

From  
Lusaka to Accra:

More women, doing more,  
building our unions

Achievements of the IUF Africa  
Regional Women's Project,  
2007-2011



# Thanks

Our grateful thanks go to all those who are taking part and making this project such a success, particularly:

**IUF Africa Regional Women's Project Coordinator**, Adwoa Sakyi, based in Ghana.

**IUF Africa Regional Women's Committee** members who initiated the project and gave support and guidance: East Africa: Vicky Kanyoka; West Africa (English-speaking): Adwoa Sakyi; West Africa (French-speaking): Aïssétou Camara Soumaré; Southern Africa: Dainess Chawinga.

The **National Project Coordinators** in each country: Bénin: Nouratou Gambia; Burkina Faso: Assétou Traoré; Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast): Marie Fiankan; Ghana: Jennifer Taylor; Kenya: Anne Wekhomba; Malawi: Dorothea Makhasu; Mali: Aïssétou Camara Soumaré; Niger: Ramatou Maman Ali; Nigeria: Esther Timothy Cooke; Senegal: Coumba Mané; South Africa: Patricia Nyman; Tanzania: Getrude Zachary Sima; Togo: Emilie Viho; Uganda: Christine Nansubuga; Zambia: Astridah Phiri; Zimbabwe: Juliet Sithole.

Members of the **National Project Coordinating Committees** and the trade unions in each country in the project: Bénin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo in West Africa; Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda and Zimbabwe in Southern/East Africa. (For a list of the unions involved, please see pages 37 - 38.)

Staff at the IUF headquarters, especially the **IUF Equalities Officer**, Barbro Budin.

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“It opened my eyes about women’s rights at the workplace.”

Janeth Nkya, an Office Attendant for the CHODAWU union at the White Sands Hotel, Tanzania, who took part in the project training.

“Before the project, women were not fully involved in trade union sensitisation. After carrying out workplace and national workshops through the project, we now have women activists. Women are confident and have taken up leadership positions. As a union, we have increased the membership of both men and women.”

Sam Buhigiro, Organising and Education Secretary, UBTAWU (Uganda Beverages, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Union), Uganda



## What this booklet is about

In this booklet, we want to tell you about a particular women's project in the trade unions in Africa and what it achieved.

It is an outstanding example of how much can be done - with relatively small resources but with immense energy and commitment from those involved.

In the five years of the project so far, in 16 African countries taking part:

- Thousands of more women have joined and become more active in the unions.
- Thousands of more men have also been recruited into the unions.
- More women have been trained and gained confidence to take on leadership roles, with an impact also on their lives beyond the workplace and the union.
- Attitudes towards women, especially women leaders in the unions, have been changed for the better.
- Union policy has been improved in many countries so as to involve more women, at all levels.
- More women have taken part in collective bargaining with employers and negotiations with governments.
- Issues that are important to women, such as maternity rights, violence at work and sexual harassment, have been taken up with more vigour.
- There has been much closer cooperation among unions, within countries and across borders.

The project has been inspiring not only for those in Africa who are taking part, but also for those in the IUF who help to organize it and the Swedish unions who support it with funds.

So we hope that it will inspire you too to take similar action, to strengthen your own union movement to fight for better lives and livelihoods for all workers, in your own country and across the world.

**Ron Oswald**

**General Secretary**

**International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)**





## The IUF promotes gender equality

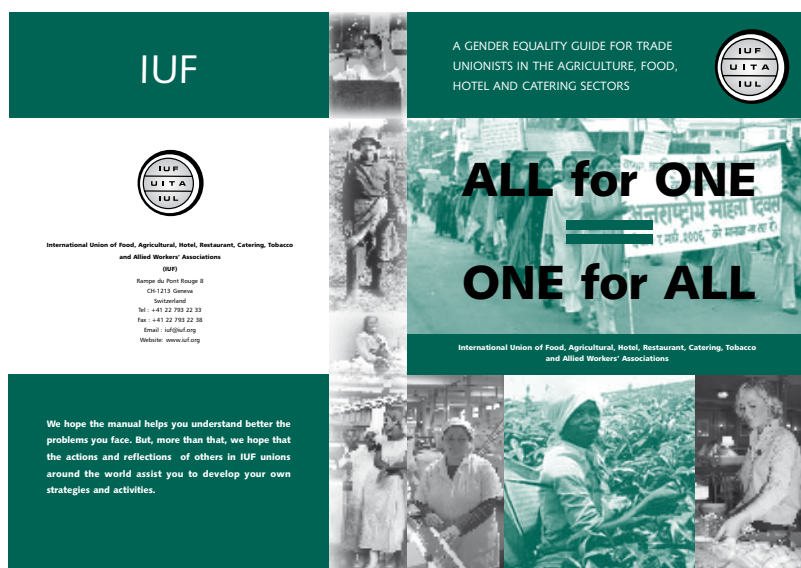
The IUF is a Global Union Federation with member unions across the world. Its unions are for workers in agriculture and plantations, tobacco, food and beverage processing, hotels and catering, and domestic workers.

Over the past decade in particular, the IUF has been actively trying to improve gender equality, to foster better women's involvement in union activities everywhere.

Women the world over are paid less than men. They are also more affected by precarious forms of employment, especially through outsourcing and casualisation of jobs where employers want to avoid their legal responsibilities to their workers. As a result, women are more likely to suffer poverty. Yet women are to a large extent responsible for taking care of children and the elderly. So, gender equality is vital for tackling poverty.

Via its Action Programme for Equality, the IUF has raised funds and given technical support for education, awareness-raising and mobilization by its affiliated unions – to attract more women workers to join unions, to encourage them to be more active and to stand for election as leaders, and to win more support for this among men too.

It has published materials for its affiliated unions to use, notably in 2007 a gender equality guide called 'All for One = One for All', (see page 39 for how to get copies, in various languages).



Also in 2007, member unions at the 25th IUF World Congress passed an historic resolution aimed at improving the involvement of women in the IUF. They agreed that, in each and every decision-making body of the IUF, women must comprise at least 40 per cent of the union representatives there. And there are sanctions: voting rights are reduced in proportion to the number of women missing.

It is not a simple matter, though, to bring more women into the structures of the trade union movement. If it was, it would have been done a long time ago. Sadly, gender discrimination still continues to affect – and weaken – the trade unions in too many countries.



In Africa in the mid-2000s, the topic of on-going gender discrimination in the unions was rising to the surface. Participants at the IUF Africa Regional Women's Conference held in Lusaka, Zambia, in 2006 decided that:

- women's concerns were barely acknowledged in trade union agendas
- no women's activities were taking place across borders in between the regional conferences/meetings
- there was virtually no communication between the Regional Women's Committee members between meetings, and not enough feedback from them to women union members
- women's representation in the IUF Africa Regional Committee was far too low.

So, the Women's Conference made a strong recommendation to the IUF Regional Conference that took place immediately after it. They proposed a special project to address these concerns. They wanted not just greater representation of women and their issues, but greater communication at all levels - national, sub-regional and regional.

This led the IUF to initiate a special project across its affiliated unions in Africa. This started at the end of 2007, and has been running since then, supported with funds from the Swedish trade union movement, and with great success.



IUF Africa Regional Women's Project Coordinator Adwoa Sakyi and IUF Equalities Officer Barbro Budin at a project workshop in Accra, Ghana, in December 2010.

Participants at a capacity-building workshop in Nigeria (left), and taking action on domestic workers' rights in Burkina Faso (right).





# About the IUF African Regional Women's Project

This project was set up with the aim of promoting gender equality in the trade unions of Africa – because this is a key way to improve the quality of women's lives and livelihoods there, and thereby help to reduce poverty for all in the continent.

To kick-start the project, sub-regional workshops were held. One for IUF unions in English-speaking countries of Africa was organised in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 19-23 November 2007, facilitated by the South African labour education organization Ditsela. Two weeks later a similar workshop was held in Cotonou, Bénin, for IUF unions in French-speaking countries of West Africa.



