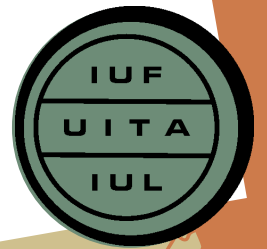


Safe farms, safe workers, safe communities



Improving occupational health, safety and environmental standards on plantations and farms in Africa



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IUF African OHSE National Project Coordinators:

Ethiopia	NFFPFATU	Gebeyehu Adugna
Kenya	KUSPAW	Ndete Amunabi
Malawi	TOAWUM	Raphael Sandramu
Nigeria	AAEUN	Esther Timothy Cookey
Zambia	NUPAAW	Kunda Mutebele

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Safe farms, safe workers, safe communities

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“We joined the IUF projects in 1998. Previously there were strikes every year. But we developed the union and taught the workers, and this reduced the strikes and produced round-table dialogue with management. But we still have a big problem with casualisation. Health and safety cannot be observed if the basic rights of workers are not observed.”

Joram B. Pejobo, General Secretary, National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers of Uganda (NUPAWU)

“The best achievements of our federation regarding OHSE include:

- Workers, especially in the horticulture sector, have got high awareness about chemicals and keep themselves from hazards; they know how and why to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Workers are more aware about national laws and ILO standards on employment.
- Women’s Committees are established on each of the farms for the rights of women workers.
- Trade unions’ bargaining ability is increased, as workers’ rights are better respected.”

Gebeyehu Adugna, OHSE Project National Coordinator and President, National Federation of Farm, Plantation, Fishery and Agro-industry Trade Unions (NFFPFATU), Ethiopia

“OSHE is a tool to organise workers. That’s what I can add.”

Christine Nansubuga, National Treasurer, National Union of Cooperative Movement and Allied Workers (NUCMAW), Uganda





Introduction

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services.”

United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25

“Agriculture is one of the most hazardous of all economic sectors and many agricultural workers suffer occupational accidents and ill health each year. It is also the largest sector for female employment in many countries, especially in Africa and Asia... and accounts for approximately 70 per cent of child labour worldwide.”

International Labour Organisation (ILO), SAFEWORK

- The International Labour Organisation (ILO) says that at least 170,000 agricultural workers across the world are killed at work each year.
- 40,000 of these deaths are due to pesticide poisoning alone.
- Workers in agriculture run twice the risk of dying on the job compared to workers in other sectors.
- Millions more are seriously injured in workplace accidents involving agricultural machinery or are poisoned by chemicals.
- Agriculture is also one of the main locations of child labour in the world, because of the poverty faced by rural communities.

ILO

170,000
agricultural
workers across
the world are
killed at work
each year.

Yet only about 5% of the world's agricultural workers have access to any form of labour inspection or legal protection of their health and safety rights. In most countries only some types of agricultural workers are covered by national legislation, employment injury benefits or insurance schemes. Far too many are employed on a casual basis, which allows their employers to sidestep their legal responsibilities to their workforces. Where national regulations do exist, governments do not put in enough resources to make sure they are properly applied. So, many agricultural workers are deprived of any form of social protection. They and their communities must absorb the impact of these hazards as best they can.

As well as the health and safety problems faced by the workers, agriculture and horticulture have a major influence on the wider environment, particularly from the use of chemicals, the management of wastes, and the transport systems that move the goods, often to far away places. Chemical wastes that are poorly managed can stay in the ground or run off into local streams, leaving long-term pollution of the earth and water. When all the processing, transport, packaging, waste, etc. are taken into account, the global food system is responsible for about a half (40-57%) of all greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions are the cause of the climate change that is bringing extreme weather, which is in turn affecting agricultural production and rural communities.

So, the global food industry plays a big role in questions of world food security and climate change. Workers and their unions in these sectors have a duty and a role to promote responsible practices, not only for the health and safety of themselves and their communities, but for the safe and healthy management of the planet too.

This is why the global union federation for the food and agriculture sector, the IUF, places an emphasis on Occupational Health, Safety and the Environment (OHSE) as a key part of its activities with trade unions across the world.

Organise,



The IUF and its approach to OHS + Environment

“The IUF recognises that the right to a safe and healthy working and living environment is a human right. For farm and plantation workers and their communities this is particularly crucial, because theirs is one of the most dangerous sectors in the world. But their well-being is also vital to a sustainable food system for us all.

For unions, taking these issues up makes sense to the workers concerned, and it can contribute massively to building their membership. We are very pleased at the progress made by some of our affiliated unions in Africa in these ways. Now our aim is to spread these successes to more unions in more countries.”

Ron Oswald, General Secretary, IUF

The IUF was founded in 1920 and today 394 trade unions in 126 countries belong to it, representing over 12 million workers worldwide in agriculture, food processing, hotels and catering. The IUF builds solidarity at every stage of the food chain, to defend human, democratic and trade union rights, from ‘plough to plate’.

The IUF has long been promoting workplace occupational health and safety issues among its affiliated unions, particularly in agriculture and horticulture because these are among the most dangerous industries for the workers involved. Now climate change is causing more rural areas to experience prolonged droughts or floods. Crops fail and communities suffer loss of food and income. The local ecology is also being affected by agro-chemicals which damage the land, water or living organisms including insects which are vital to pollination. Global food security and the health and safety of agricultural workers and their communities are inextricably linked.

To help support awareness-raising and activities on these issues among workers themselves, the IUF runs special projects with its affiliated unions. In recent years, these have included its Global Pesticides Project (GPP), the Roving Safety Reps (RSR) Project, and the one that is the focus of this booklet, the African Regional Occupational Health, Safety and Environment (OHSE) Project.

The IUF also makes sure that OHSE issues are integrated into its other activities, such as its Global Sugar Project (GSP), Cut Flowers Project, the IUF African Regional Women’s Project and the Education and Organising Project including HSE in French-speaking West Africa

The IUF works hard to make sure that all these projects work together so as to strengthen their presence individually and as a whole. Across the Africa region, for example, they come together in joint meetings of the IUF Team Africa Synergies, involving each other in their activities (**see more on pages 7-8**).

Despite the big challenges faced by trade unions, such projects do make progress. Where workers and unions put in the effort needed in the right kinds of ways, they bring about positive changes. They can make workplaces safer for the workforces. They can also reduce any negative impacts from those workplaces on the wider community and the environment in which we live. Plus they gain union membership and strength. This is what this booklet shows.

Fight and Win!





Uganda: 'Positive and tangible results'

The National Union of Plantation and Allied Workers of Uganda (NUPAWU) was one of the first unions in East Africa to get IUF support on OHSE issues. Here, Joyce Tumwesiga, NUPAWU's Director of Education and Training, speaks of what it brought to workers and the union there. Having benefited from the IUF African OHSE project in its early stages, NUPAWU then felt able to carry on these activities by itself so that the Project could be extended to other countries (see page 9).



"Support from the IUF produced positive and tangible results for our union NUPAWU. Generally, there are improved health, safety and environment conditions at workplaces. More workers are provided with PPEs and there is safer use of chemicals. Cases of accidents and sexual harassment are reduced. Also there is better management of industrial residues, and better medical facilities, among others.