Participants develop ideas for their project activities, at a workshop in Accra, Ghana, in December 2010.

There and in later meetings, the participants set out and developed what they want to do through the project:

- To recruit and organize more women into the trade unions of the continent.
- To have more women in decision-making bodies of the trade unions – at all levels, from the local to the national and international.
- To get gender issues, such as women's health and safety, into the mainstream union agenda.
- To build the confidence and capacity of women union members to take part in all union activities, especially in bargaining with employers and lobbying governments.
- To raise more awareness of women's rights that do already exist in national laws and international instruments, and to build stronger campaigns to get them implemented, with a particular focus on the international ILO Convention on Maternity Protection C183 of 2000, and the ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers C189 won in 2011.
- To strengthen solidarity and collaboration between IUF-affiliated unions within countries and across borders.



## The countries taking part

The first countries to get active in the project were Bénin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, and Niger in West Africa, and Tanzania, Zambia and Uganda in Southern/East Africa. Some, particularly those in West Africa, were helped by the fact that they already had a Women's Coordinating Committee between the IUF unions in their country.

Soon, these eight countries were joined by six more: South Africa, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). Sadly, the excellent project activities underway in Cote d'Ivoire had to be suspended after the CIAGAH-CI union offices there were destroyed by the military forces of President Ouattara in April 2011, see page 21.

It took longer to build the activities in Kenya because of the difficult political situation there too. However, by 2008 there too the project activities had got going.

Meanwhile, in Zimbabwe, IUF affiliates were suffering severe political repression. The General Secretary of the agriculture and plantation workers' union GAPWUZ, Gertrude Hambira, was one who had to flee into exile. The project has, however, been able to keep in contact and to invite a GAPWUZ representative to meetings outside the country. From early 2012, the project became active in the country, now with a National Project Coordinator to take it forward.

So, by early 2012 when this booklet was written, the project involved 16 countries across the continent, with hopefully more on the way.

A list of the IUF-affiliated unions involved is on pages 37-38.

The overall Coordinator for the IUF Women's Project in the Africa Region is Adwoa Sakyi. Adwoa is based in Ghana where she was formerly Gender Officer of the General Agricultural Workers' Union (GAWU). She was also Chair of the IUF Agricultural Workers' Trade Group from 2002 to 2010. She is a trade unionist with over twenty years of experience.

Adwoa Sakyi : the overall  
Coordinator for the IUF  
Women's Project in the Africa  
Region







## How the project is organised

In each country taking part, an important first step has been to establish a National Project Coordination Committee (NPCC) involving all the IUF affiliated unions there. Project Coordinator Adwoa Sakyi explains:

“At the very start, we knew that we must draw everyone into the project. It must be owned by the unions in each country. It would never succeed if it was seen as something separate or parallel to their other activities. It had to be integrated.

So, I went to the different countries to talk about the project with the union leaderships, especially the General Secretaries. I encouraged them to make sure there was a representative from their union on the National Project Coordination Committee in their country. Then, before coming to an NPCC meeting, each union representative has to consult within their union, and report back afterwards. This is a key part of our model - to make sure that there is proper integration between the NPCC and the unions' structures.”

By the end of 2011, NPCCs were active in 14 of the 16 countries of the project. These committees meet three times each year.

In each country there is also a National Project Coordinator, whose job it is to make the project happen there, under the guidance of the NPCC. They initiate and organise activities across the country, and also produce reports of the activities and financial situation for the Regional Project Coordinator.

Another key element introduced by the project is that the project's funds can be accessed only with the signature of the National Project Coordinator. This authority has also helped raise the status of the project and the women Coordinators where they may have been marginalised by male union officials.

The Africa Regional Project Coordinator keeps in close contact with these national Committees and Coordinators, as well as the General Secretaries. “I make frequent calls and send them sms messages”, says Adwoa. She circulates each country report to all others, so that everyone can read about each other's activities and reflect on their own. Where particular countries may be falling behind, this stimulates them to do more.

Also, all the countries come together in a project meeting each year. Here they share experiences and ideas, and plan for the next stages. Each country reports on its activities, plus there are training workshops, for example in project management and organisation development skills. These meetings are deliberately held in a different country each time. All the NPCC members, all the General Secretaries and all union Education Officers of the host country are also invited to attend. Then they too can learn more about what is happening outside their country, and reflect on that for their own union's activities.

The project keeps in close contact with the IUF Africa Regional Women's Committee and makes sure that other IUF activities in Africa, such as its Occupational Health and Safety and TNC projects, are linked to it, to mutual benefit and to maximize the use of resources.

Adwoa believes that this model of organising the project goes a long way to explain why it has been so successful.



## Education / training where the workers are

“The rank-and-file are the union; they own their union. So they should have training on what the union is about, and how it can help serve their needs.”

Project Coordinator, Adwoa Sakyi

In this project, the key emphasis is on reaching out particularly to women workers and young workers - to encourage them, and build their capacity and their enthusiasm for the constructive role that trade unions can play in their lives. This is something that has been more than achieved in the four years of the project in Africa so far.

In each country, one of the early steps is to identify a core group of trainers (mostly women) who can push forward on the education and awareness-raising programme. They are picked out from those who come to the events. “We identify those who are committed to the activities. We look for their body language and the kind of contributions they make”, explains Esther Timothy Cookey, the National Project Coordinator in Nigeria. Then they are invited to more training in how to reach out to more women workers, how best to run sessions to engage everyone there, and so on.

The project encourages these trainers go to where the workers are. It varies from country-to-country, but the aim is for a ‘de-centralised’ programme. In some situations, they hold lunchtime sessions at particular workplaces. Or they bring workers from different local workplaces together. Workers from different sectors, such as hotels, food processing and agriculture, often do have common problems. So, they can meet to discuss these together.

The project also promotes participatory education methods. It is not for the trainers always to identify the problems and their solutions. Rather, the trainers are encouraged to ask the participants to identify their key issues and to work together to find the solutions. They encourage, study circle methods, small group work and role play. Such collaboration within the training sessions lays the foundation for people to continue working together afterwards, building active solidarity within and between the unions.

The trainers also make it clear that what the participants learn in the workshops they should take back and use actively with their fellow workers and union members.

What is more, it is cost-effective to have the trainers traveling around the country to bring union members in a particular area together. This uses up fewer resources than asking everyone to travel to one location like a major city. Plus, it is easier for women workers to come to a local workshop, given their domestic as well as work responsibilities.

Meanwhile, by keeping in good communication with the trainers, the National Coordinators and Committees – and the union leaders involved there - have also been able to get a clearer understanding of the issues currently concern the workers. This has brought some union leaders back into much stronger contact with those whom they represent, particularly the women workers.

This, in turn, has led more workers – both women and men – seeing the unions taking up their issues, making them more likely to join and be active in the unions.



Thandiwe Nyirongo Banda works at the National Milling Company in Zambia

Here is what she says about the project.

“I appreciate the chance to attend the workshops. Among the many topics we discussed are health and safety at work, women’s rights at work, how to negotiate with management when it comes to negotiations, etc.

My fellow employees also benefited from what I learnt because, as was discussed at the workshops, the knowledge obtained was to be shared with them.

Other than benefiting at work, I had to apply the same information during my exams when writing a Human Resources paper. I am sure I got everything right because I passed very well. Remember the roles we used to have of teaching others at the workshops? This helped me in my conversational skills when addressing a number of people.

The benefits are too numerous to mention that I can’t write them all. All I can say for now is “THANK YOU” and keep it up!”

Thandiwe Nyirongo Banda works at the National Milling Company in Zambia, and is a member of the Women’s Committee of the National Union of Commercial and Industrial Workers (NUCIW).

## Planning and management skills

The project has been a useful opportunity too to provide the unions with more training in project planning and management. For example, a special workshop on this was held in February 2008, in Bamako, Mali, where 45 participants from all 16 countries in the project took part.

Such skills are needed to build and run a union effectively. They help a union to be transparent and accountable to its members.

They also help those involved in the project to be accountable to those who fund it. In this case, the Swedish unions are very happy (see pages 34-35).



## Public awareness-raising

It is important also to build public awareness of the constructive role that unions can play in the lives of ordinary working women and men.

In many countries, including **Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania** and those in **West Africa**, the unions in the project are using International Women’s Day, 8 March, as an opportunity to highlight these issues. They have slogans such as “Decent Work for Decent Life”, “Equal Opportunity at Work Enhances Development”, and “Workplaces Free from Sexual Harassment”. Or they focus on particular issues such as maternity rights (ILO Convention 183), or domestic workers’ rights (ILO Convention 189).

Also in West Africa, they use the IUF Day for Prevention of H&S Risks, a special day in the sub-region, held in cooperation with the ILO. Here they highlight women’s health and safety.

**In Mali**, the National Project Coordinator Assétou Camara Soumaré has focused on the ILO Convention 184 on Health and Safety in Agriculture (see page 19) and the situation of rural women. Their reproductive health is at great risk from the intensive use of pesticides, but they have little maternity protection or access to medical facilities.

Such days provide a very good opportunity to bring the different unions together, and also to network with other organisations involved in women’s rights.

Some have won good media coverage too. Again, this is especially the case in French-speaking West Africa. Others say this is something they certainly want to turn to in the next phase.







## Women and men – together or separate?

Although this is called a 'Women's Project', from the start it was clear that this project is about gender equality and so should include men as well as women.

"In the first country-level meetings that I had, some union leaders queried why women need a special project. After all, they said, women are part of the union. Others, by contrast, showed little interest, seeming to treat it as just a 'women's project'. But I was clear: this is about gender relationships.

Yes, women are workers too, and no union should ever forget that. And we do need some separate activities just for women so as to build their knowledge and confidence.

But men should also build gender into their understanding and their activities. Therefore, we should include men in our project, and even sometimes hold separate activities for men to discuss their approaches to gender equality."

Project Coordinator, Adwoa Sakyi

Project Coordinator Adwoa Sakyi says that, ideally, about one-third of the participants should be men. The reality of course varies a lot from country to country, depending on the nature of gender relationships there. There may be strong religious or cultural factors that keep men and women apart. Or it may be a question of the gender politics within a particular trade union. Some men leaders still regard all this as a 'sideline' issue, of little importance.

Working with a 'decentralised' model, the project encourages allows the National Project Coordinators and Committees to develop their own strategies to meet their own situation.

"In Zambia, it is part of our strategy to include men. If we confine the project to women only, men may not understand what we are doing. So we hold programmes to involve men and win their support. Then they can explain to other men what the women want and are doing, and they in turn become interested.

It is true that men can be defensive about women's activities. So we have to get them interested. We invite a few to certain of our activities so that they can understand that we are not trying to usurp men's powers, not to take over, but to find a space for women, to co-exist. Once we include men and show them this, they do become supportive. The strategy has worked well.

But most of the project activities are women-only. It depends on the topics or the type of training. For example, if it is capacity-building, then it is women-only. If we are talking about gender equality then we include men. We do invite men to discussions on sexual harassment so that they understand this from a women's perspective, and these workshops become very interesting as a result."

Dainess Chawinga, General Secretary of HCWUZ (Hotel Catering Workers' Union of Zambia), and member of the IUF Africa Regional Committee



In some situations, women-only groups give more freedom to women to discuss issues which can prove difficult with men present - such as sexual harassment and other violence against women. For many, this is the first time they learn that they have rights, as women, laid down at international level, such as in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Or they receive training that builds their confidence, for example in how to negotiate, which can be more difficult when men are present and dominate the proceedings.

Meanwhile, in some project meetings, there is men-only group work. Here, they can explore men's understanding of gender equality, and how they can help promote it in their unions. It is very rare for men to have such opportunities between themselves, and so this is something the project is keen to make happen.

The project is clear that the aim is to overcome gender discrimination. Over time, women will become more involved in their unions alongside the men, their issues will become part of the mainstream union agenda, and more men will respect women for the life and strength that they bring to the organisation. Encouraged by the project, in many places this is already starting to happen.

Men-only group work has been done at some project evaluation/planning meetings. Project Coordinator Adwoa Sakyi says, "This has not only helped to get a better understanding among the male comrades about women workers' concerns, but also led to a much better gender perspective in the project as a whole".





# More union members, more active

As a result of the project, many more workers have been brought into unions across Africa, and not just women workers - men too.

This is all the more impressive because this growth in union membership has happened despite the job losses and casualisation of employment hitting many of the industries in which IUF unions operate.

Within just a year of getting involved, unions in the project reported over a hundred new members, sometimes even several hundred: 374 in **Niger**, for example.

So often, members recruited by unions are soon laid off again. Yet the numbers kept growing. The unions are clear that much of this is due to the project. Without it, they would probably have lost rather than gained in numbers.

By the end of 2011, the total estimate of new women union members across the 16 countries since the project started was **25,000**, plus thousands of men.

Such rises in membership bring more life and energy into the unions. It also means extra income from more membership fees.

It is also true that, previously, many unions had no data on how many of their members were men and how many women. Now, most unions in the project collect this information. This helps them understand the composition of their membership much better - so as to provide the support and services that their members really need.

## More women

In some places, the unions had become so dominated by men that many women had come to think that unions are just for men.

Or they could see that if they tried to get active in a union, they would soon find themselves ignored or facing too many battles.

So, many women had become thoroughly apathetic about unions.

It is also true that most women lack much time for anything that might be 'extra'. Their daily lives are already full of their commitments to their families and the broader community as well as their work.

By inviting them, encouraging them, listening to them, and showing them how unions can actually help make their daily lives better, the project has encouraged women across Africa to realise that, no, unions are for women too. They have joined in their thousands, and they have got active.

## Precarious / vulnerable/ informal workers

Perhaps the biggest challenge to unions today is casualisation. Bosses hire workers on all kinds of temporary contract, or via labour agents and outsourcing, rather than employ them properly. This seriously weakens the unions.

So, if unions want to build their membership, they need to change their mode of recruiting and organising – to follow the principle that ‘every worker is a worker’. In some countries, the project is also trying to grapple with this vital question.

**In Niger**, the NPCC has made women in the informal economy a strong focus of their activities. As a result of some training workshops, five new local unions have been set up in the urban community of Niamey.

**In Kenya**, 90 days paid maternity leave has been won for women contract workers at two sugar companies, Mumias and Nzoia.



“As more union members have become confident and active, this has improved the understanding of what are trade unions among so many more workers, and even among employers and the wider community.

Non-unionised informal economy workers are now more enthusiastic to join the unions too, even though it is much more difficult to organise them.”

Christine Nansubuga, NUCMAW (National Union of Co-operative Movement and Allied Workers), and National Project Coordinator, Uganda





# The issues that count

Taking up the issues which are of most concern to women workers is clearly an important way of drawing them into the unions.

## Maternity protection

Over and over, maternity is one of the first issues that women workers want addressed. Then they can successfully combine their roles as income-earners and as bearers of the next generation.

In Sub-Saharan Africa today, still too many women die in childbirth. Still too many workplaces practice discrimination against women employees who are pregnant or have just given birth. Too many employers dismiss pregnant women or prefer to employ men anyway, to keep down their costs. They like to ignore their responsibilities - to their own women workers and to society at large – rather than provide safe jobs for pregnant women and proper maternity leave.

The truth is that, since 2000, women workers' rights to maternity protection have been set out at international level in ILO Convention C183 on Maternity Protection. This says, for example, that all women workers (married or unmarried, permanent or casual) have maternity rights. They should get not less than 14 weeks maternity leave, paid at least two-thirds of their wages. Pregnant and nursing women cannot be forced to do any work that may harm them or their child. An employer is not allowed to sack a woman because she is pregnant, or on maternity leave, or nursing. After her maternity leave, a woman has the right to return to her previous job (or similar) and pay rate. These and other provisions go a long way to protect women workers and their babies.