Through the IUF, we had several trainings of trainers, both at national and branch levels. Some of these trainers are still on the ground, still carrying out sensitisation of workers. Awareness-raising on OHS, especially through campaigns, drama and field visits, has attracted more workers to join the union, which has of course expanded the union's financial base. We have learnt that OHS has to be brought into all activities, including initial recruitment as well as routine union education.

We now have OHS representatives/committees at the workplace level in many companies, as well as at branch and national level of NUPAWU. These structures carry out workplace inspections to assess the hazards and risks and work towards their prevention, control and eventual elimination. However, we still need to establish more committees in more workplaces.

In some companies, management has come to understand better that it is not just a 'cost' to the company, but that OHS is its concern, and it has recruited OHS officers at the workplace to work hand-in-hand with the union and offer guidance on OHS issues. There are now a number of Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) with provisions that encourage health and safety promotion in workplaces. In some other enterprises, though, the OHS policies have been developed by management alone. We need to push more of them to involve the union.

We are also involved in the IUF African Women's Project, which includes OHS and how it affects women. Now, at least one-third of those on OHS Committees are women - in a committee of five members, two must be women. All committees must be composed like this.

NUPAWU is sincerely grateful to the IUF for its endless support towards the trade unions in their struggle to promote the rights and interests of workers in the agricultural sector."

Joyce Tumwesiga, Director of Education and Training, NUPAWU, Uganda



"We have learnt that OHS has to be brought into all activities, including initial recruitment as well as routine union education."

About the African OHSE projects



Those who work in agriculture and horticulture face a wide range of hazards. They may be using dangerous machinery. They can be exposed to diseases transmitted by livestock, or to toxic pesticides. They are rarely provided with adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Women workers are especially at risk because they are often employed on a part-time or casual basis, and receive less training. They face reproductive hazards, including spontaneous abortion, as a result of exposure to pesticides. Those working on horticulture export farms often do repetitive work, which can result in musculoskeletal problems. Sexual harassment is also a serious OHS risk for women workers.

In some parts of the world, particularly in Africa, HIV/AIDS is devastating the agricultural workforce. The disease not only affects individual workers and their families but also results in a loss of productivity, undermining farms and plantations, the economy, and food sustainability. It is therefore a workplace issue.

Meanwhile, agriculture is a difficult sector to establish and maintain strong unions. Organisers have to cover large areas to recruit and retain members. At the same time, low paid agricultural workers cannot provide a lot of resources for union activities. On top of this, many employers are anti-union, getting rid of union activists where they can.

And yet, as this booklet shows, unions which take up these issues and reach out to rural workers to raise their awareness and capacity, strengthen not just the capacities of the workers concerned but also the union as a whole.

IUF OHSE activities gather pace

The agriculture and plantation workers' unions of Africa have received international support for their OHSE activities for many years. At first, it was largely through a global union federation called the International Federation of Plantation and Allied Workers (IFPAAW), in particular from the Swedish Agricultural Workers' Union. In 1994, the IFPAAW merged with the global foodworkers' union IUF, and by the late 1990s IUF activities on OHSE in Africa gathered pace, with these aims:

- To build the capacity of IUF affiliated unions in Africa to promote safety and health in their workplaces, including building health and safety structures in the unions which will continue long after the project has ended.
- To improve the health, safety and environmental conditions in workplaces through education and training of union members, in ways that also increase their wider interest and activism in the unions.
- To strengthen collaboration between IUF affiliates within and across borders, encouraging each other, and building the IUF presence in the Africa region as a whole.

These aims have been the focus of various projects run by the IUF in Africa since then – some on particular sectors such as the sugar industry and the cut flowers industry, others on particular aspects such as hazardous chemicals and developing more union safety representatives, and another on gender equality (see pages 7-8).



Key hazards for workers in agriculture and horticulture

- **Chemical:** many pesticides, fungicides, fertilisers and cleaning substances are toxic; some can cause immediate effects like skin rashes or blindness; long-term exposure to even small amounts can lead to impotency or miscarriage, cancer, or damage to vital organs like the heart and lungs.
- **Physical/ergonomic:** farms and plantations are full of hazardous machinery, tools, and electrical installations; many workers are exposed to high noise, constant vibration, poor lighting, slippery floors or debris; many are made to stand or bend for long hours, or lift heavy loads without proper equipment; this can lead to muscular or skeletal damage.
- **Biological:** long exposure to extremely high temperatures in greenhouses can cause fatigue, dehydration which can lead to impotency in men, or heat stroke which can lead to death if untreated; extremely low temperatures in cold storage rooms can lead to pneumonia, asthma, numbness and impotency; long working hours can lead to fatigue, dizziness, headaches, or more accidents at work.
- **Psychological:** stress can come from long hours, isolated work, night work, casual labour, or bullying and sexual harassment.



Key environmental hazards from agriculture and horticulture

- **Pollution from chemicals:** pesticides and fertilisers run off into the local soil, water, and air, often endangering their quality for humans, animals and plant-life; the burning of empty pesticide containers releases toxic chemicals into the air; some agricultural chemicals are now banned internationally because they give off vapours which destroy ozone in the upper atmosphere, adding to climate change.
- **Waste products** such as plastics and metals, if not properly disposed of, take decades to degrade, leaving residues in the soil and water.
- **Excessive use of water** by some horticultural farms may be adding to droughts.
- **Emissions from energy** used in production and transport, including cold storage and fuel for trucks and airplanes, are contributing to climate change.
- **Deforestation** to create more farms and plantations is also contributing to climate change.



the global food system is responsible for about **40-57%** of all greenhouse gas emissions



Tens of thousands of agricultural workers die each year and many more fall ill after contamination from toxic chemicals.

● Global Pesticides Project (GPP)

The IUF's 23rd global Congress in 1997 decided to focus on pesticides. Tens of thousands of agricultural workers die each year and many more fall ill after contamination from toxic chemicals. Pesticides have a huge impact on public health and the wider environment. The GPP quickly got going with IUF affiliated unions across the world, and it proved to be the backbone for much of the OHSE work that then developed within the IUF.

In Africa, the first unions to be involved were IUF affiliates in Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, Zimbabwe soon had to drop out because of the political situation there. Over the next few years, Malawi, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Kenya also joined in. The successes of the GPP there were also taken to French-speaking West Africa, to unions in Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso and Bénin, in collaboration with the ILO and Sustainlabour (International Labour Foundation for Sustainable Development).

The GPP targets grassroots union members, shop stewards and branch officials. It uses the study circles method (see pages 16-18) to bring out the key issues, and to train them to train others to spread knowledge and activism. They learn more about how to prevent exposure to pesticides, what alternative pest control measures exist, and how to build union policy and action at all levels to lobby governments and negotiate with management on these vital issues.

At international as well as regional level, the GPP is active alongside non-governmental organisations, for example campaigning with the Pesticides Action Network (PAN) and the Berne Declaration to ban the toxic herbicide Paraquat. It also collaborates with intergovernmental bodies such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (see Section 4).

For more information

'Manuel de Formation sur les Pesticides', IUF, ILO and Sustainlabour, 2010, a training manual on pesticides, in French:

http://www.sustainlabour.org/documentos/fra34_2011.pdf



● Global Sugar Project (GSP)

This is another of the IUF's global projects, running with unions in the sugar growing/production industry across the world since 2007. In Africa, it involves SPAWUM in Malawi, KUSPAW in Kenya, NUPAWU in Uganda, and NUPAAW in Zambia, as well as other IUF affiliates in South Africa, Tanzania, Swaziland, and Mozambique. With OHS one of its key focuses, there has been considerable overlap and collaboration with the IUF African OHSE Project. In Kenya, for example, the GSP has assisted KUSPAW members to do research on OSH at their workplaces, to know how to find relevant information from the Internet, and develop union policy. KUSPAW activists write about their progress on the GSP website.