However, in the ten years after C183 was agreed, **Mali** was the only country in Africa to ratify it – to put it into its own country's laws. So raising more awareness about this international Convention - especially among women workers - about the need to lobby governments to ratify it, has become a priority for the project. As a direct result, another country has been successfully added to the list.

**In January 2012, the Government of Bénin ratified C183 on Maternity Protection.**

This is a clear example of what can be achieved, and it is encouraging others to press on with their activities on maternity rights. For example, more unions are now taking up maternity rights in their collective bargaining and negotiations with employers (see page 31). Plus they are fighting, and winning, against individual cases of discrimination.

**In Malawi, a woman worker in the food company Suncrest was dismissed when she took maternity leave. She was unmarried, and managers thought that they were not obliged to respect the maternity rights of unmarried women. As a result of the project training, women union shopstewards stepped in. Not only was the worker reinstated, but she got four months paid maternity leave.**

## Health and safety at work

“Health, safety and the environment are issues at the heart of many women’s concerns. Perhaps it is because of women’s caring role at home. Taking these issues up is certainly something that gains women’s interest and respect. Women’s health and safety at work should also be taken up because women are particularly exposed to risks.”

‘All for One = One for All’, IUF gender equality manual, 2007, page 13

Women’s health is also one of the Millennium Development Goals, but it is one that has made least advance – something particularly relevant in poorer countries such as those in Africa.

In some countries of West Africa, the project has developed a special focus on health and safety training for women. The National Women’s Project Coordinator in **Burkina Faso**, Assétou Traoré of the union for tourism and hotels SYNTETH (Syndicat National des Travailleurs de l’Environnement, du Tourisme et de l’Hôtellerie) has made this a strong focus of her activities.

Assétou approached the ILO regional health and safety expert, Dr T. Kalhoulé, and together they have developed a programme of courses aimed at training more women to be health and safety focal points in their workplaces, union safety representatives, and trainers to train yet more women about health and safety. Now training is underway in Burkina Faso and the neighbouring country of **Niger**. They have also produced a training guide, available in both French and English (see page 39).

This special focus on women’s health and safety has already had some concrete results. For example, pregnant women agricultural workers are no longer forced to travel by motor bike to the plantations. Plus, they have the right to change tasks when pregnant.



The project has also established very close cooperation with the (woman) Director of the Social Security Fund in Burkino Faso who shares many of the concerns of the women unionists - for example, to extend social security coverage to women in precarious forms of employment, women in the informal economy, and domestic workers.



Agriculture is one of the most dangerous sectors. Farm and plantation workers, particularly the women, run many risks, for example from chemical pesticides and heavy machinery.

ILO Convention 184 on Health and Safety in Agriculture was adopted in 2001 but, when the project started, no African countries had yet ratified it. So this is another international instrument highlighted in the project's organising programme, particularly of course among agricultural workers. This helped to get it onto the unions' agenda and, working in alliance with others interested in agricultural health and safety, they started to make an impression on Members of Parliament and government officials in some countries. In 2009, **Burkina Faso** ratified the Convention, and so did **Ghana** in 2011.

Also, by working across the sectors, workers in food processing factories and restaurants have learnt more about the hazards faced by the farm workers who produce the food that they work with, and the food that they and their families eat. This has generated more solidarity for agricultural workers and their struggles.



In the hotels sector too, the project has brought a renewed emphasis on health and safety at work.

**In South Africa**, they used the technique of body mapping to get hotel workers discussing the symptoms they share.

“It really opened the eyes of comrades. Previously, they didn't link their backaches to all the standing on their feet and bending over that they do. It was ‘just another issue’. But now it is taken seriously, and in some hotels they have raised the question of bed-making, and been demanding that management gives them better medical cover.”

Patricia Nyman, Gender Officer, SACCAWU (South Africa Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union)



# Violence against women, including sexual harassment

“Through the project we learnt from our colleagues about the issues of sexual harassment - a thing we never acted on before.”

Dorothea Makhasu, former General Secretary of the Hotels, Food Processing and Cleaning Workers' Union (HFPCWU), now National Project Coordinator, Malawi

This is another topic very high up on the list of issues which women workers need addressing. It goes to the heart of women's well-being, and of the power relationships between the genders.

However, many women may accept it as 'just something in life' and not report cases. Or their cases are ignored. On union committees or at the negotiating table, it is rarely taken up by men in the unions. They seem not to take the issue seriously or, if they do, feel isolated and lack the confidence to speak up. Only when there is a good number of women union representatives is it taken up properly.

Among women, it is one of the issues which they often prefer to discuss just between themselves at first, until they have built their confidence. The project has encouraged this, with some good results.

“Before I attended the training, I used to shy away from union meetings thinking that I could not say anything to management. With the training, I gained skills and courage.

One day I was approached by a fellow women worker who was denied promotion because she refused to be in love with the Financial Controller at the workplace. I took up the issue with the Human Resources Manager. We then learnt that another worker, who was promoted, had been forced into an affair with the Financial Controller.

As a result of our negotiations, the worker who had refused was also promoted, and the Financial Controller was warned by management to stop the malpractice. Both women are now on the same level and enjoying their work, due my intervention. Thanks to the IUF Women's Project.”

Chipiliro Msiska works for the Malawi Sun Hotel and Conference Centre. She is also a shopsteward for the Hotel, Food Processing and Catering Workers' Union in Malawi.

“Since the project training in Zambia, we are getting many more sexual harassment cases reported, and the unions are dealing with them. Some men have been fired; some have been reprimanded. Women are now able to understand much better.”

Dainess Chawinga, General Secretary of HCWUZ (Hotel Catering Workers' Union of Zambia), and member of the IUF Africa Regional Committee





## Reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS

The risks of sexual violence/harassment and HIV/AIDS are linked. Most participating unions have included HIV/AIDS in their project action programme, and are working closely with national HIV/AIDS committees and structures.

'World Aids Day' on 1 December is another international day when they are getting involved in public awareness activities.

HIV/AIDS is something that everyone fears – permanent and casual workers, workers and supervisory staff, rank-and-file union members and leaders, women and men, young and old, from all the sectors. It is even something of great concern to decent employers.

So, this is one of the topics that the project finds is a good entry-point. Discussion of it helps to bring people together, to share solutions. The right for unions to negotiate about it with employers can be brought into training, thereby also improving negotiating skills.

**In Tanzania**, within the first year of the project, some workplace Collective Bargaining Agreements were negotiated to contain specific clauses on HIV/AIDS and sexual harassment.

Family planning is another very important issue for women, as it helps not only to affirm their rights as human beings but also to reduce poverty. So, this is another of the project's priorities, linked with the health and safety activities.

**In Mali**, the project has carried out a lot of activities among the many women agricultural workers there. They have been linking the women's rights to family planning and maternity benefits (ILO Convention C183, see page 17) with the campaign for ratification of the agricultural health and safety Convention C184 (see page 19).

The unions in **Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)** suffered under many years of political tension and violence. For two years, the CIAGAH-CI union for farm, food, and hotel workers did, however, make a lot of headway in the project. Their main focus was on HIV/AIDS, family planning, and sexual harassment.

They mapped and strategically targeted certain workplaces, and started to approach the workers one-by-one to recruit and organise them. As a result, a number of new women's committees were established.

In April 2011, however, the CIAGAH-CI union office was destroyed and all the archives were taken away by the military. All union activities, including the project, were brought to an abrupt half. Now the CIAGAH-CI will have to start again from scratch, but they are fully prepared to do so.

# Changing union leaderships

In many countries of Africa, there have long been some women union leaders.

However, one or two brave women in high position are not a sign of gender equality. They – and the issues they want to promote – are often isolated and ignored. They are at risk of being treated as tokens by the male leadership.

So, more women need to be prepared to stand for election to union positions, and more women need to vote for them. This too requires a special emphasis in the training programme, and on-going support. It is a focus throughout the project.

## Building women's confidence and capacity

In many of the countries, the project training has led to many more women gaining in confidence to stand for election – at all levels, from the shopfloor upwards. Also, more women are now supporting and electing other women.

One big impact of there being more women leaders is that it attracts more women into the unions. Women's participation increases when they can turn to women union officials, with more confidence that their issues of concern will be taken seriously.

### – at the shopfloor



In **Togo**, West Africa, in December 2011, Aba Eklu Abokovi Akouvi became a union shopsteward at her workplace, a mineral water plant. She is the first ever woman shopsteward in the history of the beverage workers' union SYNTEB (Syndicat des Travailleurs des Entreprises de Boissons), and it is as a direct result of the women's project. The union is hoping that her election will stimulate more women to become active and take up union positions.

At a brewing company in **Zambia** too, two women have won union elections at branch level. These gains in Togo and Zambia are all the more remarkable because, until recently, very few women could even get jobs on the shopfloor in the brewery/soft drinks industry there.



“At a local level, there has been a significant change in women’s participation. Women who have been to the training are ploughing it back to their workplaces. They are learning how to stand in front of others and speak with confidence on issues such as sexual harassment. They are learning the skills to make presentations, to write reports. Women who are already shopstewards have got more involved in structures and in campaigns. The training has given them more knowledge as well as confidence.”

Patricia Nyman, Gender Officer, SACCAWU (South Africa Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union)

## – at national level

Across the continent, women’s representation on union regional and national executive boards has markedly increased, as a result of the project.

In **Ghana**, women are now the majority of those sitting on the regional council executives for the agricultural workers’ union GAWU in two regions, and elsewhere they comprise nearly half. An amendment to the union’s Constitution has brought women’s representation on the national executive up from four to ten.

In **Uganda**, the UHFTAWU union had a rule that at least 25% of representatives sitting on all union committees should be women. But it was not well implemented, until the project. “Now we have achieved it”, says General Secretary Stephen Mugole. “In fact, since the elections in August 2011, 40% of my union’s National Executive Committee (NEC) are women. Many more branches have got women chairpersons too. Since the training, there is so much more awareness of the contribution that women can make. Also, women are more assertive to go for union positions.”

In the NUCMAW union there too, a direct result of the project is a change in union rules, passed at a delegates’ conference in 2010, that at least one-third of any union committee – at any levels – should be women.



“Before the existence of this project, I was not aware of all my rights as a worker, and I was too timid to advocate for those rights that were violated by my employer. This project has helped me to realize the strength of the trade unions, within and outside Uganda. I am now knowledgeable about the IUF. It has given me the strength to take up leadership positions at my workplace and in the union, thereby fighting the marginalization of women.”

Juliet Kutyabwana, Cashier and Youth Representative, NUCMAW (National Union of Co-operative Movement and Allied Workers), and member of the Project Core Group in Uganda.



In **Bénin**, a woman shopsteward and safety representative at Hotel Novotel has been elected General Secretary of her union SYNOVO (Syndicat de Travailleurs de Novotel). She had previously been harassed by management for her union activities, particularly for introducing a health and safety committee at the hotel.

In another union there, FESYNDER, the proportion of women members in decision-making bodies is now 42%.

In **Niger**, all affiliates except one have increased the proportion of women in their national boards: SNAAN from 18% to 35%, SUPRA from 18% to 47%, SNATEF from 15% to 23%, and SYNTHOBRA from 14 % to 28%. The National Project Coordinator was elected 2nd Assistant General Secretary in her union, SUPRA.

“In Nigeria, men have dominated the unions. But we are now much more gender sensitive. We have introduced a policy in the Constitution of each of the five IUF unions that, at the executive level, women must have at least 40% of the positions. In the food workers’ union FOBTOB, we have already got to that level.”

Gabriel Babalola, Chair of the IUF Nigeria Council, and IUF Africa Regional Secretary since December 2011. He is also former President of FOBTOB (Food, Beverage and Tobacco Senior Staff Association) in Nigeria.

“We are working round the clock to get more women elected at the union conferences in 2012. We are trying to network with the men who will agree to this. We are sure we will succeed. Unions have been in crisis for a number of years and so are now more willing to embrace women’s participation.”

Esther Timothy Cooley, Head of Education and Gender of the Agriculture and Allied Workers’ Union (AAWU), and National Project Coordinator in Nigeria. She is also Chair of the IUF African Regional Women’s Committee.

## Women’s committees

The project has also helped to strengthen and energise Women’s Committees in the unions, at all levels.

Such bodies are of course very useful places where women can strategise together on the issues they want to take up, and the ways to do this.

In **Tanzania**, there has been a huge increase in the number of women’s committees in the unions:

- TUICO (Tanzania Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers) now has 178 women’s committees at branch level, and 22 regional women’s committees.
- TPAWU (Tanzania Plantation and Allied Workers’ Union) now has 143 women’s committees, and 8 zone women’s committees.
- CHODAWU (Conservation, Hotels, Domestic and Allied Workers’ Union) now has 144 women’s committees, with 19 regional women’s committees.





## - at international level

Bringing the women of IUF-affiliated unions together, within and across countries, has also led to greater confidence to promote women into structures of the global union.

Over the years, there had been far too few women union representatives on the IUF Africa Regional Committee. This was even still the case four years after the 2007 IUF Global Congress agreed to a policy change to increase women's participation in all IUF structures to at least 40% (see page 5).

So, delegates at the Women's Conference held in Accra in December 2011 decided to be more proactive. They made a formal request to the main IUF Africa Regional Conference for affirmative action so that the 40% standard would be met. Throughout that Conference, the Women's Project was praised for its role in strengthening the unions across the continent. So the request was impossible to deny. What is more, many more delegates at the Conference this time were women, some 44%.

As a result, the IUF Africa Region's Constitution was amended, and a woman union leader was elected for the first time to sit on the IUF Regional Committee in her own right, not just as a women's representative.

She is Dainess Chawinga, General Secretary of the Hotel Catering Workers' Union of **Zambia**, and she now represents Southern and Central Africa on the IUF Africa Regional Committee. A woman like Dainess can represent all union members, not just the women. She is, after all, an experienced leader of her own union. So, as of early 2012, the Committee comprises 4 men and 4 women.

“Women noticed that it was high time that we enter the mainstream, not just sit in seats reserved for us. We are ready to take up leadership positions just like the men.

Women are now supporting each other to do this. And so are more men. We found very little resistance among them, and this is because so many men have been included in the project. More men now realise that women can do what they do. We are equals.”

Dainess Chawinga, General Secretary of HCWUZ (Hotel Catering Workers' Union of Zambia), and member of the IUF Africa Regional Committee

For more from Dainess, see page 36.





Meanwhile, there has been an impact on the composition of the IUF Africa Regional Women's Committee too. Most of the new members elected in December 2011 are Project Coordinators in their home countries. They can now bring all that experience and knowledge to this Committee, and be very active representatives for their constituencies.

What is more, the Chair and the two Vice-Chairs of this Women's Committee are also titular members of the IUF Africa Regional Committee. This brings a further guarantee that women's policies and activities will be integrated into the mainstream.

In these ways, huge progress has been made to combat the weaknesses identified by the Lusaka Conference in 2006 (see page 6).



“At a personal level, the project has helped me so much. I have become more active in the union, more knowledgeable, and I have more skills. I have carried out activities in four unions in my country. Now I hold a position at national level in my own union, elected in 2010. I have also networked with people at international level, and in December 2011 I was even elected to be the Titular Member for the East Africa region on the IUF Regional Committee.

Christine Nansubuga, National Treasurer for NUCMAW (National Union of Co-operative Movement and Allied Workers), and National Project Coordinator, Uganda.