For more information

www.iuf.org/sugarworkers

'Occupational Health and Safety in the Sugar Industry of Kenya', IUF and KUSPAW, August 2012:

<http://www.iuf.org/sugarworkers/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/IUFSugar-KenyaOHS-Activities-August2012.pdf>





● Roving Safety Reps

The Roving Safety Representatives (RSR) is a model developed in Sweden (**see page 13**). There, RSRs are appointed by local union branches to look after the health and safety interests of workers in small and medium-sized workplaces where there is no workplace OHS representative.

Since 2009, the IUF has been piloting a RSR project in South Africa. At first, there was resistance from many farmers, but by 2010 the SA Government agreed to help roll out the scheme across the country. The Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) and the National Union of Food, Beverages, Wine, Spirits and Allied Workers (NUFBWSAW) have been working with government technical officers to train RSRs and raise awareness among farm workers, landowners and local government officials. The RSRs are now carrying out checks on farms in a number of provinces. South African farm workers are becoming more aware of their rights and also their responsibilities to help improve OHSE standards. Some farms have become unionised where they were not before.

The plan is to pass the lessons learned on to other countries in Africa and elsewhere. As a result of IUF involvement in negotiations at the ILO, the RSR system was included in the ILO Code of Practice in Safety and Health in Agriculture agreed in 2010 (**see page 30**).



For more information

RSR Education Manual, 2008:

<http://www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/2008%20RSR%20Education%20Manual.pdf>



● Cut Flowers Project

The IUF Cut Flowers Project ran from 2008-2012, in Latin America as well as East/Southern Africa. Its focus was on the rights of women who work on the horticultural farms that produce cut flowers for export. There, workers work long hours in hot greenhouses or in cold storage rooms. Many chemicals are used, from pesticides to cleaning materials, leading to human health problems as well as contamination of local water systems. Many workers also face sexual harassment. The IUF saw a big need to develop company codes of conduct in this growing industry, based on international ILO employment standards rather than simply the companies' own self-proclaimed statements. Out of the project, a training manual for shopstewards was developed for use on the farms.



For more information

'Improving Working Conditions in the Cut Flower Industry: A Trade Union Training Manual', IUF/FIAN/FES, 2001:

<http://www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/2001%20Improving%20working%20conditions%20in%20the%20cutflower%20industry.pdf>

● Poverty Reduction and the Promotion of Democracy

Supported by the 3F union federation of Denmark, this new project is building capacity among IUF affiliated unions in Southern Africa to take a stronger role in helping to reduce poverty and promote democracy in their countries.

IUF OHSE Project in Africa

To build on its existing OHSE activities in Africa, the IUF started a new project Global Strategies in Health and Safety in 2006. The aim was to broaden out to a wider set of OHSE issues and activities, and to more unions in more countries, supporting them to become stronger in handling OHSE issues and in building their membership and energy.

A key aim of all IUF projects is to support individual unions well enough so that they become able to continue their activities without special support. So, for example, two unions in Uganda – the National Union of Plantation and Allied Workers of Uganda (NUPAWU) and the National Union of Cooperative Movement and Allied Workers (NUCMAW) – which had been part of the GPP from 1998 (see page 4) were able to continue on their own. This meant the work could move on other unions in the region such as Zambia, joining Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria and Kenya.

So, the unions taking part in the project from 2006 to 2012 were:

Ethiopia	National Federation of Farm, Plantation, Fishery and Agro-industry Trade Unions (NFFPFATU)
Kenya	Kenya Union of Sugar Plantation Agricultural Workers (KUSPAW)
Malawi	Sugar Plantation and Allied Workers' Union of Malawi (SPAWUM)
Malawi	Plantation, Agriculture and Allied Workers' Union of Malawi (PAWUM)
Malawi	Tobacco and Allied Workers' Union of Malawi (TOAWUM)
Nigeria	Agriculture and Allied Employees' Union of Nigeria (AAEUN)
Zambia	National Union of Plantation, Agriculture and Allied Workers (NUPAAW)

It is worth noting that union structures vary a lot between countries. The AAEUN in Nigeria, NUPAAW in Zambia, and PAWUM in Malawi cover workers in numerous companies, in various agricultural and horticultural sectors. By contrast, SPAWUM in Malawi and KUSPAW in Kenya are only in the sugar industry, and TOAWUM in Malawi is only in tobacco. Meanwhile, in Ethiopia, NFFPFATU is a federation of some 200 unions, based in various companies, in various sectors, though the limited budget meant that the project could only focus on horticultural farms. The Project had to be sensitive to the different ways in which each participating union works.

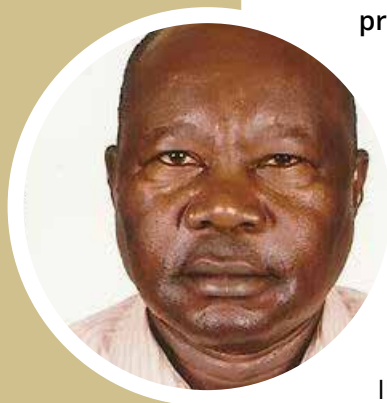
Also, of course, there were different political contexts for the unions in each country. For example, in Nigeria there was the ongoing instability arising out of the conflict between Islamist groups and the government in parts of the country. In Kenya, there was significant civil unrest in 2011. Another factor was internal conflict within some unions, such as within SPAWUM in Malawi that same year, which sometimes led to a change of union leadership.



Coordinating the African OHSE Project

“Despite being at different stages of trade union organisational development, membership strength, gender disparity, and experience in project management, I am very pleased to say that all the unions have now mainstreamed health and safety into their activities.”

Omara Amuko, IUF African Regional OHSE Project Coordinator



At the Africa regional level, guiding all the participating unions was the IUF African OHSE Project Coordinator, Omara Amuko. He is from Uganda, where he had been the Education and Organising Officer for the National Union of Plantation and Allied Workers (NUPAWU). In that role, he had developed a strong focus on OHSE and pesticides through the Global Pesticides Project (**see page 7**). Today, he is also the IUF Global Health, Safety and Environment Coordinator.

To get the IUF African OHSE Project underway, it was his job to meet with the General Secretaries and other officials of each participating union, and encourage them to be involved. Once they had appointed their own National Project Coordinators (**see opposite**), he continued his support with technical information and advice. He helped adapt training materials to their union members' specific needs, gave them guidance on how to respond to particular OHSE problems being faced, and more. He was also able to add in his knowledge and experience from his activities at the global level, for example in bodies of the United Nations (**see page 32**).

He also liaised with other IUF programmes in the Africa region (**see pages 7-8**), to maximise cross-fertilisation. He also made sure that links were kept up with unions in the Global Pesticides Project, such as those in Uganda, Tanzania and Ghana. He worked with the Women's Project on women workers' involvement, particularly in issues such as HIV/AIDS and the impact of pesticides. He interfaced with the Global Sugar Project which was also active on OHSE issues with the sugar workers' unions of the region.

It was important to ensure good evaluation processes and regular reporting for the project, so that the project could develop well, and the unions be accountable to their members. He made sure there were regular evaluation meetings by each participating union, which he also attended. Plus there were annual evaluation project meetings, attended also by representatives of the Swedish unions supporting the project (**see page 13**).

Sometimes there were hold-ups in project implementation caused by changes in union leadership or National Project Coordinators, or union restructuring/mergers. For example, on the Dwanga sugar estate run by Illovo in Malawi, one Coordinator got promoted to head the company's Health and Safety Department, and his replacement in the Project was sacked. So the African OHSE Project Coordinator had to respond flexibly to each situation to keep the project alive. In the end, no country dropped out due to poor implementation. No-one had to be suspended.

National OHSE Project Coordinators

Gebeyehu Adugna, Ethiopia

Kunda Mutebele, Zambia

Raphael Sandramu, Malawi

Ndete Amunabi, Kenya

Esther Timothy Cooney, Nigeria

So that as much as possible could be achieved within all the varying situations in the different countries, each country had its own National Project Coordinator. It was that Coordinator's task to liaise closely with the Executive Committee and General Secretary of his/her own national union and of other appropriate unions in the country, as well as with the African Regional Project Coordinator (**see opposite**), to whom they had to report on their activities.

Their job was to get more emphasis on OHSE throughout the unions, and to organise activities on the ground, with the workers. They reached out to workplaces to identify people who might become Study Circle Leaders and organised training for them. Those Leaders then returned to their own farms and plantations to stimulate and train more workers (**see pages 16-18**).

Another key area of the Coordinators' work was to help adapt awareness-raising and training materials, in local languages and on topics relevant to the workers concerned.

The Coordinators also provided ongoing technical advice and support to set up or strengthen OHSE workplace committees, to develop better OHSE reporting systems, and to include OHSE issues in Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) (**see Section 5**). They supported the union to lobby government on improving OHSE laws, particularly to ratify important international standards (**see Section 4**), and to do public awareness campaigning on these issues.

The funding that each union received for this work was not large, and it is a measure of their commitment that so much was achieved with relatively small amounts. The pay-back was a growing union membership (**see page 44**) and, with that, increasing income from membership dues and more energy to make progress in protecting workers and their communities.



< Inadequate protection like this is what the unions are fighting.





The OHSE project coordinators and other members of Team Africa welcome the IUF's new campaign on safe working conditions for hotel housekeepers. Agricultural and hotel workers face similar OHS problems, including exposure to chemicals, lifting heavy objects, repetitive strain injuries, and sexual harassment.

Make Up My Workplace: Dignity for Hotel Housekeepers:

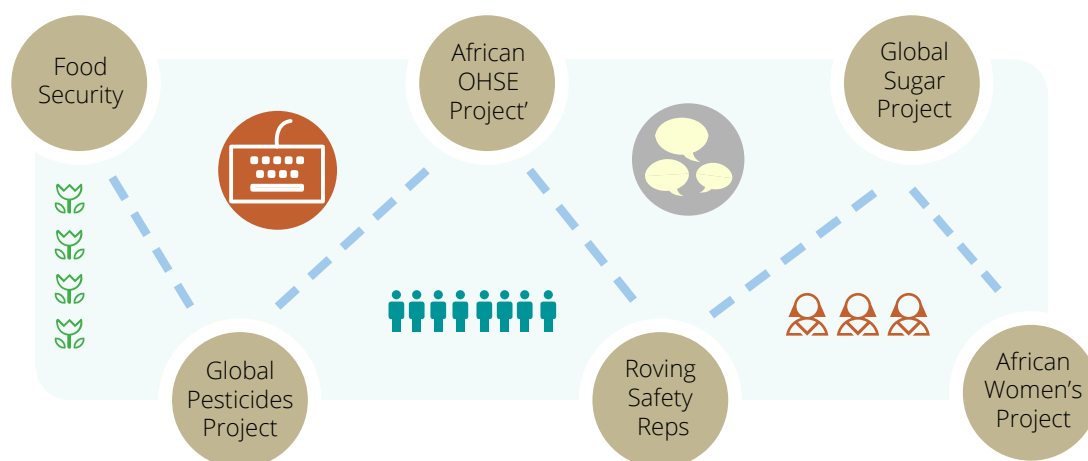
<http://www.iuf.org/show.php?lang=en&tid=221>



IUF Team Africa Synergies

To get as much cross-fertilisation as possible between all the various IUF projects running in Africa (see pages 7-8), and build the common knowledge-base and mobilisation of its affiliates there, the IUF in the region has what it calls the 'IUF Team Africa Synergies'.

Regular meetings are held involving the Regional Coordinators of the various projects, and they also keep in touch via email and other social media. They support each other with joint visits to affiliated unions, holding meetings with union leaders, running briefings and seminars, and so on. All this has helped to inform the OHSE Project in the region, and vice versa.



And beyond Africa

Being part of a global trade union, there is also a lot of sharing of information, strategies and lessons learned across the structures of the IUF, particularly between its regional offices, via the Internet, conferences and, where funding is available, joint workshops.

Swedish unions support the projects

The African OHSE Project and other IUF projects in Africa have long been supported in particular by the Swedish trade unions. The Swedish Agricultural Workers' Union (SLF) was founded in 1908, and just four years later it was part of a union movement that won a law in Sweden giving workers in any workplace where there are at least five employees the right to appoint their own health and safety representatives.

Over the years, the Swedish unions developed good OHS structures and practices, including the Regional Safety Representatives (RSR) system for small and medium-sized workplaces (see page 8). They also developed and promoted the study circles method of learning (see pages 16-18). In 2002, the Agricultural Workers' Union merged into the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union Kommunal, which today has over half a million members, mostly in the public sector.

The Swedish Agricultural Workers' Union was also very active at the international level, giving support to many OHSE projects among farm and plantation workers across the world. Its then National Officer Sven-Erik Pettersson, a man with great expertise in pesticides, provided a lot of training and information to help the African OHSE Project get off the ground. After the merger, Kommunal was happy to continue with this work.

For many years, Kommunal (and the SLF before it) had turned to the Swedish trade union solidarity support organisation, the LO-TCO Secretariat for Development Cooperation, to provide financial support for OHSE activities. Now for the OHSE Project in Africa these union bodies were able to get additional funding from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), a government body funded by Swedish tax-payers' money. Kommunal added in from its own resources, and supported the project with technical information and advice. Its representatives – including Anja Westberg, who is also Vice-President of the IUF Agricultural Group - attended project evaluation workshops and paid visits to project sites such as cut flower farms in Ethiopia and a sugar processing mill in Uganda, adding in to the discussions about how the project could best develop.

"In the project, we used our experience from Sweden where we fought hard to remove hazardous pesticides, and even managed to influence policy in the European Union. Persevering union work does produce results. Improving health and safety standards in agriculture not only benefits agricultural workers. Their families, especially children, are vulnerable to ill health from, among other things, exposure to pesticides. The agricultural workplace has a major impact upon public health, food quality and safety, and the general environment. I'm very impressed by the excellent work done in the project. With limited resources, the committed trade union representatives have achieved significant results."