## Changing the mindsets of some male union leaders

In some of the countries, male union officers have provided excellent support from the beginning, and participated actively in the project. This is something the project strongly encourages, particularly through the National Project Coordinating Committees. They become role models for other men to follow, and provide reassurance to those men who are doubters.

In some other countries, male union leaders still operate more within a strong patriarchal system. Some tend to suggest it would be unlikely that women unionists will get permission from their husbands to take part in union activities. Or they question who will look after the children when the women are away. There are instances where the union Education Officers have refused to acknowledge the women's project trainers. Some men leaders are still behaving badly – including, and sometimes especially, against successful women.

“Some men do fear that ‘women will take over from men’. But we educate both women and men. We encourage the men through education and workshops to change such thinking. Increasing women's leadership is a global standard that we have to follow. And when men see the women leading the education, they can see the potential of women and allow them to take leadership positions.”

Gabriel Babalola, Chair of the IUF Nigeria Council, and IUF Africa Regional Secretary



As the project gets underway in each country and brings new members in, with their energy and resourcefulness – and the extra income from their membership dues - many men do start to change their thinking and attitudes.

“Gradually, things can change if we continue to work as we are doing. Sometimes it is remarkable to see a male General Secretary now listening intently to the words of a woman from his union, brought on by the project.”

Adwoa Sakyi, Project Coordinator

# Winning new laws and agreements

“Capacity-building on labour laws and rights is very useful. Once women know their rights, they are able to speak out and defend themselves when something is wrong. Now more of them know, for example, that they cannot be fired for belonging to a union. So, more of them attend union meetings now.”

Dainess Chawinga, General Secretary of HCWUZ (Hotel Catering Workers’ Union of Zambia), and member of the IUF Africa Regional Committee

Winning new laws is of course a long-term process. But legal rights for all workers, and special rights for women workers, do already exist within countries as well as at international level. The need is often to raise awareness of those legal rights which do already exist.

Some of the National Project Coordinating Committees, for example in **Ghana**, have compiled overviews of the rights that already exist in their own country’s laws and regulations, and in international standards. They have produced simple briefing documents and then used them in the training sessions. For those who were until then unaware of the legal rights that already exist, the information has helped build their motivation and confidence to fight for more gender equality.

“After attending various workshops and meetings sensitising us about our rights, this gave me the capacity to advocate for women’s rights and against violence against women. As a branch we are also proud because the project has enabled us to review/conclude the terms and conditions of service, signed in 2011.”

Jane Epedoi is Women’s Representative at branch level and Vice-Chair of the Women’s Wing of NUCMAW (National Union of Co-operative Movement and Allied Workers) in Uganda.

Benin C189 rally







# Domestic workers now have rights too!

At the same time as this project got started, the international campaign was underway to win a new international ILO Convention for the recognition and rights of domestic workers worldwide, C189. This project took this campaign up in many countries.

Union members attending project activities were – and still are - asked to give strong support to domestic workers to organise and fight for their rights as workers.

This helped bring domestic workers' organisations into an African regional network linked to the International Domestic Workers' Network (IDWN) and the IUF. So they became part of the international fight for C189. They include:

- **Bénin:** SYNEMB (Syndicat National des Employés de Maison) and SEHM/BA (Syndicat des Employés d'Hôtels et de Maison, BA)
- **Burkina Faso:** SYNEMAG (Syndicat National des Employés de Maison et Gardiennage)
- **Kenya:** KUDHEIHA (Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Education Institutions and Allied Workers' Union) which in the past five or so years has grown from a handful to 13,000 domestic worker members.
- **Mali :** SYNIATHA (Syndicat National de l'Industrie Alimentaire, de l'Habillement et des Travailleurs des Ambassades et du Personnel de Maison)
- **Tanzania:** CHODAWU (Conservation, Hotels, Domestic and Allied Workers' Union)
- **Uganda:** UFHFTAWU (Uganda Hotels, Food, Tourism and Allied Workers)



Happily, ILO Convention 189 (C189) on decent work for domestic workers was finally agreed by the International Labour Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, in June 2011.

Now the project is highlighting the need for all workers and unions to raise their voices for C189 to be ratified, put into national labour law, by their own governments.

In this way, the project is helping to build more awareness of the situation and needs of other workers, and generate solidarity. It is building activism in other spheres of workers' lives, not just in their own workplace.

It has also made more workers aware that there are international instruments which confirm that all workers have basic human rights – not to be discriminated against in any way, to form and join unions of their own choice, and so on.

Plus, it provides the strongest example of how even the most marginalised workers can come together, build solidarity between themselves and with their supporters, and make major gains. This inspires other workers of the potential that lies within themselves.



## Negotiating on women's concerns

To make an impact on the bargaining agenda, more women need training in negotiating skills, so that they can be there at the negotiation table alongside the men. In many countries, the project has been very successful in this.

### “Women make good negotiators”

“It was a challenge at the beginning. People mostly thought that ‘women handle only women’s issues’. But, since the project, every branch in our union must have women trained to handle any union issues.

In fact, women make good negotiators. Their views are more listened to by management, and they win more cases. Male managers feel that women are not lying. Across Uganda, in politics, in civil society organisations, women no longer hide behind doors, and they are known to be less corrupt. Women try to deliver well because of the past discrimination against them.”

Stephen Mugole, General Secretary, UHFTAWU (Uganda Hotels, Food, Tourism and Allied Workers), and Chair of the National Project Coordinating Committee, Uganda



In **Zambia**, since more women have joined the negotiating teams, the HCWUZ Hotel and Catering Workers’ Union has succeeded in including breastfeeding breaks and sexual harassment into more of its CBAs. Not only that, women have been negotiating for time off when their children are sick. Previously this would have been taken from their annual holidays.

But also, more men negotiators need to understand better women workers’ concerns, and be active in putting these concerns into the bargaining agenda. Here again, the project has seen good success.

In many places, men are included alongside women in the project’s training on collective bargaining where women’s issues such as maternity rights are the topics focused on.

The project has also had an impact on union leaders, who often lead negotiations, through their presence on the National Project Coordination Committees and at conferences.

“Before the project, I was very ignorant of women’s rights. After having education through the women’s project, there is strong solidarity and unity in solving our problems. We were able to establish meetings with our employer, through which workers’ challenges are discussed and solved. We now insist that women’s rights are considered and followed. Also, membership has increased as more workers joined TUICO. The project is very successful since there is a good relationship with the employer, leading to a conducive working environment.”

Stephen Athanas, a Shopsteward for the TUICO union at Tanzania Breweries Ltd., Tanzania, who attended a project workshop in April 2011.



“Our union is good at collective bargaining, but we didn’t include maternity rights much before. Even I was not aware of the importance of the ILO Convention on Maternity Rights until the project training. Since then we have successfully won clauses in the CBAs with three companies (a biscuit manufacturer, a supermarket chain, and a hotel), which set out that breastfeeding mothers and women who are over six months pregnant should not work at night. At the biscuit company, there is now a special room where mothers can breastfeed their babies. We are trying to build such clauses into all our CBAs. Companies are resistant because of the costs, but we are winning.”

Stephen Mugole, General Secretary, UHFTAWU (Uganda Hotels, Food, Tourism and Allied Workers), and Chair of the National Project Coordinating Committee, Uganda

“The rights to 60 days’ maternity leave and 4 days’ paternity leave were in the Uganda Constitution and labour laws but were not being implemented. Now many more men as well as women recognise the need for them.”

Christine Nansubuga, NUCMAW (National Union of Co-operative Movement and Allied Workers), and National Project Coordinator, Uganda.

In **South Africa**, the **SACCAWU** union has won several new clauses in its Collective Bargaining Agreements, as a direct result of the project. A new parental rights agreement was reached with the hotel chain Sun International in 2008. Managers there have also agreed to hold workshops on sexual harassment at each hotel run by the company, and to pay for a national workshop to draft a programme on gender issues. Meanwhile, at Southern Sun hotels there is improved maternity leave, and at the Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre the union has won an HIV-Aids policy.