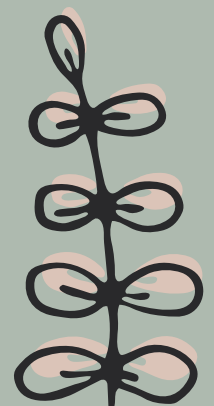
Anja Westberg, National Officer for Working Life Development, Kommunal, Sweden.

"Development cooperation is an integral part of our unions' commitment to global solidarity. It's not just trade unions in the global south that benefit from our partnership. We do too. We learn a lot about the experiences of trade unions in other countries and spread that knowledge in our own local work in Sweden. What stands out the most is the dedication and bravery of trade unionists who, despite obstacles such as gaps in laws and regulations and hostile employers, still manage to gain success."

Kristina Olsson, International Secretary, Kommunal, Sweden



"We benefit from the partnership too."



What the IUF African OHSE Project achieved

Briefly, unions involved in the African OHSE Project are saying that this is what they have achieved, and as explained in the pages that follow:

- More awareness about OHSE issues among workers and in their unions, and more desire to take action to prevent/avoid risks and report problems
- Better use of PPE, machinery handling, etc., meaning that more accidents/hazards are avoided
- More/better facilities such as workplace toilets and clinics
- OHSE is now recognised as a union organising tool, and has become a union priority at all levels, mainstreamed into the structures
- Significant numbers of workers have been motivated to join the union at their workplace, particularly women workers
- Many more union activists have received training in OHSE issues, and in how to train other workers through workplace Study Circles
- More/better OHSE union committees and elected OHSE workplace representatives, with greater involvement of women workers
- Better recording/reporting of risks and accidents, and the use of this information to prevent more happening
- More/better integration of OHSE into union education programmes; better skills and knowledge passed on at the shopfloor level and in union structures at all levels
- Improvements in union recognition agreements and CBAs
- Union leaders at national level are more aware and knowledgeable about OHSE and are being involved by government as a stakeholder
- Improvements in national laws and regulations relating to OHSE
- Stronger inter-union collaboration at a regional and international level
- Better understanding of the work of international bodies such as the ILO and FAO, as well as NGOs, and the information and support that they can provide.

Next stages



For those unions which have already taken part in the project, the aim is that they will continue to build on their OHSE activities.

Hopefully this has not been just an 'added extra', taken up while there is a special project with extra funding and then dropped, but instead truly integrated into the union day-to-day activities. Some unions involved in the early years of the project have achieved this, showing the way for others (**see page 4**).

As this booklet was being written, the project was being extended to unions in Cameroon and Liberia. A key aim of this booklet is to help inform them and others in Africa and elsewhere about the challenges faced and lessons learnt by their union brothers and sisters in the African OHSE Project so far.

Also, the emphasis of the project is now on better data collection. This will give unions, companies and governments more solid evidence of the workplace accidents and illnesses that urgently need addressing.

How they built knowledge and activism



“Any improvements in OHSE standards and the building of a preventative culture start at the workplace, among grassroots membership. If a worker does not wear PPE, it means he or she has not captured the culture of ‘prevention is better than cure’.

The question is: how to make sure people know that safety is important and so will do it voluntarily. They should be demanding it.”

Omara Amuko, IUF African OHSE Project Coordinator

The best way to achieve a safe and healthy workplace is for the workers themselves to understand the risks, to know what the solutions might be – or where to find this information - and to have the strength and determination to achieve the necessary improvements, collaborating with management wherever possible, but fighting for it where management resists.

Throughout, the IUF African OHSE Project has emphasised this ‘attitude change’. The overall aim has been to develop a preventative health and safety culture among the workers and their unions.

“Building capacity is the key, so that people can know the problems, and stand up to find solutions.”

Joram B. Pejobo, General Secretary, National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers of Uganda (NUPAWU)



Raising awareness about OHSE issues

One of the main difficulties that the project faced – and was determined to overcome – is the very low level of awareness about OHSE hazards that generally exists among agriculture and horticulture workers across Africa. Raising their awareness of the risks that they face, and how they and their trade union can help find the solutions to these problems, was vital. The unions also wanted and needed to build greater public awareness, not least because these issues affect wider questions of pollution and food security.

To kick-start the process, some unions found it useful to distribute leaflets and posters. T-shirts are another common way of alerting workers and the wider public. So too is getting onto radio or even TV, if possible. In Uganda, they found drama a good way to build public support and raise awareness for better OHS laws.

“We write up a theme, such as the effects of chemicals on expectant mothers, or the role of OHS Committees, and work with a team of actors to develop a play. This is then shown to a wide range of people - workers, employers, politicians and local communities. Shows for the workers are usually staged over the weekends, when they are free, as well as on public holidays and days like Labour Day (1st May) and International Women’s Day (8th March).”

Joyce Tumwesiga, Director of Education and Training, NUPAWU, Uganda.

Other unions in the project have also used International Days to organise demonstrations, public meetings, and so on (see page 34).





Involvement
of workers in
discussions
encourages
their activism.

Training via Study Circles

The African OHSE National Project Coordinators also took a more strategic approach to education, so that grassroots workers would become involved and willing to take action themselves, not simply leave it to those higher up in the union. They also wanted the Project not just used to solve a few immediate problems, but to become embedded in long-term union strategies.

Study circles, used in workers' education around the world for many decades, are a key method of doing this. They are very valuable for workers who have little previous experience of unionism, and indeed for those with little formal education. The Project proved a good opportunity to expose more unionists to this democratic way of learning.

Typically, workers are invited to come together in small groups of 5-10, on a regular basis. There, a trained Leader brings information which may be new to them, but also encourages them to decide on the issues they wish to discuss, and makes sure that everyone can participate. They share experiences in a spirit of respect and tolerance towards different opinions, and develop a sense of solidarity. They are encouraged to develop a common plan of action.

Involvement of workers in discussions encourages their activism. It shows that others are listening and taking their concerns seriously. It builds their awareness and their confidence to take action. Study circles at the workplace are also a good way for unions to keep in touch more regularly with their members, rather than just one-off training, perhaps held in a location far away from where the workers are. The union is more visible. It shows itself to be prepared to come to its members, to be willing to take up the concerns they express. Such an approach can really strengthen unions.

African unions have long been using this method of education, trained in particular with the support of the Swedish unions and other IUF projects. The African OHSE Project was able to draw on this, and the unions involved have trained new cohorts of Study Circle Leaders from different workplaces, as well as union branch officials. These Study Circle Leaders then return to their own workplaces and hold study circles for workers and union shopstewards there. They run sessions in other workplaces too, and hold training sessions for local branch union officials.

Study circles help everyone to assess the particular OHSE risks faced, and what can and should be done about them. The workers are encouraged to know their legal rights, and what management should be doing. Energy is mobilised to elect OHSE representatives and organise workplace OHSE Committees to gather more reliable data about the hazards and negotiate with management. This feeds into more union policy and action at branch and national level, including what needs to be taken up with government. Meanwhile, the Regional and National Project Coordinators (**see pages 10-11**) keep in contact and feed in up-to-date information and ideas.

Kenya

The KUSPAW union reports that the sugar producing company Mumias has given special uniforms to the Study Circle Leaders, so that the workers can easily identify them as 'safety educators'.