# Stronger union collaboration

## Within countries

Some unions were not working well together before this project. Some were even mutually hostile. But, by encouraging all IUF affiliates in each country to form a National Project Coordinating Committee (NPCC), an unexpected – and very welcome - result is that in many countries the project has brought the trade unions together.

They are now sharing information and plans, even working together in collective bargaining negotiations. The consequences are far wider than the women’s project itself.

In **Nigeria**, there was very little communication or collaboration between the unions. Partly it was because of ideological differences, with unions divided between two federations with different political orientations. Another reason seemed to be thinking that workers at different levels ('blue-collar' / 'white-collar', or 'junior staff' / 'senior staff') or in different sectors (agriculture, food processing, hotels, etc.) have different needs. The unions had become hostile, and often accused each other of 'poaching members', according to the National Project Coordinator, Esther Timothy Cookey.

The women’s project helped to change all this. The five unions in Nigeria affiliated to the IUF were encouraged to build a National Project Coordinating Committee. There, the mostly women representatives started working together, and this fed back into their unions, helping to overcome tensions.

Now an IUF Nigeria Council has been formed, involving all five affiliates and they are cooperating much better. Chair of the Council, Gabriel Babalola, says that they are stressing that 'everyone is a worker' and they should all 'work as one'. This is bearing fruit. For example, the separate unions for supervisors and workers in the food sector are now negotiating with employers together rather than separately. This is an unexpected but very welcome outcome of the women’s project.

Similarly in **Uganda**, the five unions affiliated to the IUF did not collaborate before the project. Now they meet regularly in the National Project Coordinating Committee (NPCC). "We now share our CBAs and consult each other when negotiations are taking place so that women’s interests are properly covered", says Stephen Mugole, General Secretary of UHFTAWU who chairs the NPCC in Uganda.

In **South Africa**, the National Project Coordinator Patricia Nyman has also noticed how shopstewards from different unions who have been involved in project workshops together now interact better at other meetings, such as those of the COSATU federation. "The solidarity is there at the shopfloor level too, not just at the official level", she says.

Project Coordinator Adwoa Sakyi comments:

"The project has led people to ask 'why do we create such divisions amongst ourselves?'. "





## Across borders

“The project has increased our link with other unions within our country and internationally. In Malawi there are four affiliates of IUF but we were not in touch with each other. Now, with the project, we interact and share ideas. Internationally too, we interact more with fellow IUF affiliates.”

Dorothea Makhasu, former General Secretary of Hotels, Food Processing and Cleaning Workers' Union (HFPCWU), and National Project Coordinator, Malawi

Through its regional meetings and exchanges, sharing of reports, and so on, the project is enabling women (and men) from different countries to learn from each other. National Project Coordinators discuss which organising and education techniques are working for them, for example. They are also encouraged to share the key challenges that they face, and seek ideas from each other about how to overcome them.

“One of the areas where I have learnt from others is the different organising tools that can be used in different situations.”

Patricia Nyman, Gender Coordinator, SACCAWU (South Africa Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union)

Relationships between neighbouring countries are being strengthened too.

In West Africa, the National Project Coordinating Committees in **Burkina Faso** and **Niger** have gone on cross-border exchanges to share strategies for organising in the informal economy, including domestic workers, and for getting more women into decision-making bodies.

## Expanding into new countries and regions

This greater cross-border and regional collaboration is also bringing more energy to the Global Union. And this is also encouraging more unions to join the IUF and/or play a more active role in it.

Over the years, it has been particularly difficult to involve women trade unionists from North Africa in the activities of the IUF. But this too is starting to change, hopefully to be helped also by the project.

**Sonia Agrebi** of the **FGAT-UGTT** (food and tourism union) in **Tunisia** participated for the first time in a regional union conference in Accra, Ghana, in December 2011. There, she was elected as a titular member of the IUF Africa Regional Women's Committee. This is the first time ever that this committee has a member from North Africa. Sonia is very active within her union and is happy and enthusiastic to be part of a wider network such as the IUF Regional Women's Committee.

“We need to do more, and we are hoping that the recent political changes in North Africa will give women in that region more opportunities to be actively involved.”

Dainess Chawinga, General Secretary of HCWUZ (Hotel Catering Workers' Union of Zambia), and member of the IUF Africa Regional Committee



## Impact on the Swedish unions supporting the project

The project is financed by Swedish trade unions - the LO-TCO union federation and the four Swedish unions which are affiliated to the IUF: HRF, Kommunal, and Livs. The Swedish unions are very happy with the huge progress that the African unions are making, for the relatively small sums involved.

This is proving, however, not to be just a one-way flow – where some give something and the others gratefully receive it. The union representatives from Sweden who have visited project activities have returned home inspired with energy and ideas for their own trade union movement. They have a renewed sense of the common problems – and strategies to overcome them - that unite workers across the world.

### “This is ‘Union’ for me”

“I went to the 2010 meeting in Ghana and was so impressed with the way that all these women from different unions cooperate, the enthusiasm they have for being part of a union, how they reach out to so many women through the workshops in so many workplaces, how they use the few resources that they have.

They are clear that women should have more opportunity to be represented at the bargaining table, to sit at all levels in the union, and also that women must support other women to be elected. They think it important that men should take part too. Many men don't know how women feel or what their concerns are – they never speak about those issues between themselves. As many negotiators are men, they don't put these issues on the table. I hope we can get more women involved in collective bargaining.

I bring the experience of the African project to my union Kommunal all the time, that the best way to recruit is to go out to workplaces and hold workshops, to meet the workers where they are and ask what they want. The proof is how many new recruits to the African unions they have won. Kommunal is the biggest in Sweden, and I feel we wait too much for people to come to us. I have been in a union since 1978 but this is the thing I will carry with me for the rest of my life – this is ‘Union’ for me.”

Anja Westberg, National Officer, Kommunal (Swedish Municipal Workers' Union).

“When I visited the African Women's Project in 2010, the highlight for me was to realise how incredibly much we have in common and how little really divides us in this patriarchal world.

I carry with me still the participants' strong commitment and enthusiasm, their belief in people and in the strength of many working together. Workplace visits and meetings with the national union Presidents were very instructive, as then I saw and understood what a huge uphill struggle it is that the women have to fight.”

Kristina Nordström, National Gender Officer, Swedish Food Workers' Union (Livs)



## “A mutual exchange”

**Therese Guovelin** is Vice President of the HRF union for hotel and restaurant workers in Sweden. The HRF is the main supporting union of the IUF Africa Regional Women’s Project. Therese is also one of the eight IUF Vice-Presidents and Vice-Chair of the IUF Women’s Committee. She attended the launch workshop of the project in Johannesburg in 2007 and a regional project evaluation/ planning meeting in Accra in 2010.

“We have had some successes in Sweden with gender equality, though not with other things like the on-going pay gap. So we can see that some of the challenges faced in Africa are the same as we face in Sweden. However, we do have more opportunities, and it has perhaps made some Swedish union members lazy. Telling our own rank-and-file members about the African Women’s Project is a way of encouraging them.

We tell our members about the problems our African sisters face, from the employers and some of the union men, and yet how they stay positive, saying, ‘Yes, it is a struggle, but we are happy to take it on’... how they keep up their energy. They are eager to expand, to develop their networks, and take it to the next level. And they do this with so few resources - they do what they can with the money offered. What is more, they are clear they don’t want to be dependent on us for the long-term.

The project teaches us to be sincere, to look at ourselves, in our organisations, and ask ourselves ‘What can we do to cooperate better with the rest of the union movement?’. In too many countries, we play into the employers’ hands by fighting each other for members and so on. We need to be responsible, and demand that responsibility of others too. We need to have the strength to let go and give the activists the freedom and responsibility to try new things, particularly the women, because women can do it. But this is not only for women; it is for men too.