“Study circles are a way of reaching out to more workers. They are done in working hours and in the workplaces, not separately. At first, we do short sessions of 5 minutes with small groups. We give them information and ask about the problems they are facing. It builds their confidence, and makes them speak out and become more involved in the union. Then, in some places, such as York Farm (see below), we do bigger groups for 45 minutes after lunch. Topics include the chemicals being used at the workplace, accidents that have happened, and any illnesses the workers are experiencing that might be workplace related.”

Kunda Mutebele, Project Coordinator, National Union of Plantation, Agriculture and Allied Workers (NUPAAW), Zambia

Zambia

Marvis Mwansa is a supervisor in the vegetables production section at York Farm, outside the capital city Lusaka. They grow flowers and vegetables for export. She has worked there for some 13 years. Marvis is also a Study Circle Leader and Peer Educator there, trained by NUPAAW.

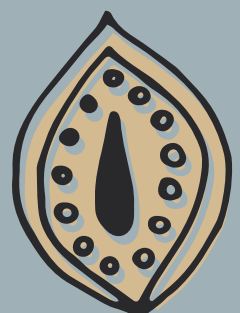
Study Circle sessions are held at lunchtime twice a week: on Thursdays with those working in the roses section, and on Fridays with those working in the vegetable fields, the harvesters, weeders, etc. Each time there are some 30-60 workers present, she says.

“Things have improved a lot”, Marvis reports. “Before, the workers were not aware of the dangers of chemicals. Now, if they see others spraying nearby, they shout out, ‘Please stop spraying! We are working here’. They know about the need to wear PPE, and are aware of their rights.

Also they are more assertive. If there is any sexual or physical harassment or bad language, they know to report it to Human Resources. Disciplinary action will be taken, according to the CBA, and the offender may lose their job. The case may even be reported to the police. The Gender-Based Violence Act is very powerful, and is very much being used.

Through this process, we have learnt much more about unions, and also we have acquired more skills. It has helped us a lot. Even the employers have become more open. We share with them what is happening at the farm, and they see the benefit. One challenge, though, is that an hour is too short to discuss such interesting topics with the workers. We have asked management for more time, but so far they are only saying, ‘We will look into it’.

York Farm adopted an HIV/AIDS workplace policy in 2008, currently being revised. As well as having trained HIV/AIDS Peer Educators, they commemorate World Aids Day on 1 December on the farm, with a march, drama and other activities. They also invite a Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) group to come and do testing for the workers.





3 | HOW THEY BUILT KNOWLEDGE AND ACTIVISM

Malawi

The unions there say they have very much benefited from using the study circles method. To kick start the process, they were able to draw on Study Circle Leaders trained through their own national union centre, the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions.

Among them was the OHSE National Project Coordinator Raphael Sandramu. His first step was to get branch, district and regional leaders in the project unions to identify people to be trained, and then he organised a series of Study Circle Leaders Courses. In the end, well over 500 people got this training, nearly 300 of them women workers. The courses gave them the knowledge and skills to set up and lead more study circles on the farms and estates where they work. For example, the Leaders trained in 2013 held some 26 workplace study circles, which trained almost 350 union members, again over half of them women.

There were also 2-day courses for union branch officials and shopstewards, with nearly 100 attending in 2013. Now they too know more about such issues as the toxic chemicals DDT and Paraquat, and the need to get their Government to ratify ILO Convention 184 (see page 29). They in turn held awareness-raising meetings with nearly 600 workers at various locations. At all these events too, a majority of those present were women.

Malawian agricultural and plantation workers are now much more knowledgeable about hazards, and active in trying to prevent them. Raphael Sandramu says, "They are very keen to observe the instructions on how to use the chemicals, and do query the employer about any mistakes they see". On one sugar plantation, it was the participants in a study circle who raised the problem about aerial spraying that was polluting the local environment and exposing workers and communities to toxic pesticides. The SPAWUM union took it up with management, and the spraying was halted (see page 37).

Another key result is that 65 workplaces now have OHSE Committees, which are monitoring the hazards and negotiating with management for improvements. For example, on some estates, management now provides workers with toilets where previously they didn't.

All this has resulted in an increase in union members and in income to the union from membership dues. More members are actively attending union meetings, and that includes many more women workers.



Workshops

Where it is not possible to carry out a full programme of study circles training, one-off workshops are also useful for developing workers' awareness and union strategies to combat OHSE hazards.



Nigeria

In December 2011, the AAEUN ran a day workshop at the Ohaji Nucleus estate, part of the state-owned palm oil company Adapalm in the south of the country. Over 2,000 workers live and work there, and they were invited to discuss the accidents or illnesses they had experienced as a result of their work. Many did so.

Some reported fatalities and injuries as a result of falling palm fruits. Others had lost a finger or even an arm from an accident with machinery. Women carry heavy quantities of palm fruits on their heads from the fields to the factory, and one now suffers permanent disability after falling into a ditch. Another man had been blinded by acid but was then simply sacked by management without any compensation. These are just a few examples.

What the discussions also revealed was that no records were kept of any such incidents. So it was decided to form a health and safety committee on the plantation, comprising representatives from the union, women workers, senior staff, management, and the local community. They would be tasked with holding regular interactive sessions like this one, so that everyone would become more aware of the situation and take steps to improve it.

The union took the opportunity to inform everyone about the newly revised Employees Compensation Act, passed in 2010. It also made representations to the Imo state authorities, to provide more funding for this and other plantations to run more safely as well as more productively.

National Project Coordinator Esther Timothy Cookey reports,

“Today these plantations are back to production with some level of safety provisions in the workplaces”. However, one clear lesson learnt, she says, is that most employers are “only paying lip service to the issue of health and safety” and that “the union needs to do more close monitoring of employers and step up our efforts to set up OHS committees”.





Data gathering

Through the project training, workers and their unions have become much more aware that they need to be gathering OHSE information, and not leave it to managers or government inspectors who rarely have reliable data. Good knowledge about the problems faced also means that the unions can draw up better plans to overcome them. This helps raise awareness among workers about the real nature of the risks they face and how the union is trying to help them.

The project gave union OHSE Committees and elected Workplace Reps training in how to gather data on such things as hazards in their own workplace, accidents and near misses, and workplace-related injuries and illnesses.

National Project Coordinators needed to widen workers' knowledge about what is hazardous. In agriculture and horticulture, it is not just the more obvious things such as sharp implements or heavy machinery. Toxic agrochemicals are of course a major problem. In some processing factories, it might also be such things as dust, high noise, burns from the boilers, unsafe electrical wiring, falling objects, or slippery floors.

The workers were shown ways of identifying the hazards that they face, and what might be the real impact on their own health and safety, including long-term effects. Body mapping and hazards mapping are two such useful techniques, as explained in the training manual used by the Project (see page 22).

They also learned about PPE and other preventative or protective measures that should be used. They learned to check whether their employers are maintaining chemical safety data sheets as they should.

They investigated workers' complaints, reports of accidents and near misses, and so on, and were encouraged to keep their own record books and take photographs, for example of victims of occupational accidents and diseases. This can provide solid evidence of the problems being faced, information to take to the union, the employer, the government, or even to the courts.

Nigeria

National Project Coordinator Esther Timothy Cooney says that many more workers are aware of the dangers associated with the constant use of chemicals, and of the need to use PPE. Also, discarded chemical containers (drums) are now being destroyed rather than taken home for water storage as they were in the past.

The AAEUN has developed a better system of data-gathering by local union structures and field staff, including on-the-spot assessments for risk analysis. This information is fed through to the national office, to help union officials build a better picture of the hazards faced and use this to negotiate with managements and government.