I really hope that at some point we can bring a group from the African project to Sweden, so that our unionists can see the results of our support. I would like to develop exchanges especially between young activists and new members. Also, it would be a chance for our African sisters and brothers to see that we have the same wishes, and many of the same problems – to be tackled in unity. It should be a mutual exchange.”



Dainess Chawinga, General Secretary of the HCWUZ (Hotel Catering Workers' Union of Zambia), member of the IUF Africa Regional Committee, and before member of the IUF Africa Regional Committee.

“Previously, people said that ‘women are not interested in the unions’. It is true that many women thought unions just a ‘by the way’, a waste of their time, or a ‘man’s job’. But we have seen so many women join and aspire to be in all the structures.

Through the training, they have come to understand that, through the union, they can fight for what they want in their lives. Now we have a lot of women appearing in the structures, vying for union positions. They know that, if women are not there, men will not put across what women want done. Some men may understand but they are not so motivated.

The women we train go on to train others. They stand up in front of others and teach them about their rights. Women get trained in how to negotiate for better wages and conditions. Other women see their friends doing this and it encourages them to join in. Their self-confidence really increases, and they are ready to take up positions.

I would like to sincerely thank the Swedish unions for their sponsorship of this project. We are very proud of what we are doing. It has helped us so much to see the commitment and interest that women can show.”



## **SOUTHERN AFRICA**

### **South Africa**

Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU)  
South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union (SACCAWU)  
South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers' Union (SADSAWU)

### **Zambia**

Hotel Catering Workers' Union of Zambia (HCWUZ)  
National Union of Commercial and Industrial Workers (NUCIW)  
National Union of Plantation and Agricultural and Allied Workers (NUPAAW)

### **Zimbabwe**

Federation of Food and Allied Workers' Unions, Zimbabwe (FFAWUZ)  
General Agricultural and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ)  
Zimbabwe Catering and Hotel Workers' Union (ZCHWU)

### **Malawi**

Hotels, Food Processing, and Catering Workers' Union (HFPCWU)  
Sugar Plantation and Allied Workers' Union (SPAWUM)  
Tobacco and Allied Workers' Union of Malawi (TOAWUM)

## **EASTERN AFRICA**

### **Kenya**

Kenya Union of Commercial, Food and Allied Workers (KUCFAW)  
Kenya Union of Sugar Plantation and Allied Workers (KUSPW)  
Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institution and Allied Workers (KUDHEIHA)

### **Tanzania**

Conservation Hotels Domestic and Allied Workers' Union (CHODAWU)  
Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers' Union (TPAWU)  
Tanzania Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers (TUICO)

### **Uganda**

National Union of Co-operative Movement and Allied Workers (NUCMAW)  
National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers (NUPAW)  
Uganda Beverage, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Union (UBTAWU)  
Uganda Fisheries and Allied Workers' Union (UFAWU)  
Uganda Hotels, Food, Tourism and Allied Workers' Union (UHFTAWU)

## **WEST AFRICA (English-speaking)**

### **Ghana**

General Agricultural Workers' Union of GTUC (GAWU)  
Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU)  
Food and Allied Workers Union of GFL (FAWU)



## Nigeria

Agriculture and Allied Employees' Union of Nigeria (AAEUN)  
National Union of Food, Beverages, and Tobacco Employees (NUFBTE)  
National Union of Hotels and Personal Services Workers (NUHPSW)  
Food, Beverage and Tobacco Senior Staff Association (FOBTOB)  
Hotels and Personal Services Senior Staff Association (HAPSSSA)

## WEST AFRICA (French-speaking)

### Bénin

Fédération des Syndicats du Développement Rural (FESYNDER)  
Fédération des Travailleurs de l'Hôtellerie, de Tourisme et Assimilés (FESYNTRA-HTA)  
Syndicat de la SOBEBRA (SYNTRA.SOB)  
Syndicat des Travailleurs du Sucre et de l'Alcool (SYNTRASA)  
Syndicat National des Travailleurs de Boulangeries et Pâtisseries du Bénin (SYNTRABOPAB)

### Burkina Faso

Fédération Nationale de l'Alimentation et de l'Hôtellerie de Burkina (FNAHB)  
Fédération Nationale des Boulangers et Pâtisseries du Burkina Faso (FNBP)  
Fédération Nationale des Agriculteurs, Planteurs Eleveurs et Maraîchers (FNAPEM)  
Syndicat National des Travailleurs de l'Agriculture (SYNATRAG)  
Syndicat National des Travailleurs de l'Environnement, du Tourisme et de l'Hôtellerie (SYNTETH)

### Cote d'Ivoire

Centrale des Industries Agroalimentaires, de l'Hôtellerie et des Branches Connexes de Cote d'Ivoire (CIAGAH-CI)

### Mali

Syndicat National de la Production de l'Environnement (SYNAPE)  
Syndicat National de l'Industrie Alimentaire, du Tourisme, de l'Habillement et des Travailleurs des Ambassades et du Personnel de Maison (SYNIATHA)

### Niger

Syndicat National Autonome des Travailleurs des Eaux et Forêts (SNATEF)  
Syndicat National des Agents de l'Agriculture du Niger (SNAAN)  
Syndicat National des Travailleurs de Hôtels, Bar Restaurants et Assimilés (SYNTHOBRA)  
Syndicat National des Travailleurs de l'Industrie du Niger (SNTIN)  
Syndicat Unique du Personnel des Ressources Animaux (SUPRA)

### Sénégal

Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de l'Agriculture (SATAG),  
Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de l'Agroindustrie Alimentaire (SATAGRIAS)  
Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de l'Hôtellerie, de la Restauration et Branches Connexes (SATHR)  
Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de Nestlé Sénégal (SATS-UNSAS)  
Syndicat Autonome et Démocratique des Travailleurs des Industries Alimentaires (SYNADTRIA)  
Syndicat National des Travailleurs des Industries Alimentaires (SNTA-CNTS)

### Togo

Syndicats des Travailleurs des Entreprises de Boissons (SYNTEB)  
Syndicat des Industries Agro – Alimentaires du Togo (SYNIAT)  
Syndicat Libre des Employés de l'Industrie Touristique du Togo (SYLEITTO)



## Useful Resources

### **'All for One = One for All'**

#### **A Gender Equality Guide for Trade Unionists in the Agriculture, Food, Hotel and Catering Sectors'**

IUF, June 2007

English: [http://www.iuf.org/women/2008/02/iuf\\_gender\\_equality\\_guide.html](http://www.iuf.org/women/2008/02/iuf_gender_equality_guide.html)

For French and other language versions, please contact the IUF at national, regional or global level.

### **'Guide for the Establishment of the Programme on Occupational Safety and Health for Working Women in French speaking West Africa'**

by Dr T. Kalhoulé, HSE expert of the ILO Sub-Regional Office for the Sahel Region, in collaboration with the IUF Africa Regional Women's Project, December 2010

Available in French and English.

See **Adwoa Sakyi, Coordinator of the IUF Africa Regional Women's Project**, talking about her work as Gender Officer of the General Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) in a short video, at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Im9Ak7nNM1c>

[www.iuf.org/women](http://www.iuf.org/women) for news and interviews about the achievements of women trade unionists in IUF affiliated unions across the world.

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## About the IUF

The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) is an international federation of trade unions representing workers employed in

- agriculture and plantations
- the preparation and manufacture of food and beverages
- hotels, restaurants and catering services
- all stages of tobacco processing

The IUF is currently composed of 336 trade unions in 120 countries representing over 12 million workers.



**WOMEN'S  
CONFERENCE**  
Geneva, 12-13 May 2012

**FRAUEN-  
KONFERENZ**  
Genf, 12.-13. Mai 2012

**CONFERENCIA  
DE LA MUJER**  
Ginebra, 12-13 Mayo 2012

**CONFÉRENCE  
DES FEMMES**  
Genève, 12-13 Mai 2012

**KVINNO-  
KONFERENS**  
Genève, 12-13 Maj 2012