Zambia

NUPAAW worked with management at Zambia Sugar (part of the Illovo Group) to develop an awareness-raising campaign. Every month, a coloured card is placed on the notice board of each department: green for 'OK', yellow for 'must improve', and red for 'defaulted' on OHSE standards. "When the workers enter, they must use their eyes, think and be safety conscious", says National Project Coordinator Kunda Mutebele. Sometimes a bonus is given where the green standard is reached, as an additional incentive.

Workers' legal rights

Another part of the project training was about workers' legal rights. Many workers across the world do not know what they are entitled to under existing national laws and regulations in their own country, such as the right to OHSE workplace committees (see page 40). They may have hardly heard about the government's OHS inspectorate that should be making sure such laws are properly implemented, let alone seen an Inspector actually visit their workplace.

They also usually know very little about international standards (see Section 4) and how these could be used to improve the situation in their own country. They need specific training on all these topics.

Knowing about legal rights is very important because it raises not just workers' awareness but also their confidence to pursue complaints, to take up cases, and gain public attention. Taking cases through the courts can require scarce union resources, and of course it is not always possible to win. However, unions in the project have had some successes.

Uganda

NUPAWU has taken several cases to the courts where workers have been badly affected from toxic chemicals. One concerned a male tea-plucker on the Kasaku tea estate who complained of impotency. However, it was too difficult for the union to prove the link to the chemicals, and sadly they lost the case.

A more successful one concerned Natalie Hadija, a woman worker on the Uganda Hortech flower farm who lost her sight in one eye. She needed specialist treatment and the company tried to fire her. However, the union took it up and forced management to keep her on, with a lighter task, and to cover all her medical expenses. She remained at the company for five more years, before asking to retire on medical grounds. She then set up a small business which she is still running today.

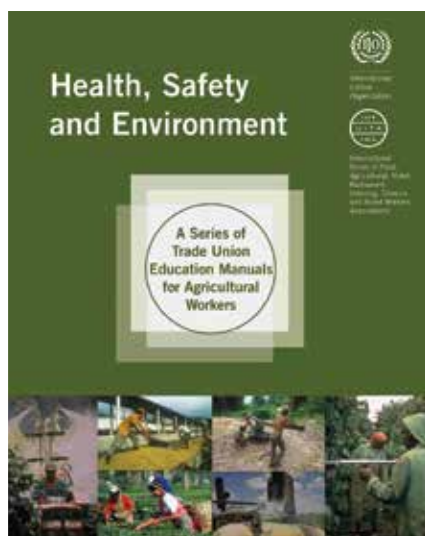
When more workers know about the existing legal situation, it also helps to build their motivation to help lobby for changes to the laws, and for stronger enforcement agencies (see pages 42-43). It also strengthens the unions' capacity to negotiate with management for better Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs). Unions in the project, such as NFFPFATU of Ethiopia, say that working on OHSE issues is a very good way of increasing general bargaining skills among workplace representatives.

“Union workplaces are safer workplaces!”

Slogan from the UK



Key Training Materials



'Health, Safety and Environment: A Series of Trade Union Education Manuals for Agricultural Workers', ILO and IUF, 2004:

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---actrav/documents/publication/wcms_111413.pdf

This set of manuals, produced by the IUF and ILO in 2004, gave a lot of ideas, information and guidance for the training programme of the IUF African OHSE project. It contains different sections for union educators, grassroots members, and OHSE representatives. There are also factsheets and sections on specifically pesticides and on ILO Convention C184 (see page 29) – including a step-by-step process on how to get it ratified in your country.

'Manuel de Formation sur les Pesticides', IUF, ILO and Sustainlabour, 2010, a training manual on pesticides, in French:

http://www.sustainlabour.org/documentos/fra34_2011.pdf

Other useful materials can be found on page 52.

Engaging union leadership

The project also included raising awareness more widely in the unions. In some cases, union leaders were not yet very active on OHSE issues. They were not yet seeing it as an integral part of the union's activities. They perhaps did not yet value the way in which taking it up could strengthen the union as a whole.

So, the National Project Coordinators, assisted by the Regional Coordinator, held meetings and workshops with national and branch officers and committees, encouraging them to be involved and take leadership on these issues.

As a result, union leaders became much more proactive. They took more initiatives to approach government officials and politicians, as well as employers. They lobbied and negotiated on OHSE issues in a much more concerted way.

"To gain real improvements in OHSE for workers, what is needed is strong and COMMITTED leadership, together with capacitated and professional monitoring systems."

Omara Amuko, IUF African OHSE Project Coordinator

Ethiopia

In April 2011, the NFFPAFATU union federation took part in a week-long set of activities that included meetings and workshops with government officials and representatives of employers. The federation's President Gabeyehu Adugna took part in public debates where he denounced the country's poor workplace health and safety standards, and urged the government and employers to work together with the unions to improve the situation. The union also distributed posters and T-shirts widely.

Gender aspects to OHS/Environment

“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

OHSE issues can affect men and women very differently. For example:

- **Toxic chemicals:** some of them affect men and women differently, particularly regarding reproductive health; for example, certain chemicals can cause sterility in men, while others cause miscarriage of unborn babies.
- **Violence and sexual harassment:** women are more likely than men to suffer such abuse at the workplace or travelling between their homes and workplace; sexual harassment and HIV/AIDS are linked, and it is mostly women who are the carers of those with HIV/AIDS.
- **Long working hours:** women tend to spend more time looking after their families; so long working hours affect their work-life balance, having a negative effect on the well-being of their families and communities.

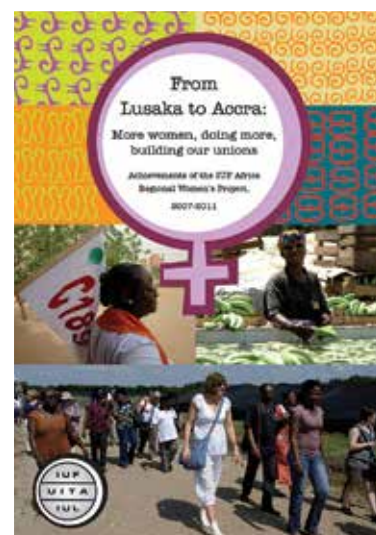
So it is important to have a gender perspective running through OHSE activities, and especially to reach out to women workers for awareness-raising and training. OHSE is also proving to be an effective way of engaging more women workers in the unions, in turn strengthening the unions.

OHSE has been taken up by the IUF African Women’s Project since it began in 2007. The IUF also makes sure there is gender equality running through all its other projects, such as the African Regional OHSE Project, as well as the Global Sugar Project and the Roving Safety Reps project (see Section 2).

With all these activities feeding into each other, all unions in the OHSE project have reported increasing membership among women workers, and that women are keen to be trained in these issues. This success can be seen in the high numbers of women involved in the study circles in all the countries. TOAWUM/PAWUM in Malawi, NFFPFATU in Ethiopia and KUSPAW in Kenya consistently managed to get more women than men to the workplace training, and in Malawi women were the majority trained as Study Circle Leaders.



... it is important to have a gender perspective running through OHSE activities, and especially to reach out to women workers for awareness-raising and training.



For more information

‘All for One = One for All’, IUF gender equality manual, 2007, available in English and French:
<http://www.iufdocuments.org/women/2008/All%20for%20One.pdf>

‘From Lusaka to Accra: More Women, Doing More, Building our Unions’, IUF, May 2012:
<http://www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/2012%20From%20Lusaka%20to%20Accra%20-%20More%20Women%2C%20doing%20more%2C%20building%20our%20unions.pdf>

‘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 African Regional Women’s Project, December 2010, available in French and English:
<http://www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/2010%20Guide%20for%20the%20Programme%20on%20OSH%20for%20working%20women%20in%20French%20speaking%20West%20Africa.pdf>



Better data-gathering

In the past, men in the unions have little understood the need for, or been unwilling to collect, data that differentiates between women and men. Yet, OHSE problems can affect the two genders very differently.

So the various IUF projects have been training more women as well as men to gather data, and to do this with a gender perspective. More women have learnt about how poor OHSE standards particularly impact on them, and become empowered to demand improvements.

PPE / Reproductive Health

There is much greater awareness among women workers now about the impact of some chemicals, particularly on their reproductive health. Many more know that they need to avoid contaminating themselves by wearing the proper PPE, and by staying out of areas that have been recently sprayed.



“It is women who do the manual sorting of coffee beans, and they were coming to work with their young children whom they were still breastfeeding. In fact, they were feeding them while they were sorting, which was exposing the children to contamination.

Kommunal came on a visit from Sweden (see page 13) and we took them to the workplace. They witnessed it and sympathised. So we negotiated with management and eventually they accepted a 30-minute break for breastfeeding. Kommunal also helped the union set up a day care centre, with a trained matron.”

Theopista Ssentongo, Workers’ Representative Member of Parliament, and NUCMAW, Uganda

With women now being employed in jobs which were previously reserved for men, this also means that they need appropriate PPE and training in how to use it - something that union OHSE structures need to be aware of, and was included in project training.

Malawi

Memory Moyo and Rhoda Mazalo both work at the Nchalo Mill owned by Illovo Sugar Ltd. Women used to work only in the offices there, but now they are being trained for a wide range of jobs. Memory is an electrician in the motor winding section and Rhoda is the first ever woman grader operator there. For these jobs, they need appropriate PPE and training to use it. With greater involvement of women and better awareness among men in the SPAWUM union there, such OHSE needs are now being taken up better (see page 18).



● Violence at the workplace and sexual harassment

This is a topic at the heart of women's well-being. Moreover, sexual violence/harassment and HIV/AIDS are linked and so these issues have to be addressed. However, many women may accept violence as 'just something in life'. Or they are too scared of losing their jobs and so do not report cases. Or, if they do, their cases are not taken up by men in union committees or at the negotiating table, who do not consider the issue a priority. Some men who are sympathetic may feel too isolated to speak up. Through collaboration with the IUF Women's Project in Africa, more unions in the OHSE Project have become more active in stopping violence and harassment.

"This is a big problem in the tobacco sector. Many employers want to use women workers sexually. We do try to tell the employers that this really has to change, and we are raising awareness among the women. Some men in the union understand, but others still don't."

Regina Ledson, Vice-President and Women's Rights Coordinator, TOAWUM, Malawi.

Zambia

Sexual harassment on horticultural farms used to be widespread. Supervisors had the power to hire and fire, and they used this to abuse women workers. NUPAAW took this up with the employers, and now many have a company policy (see, for example, [York Farm, page 17](#)). Workers are told to report any abuse to Human Resources Department, and supervisors found guilty are dismissed. Also, HR now does the hiring and firing, not the supervisors, thus removing their power. At the same time, the unions worked with the women's movement in the country to raise widespread public awareness, and a Gender-Based Violence Act was passed in 2011. There is now a lot of media coverage where there was not before.

Kenya

KUSPAW has been encouraging men as well as women to sit down and discuss problems and find solutions, rather than resort to violence. It is "a both-sided thing", says Lincoln Aveza, the union's Education Officer. The union has developed a policy on sexual harassment which it is promoting at all workplaces where it has members. It is also in the process of developing a sexual harassment training manual to be used in its study circle training,

● Better workplace facilities for women

Previously many workplaces had no separate toilets or washrooms for men and women. The project has helped foster much more awareness about this, and to get these facilities established.

Nigeria

National Project Coordinator Esther Timothy Cookey reports that most workplaces in the project now have separate washrooms for men and women, another direct achievement.



More Active Women = Stronger Unions

Collaboration between the Women's Project and the OHSE Project has also led to more women gaining confidence and stepping forward to be elected onto union committees. New Women's Committees have also been formed. This in turn has led to greater union emphasis on OHSE issues from women workers' point of view as well as men's.

Malawi

Until recently, there was no Women's Committee in the SPAWUM union. However, the IUF Coordinator in Malawi, Dorothea Makhasu, helped build one and in 2013 it was adopted into the SPAWUM Constitution. Now, more women are in decision-making positions in the union. This was a challenging task, says union President Prince Jesnao, because women are very much in the minority in the sugar industry workforce there, and comprise only about 7% of the union membership. However, with the union now taking women workers' concerns more seriously, workplaces have become safer and healthier for them. SPAWUM is reporting fewer accidents and a better supply of proper PPE.



Ethiopia

The rapidly growing cut flower industry in Ethiopia now employs some 120,000 workers, most of them women. For many, trade unions are a new idea. But the unions have been reaching out, and many new unions have been set up at the various farms, united in the national union federation NFFPFATU (see page 9). Many workers now know what a union is, and the benefits of being a member in promoting and protecting their rights.

Workplace Women's Committees have been set up on each farm that is unionised, and in this process OHSE training has played a significant role. On many farms they have, as a result, won baby-feeding time and better maternity leave. However, it does very much vary from farm to farm, says NFFPFATU.

Local, regional and global

Workplace health and safety and environmental issues are local and global at the same time. The health and safety of agricultural workers, the land they work and the water they use, have an impact on food production and nutrition.

So the IUF encourages its affiliated unions not just to strengthen their activities locally and nationally but also across borders.

- Some actions relate to the protections which governments should be providing.
- Some are targeted at particular employers that operate in several countries.
- Some take place on particular themes or on particular international days.

Such cross-border activities between unions help to share knowledge and experience, building capacity as well as motivation.

International standards and agreements

At an international level, there are very important Conventions and Codes agreed in bodies of the United Nations including the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Some concern standards of employment. Others are about environmental standards. There are also agreements and programmes on such questions as food security, clearly of vital importance to agricultural workers and communities (see pages 32-33).

In the ILO, workers (represented by trade unions) have always had a formal role alongside governments and employers. The ILO is 'tripartite' (three parties). However, for too long the other international bodies such as the FAO and UNEP were limited to discussions among governments, who took on board the needs of farmers, big and small, but the voice and concerns of workers and communities were barely heard. So the IUF and other civil society organisations lobbied hard. Now, workers and trade unions – represented by the IUF - have become one of the nine 'Major Groups' in these international bodies, and their contribution to sustainable development is better recognised.

To make sure that the voice and interests of workers are included when agreements are drawn up, monitored and implemented, the IUF has a two-way process, feeding information to and from its affiliated unions and these bodies. The IUF African OHSE Project Coordinator, Omara Amuko, attends meetings of, for example, the ILO and the FAO. He then passes on information about this to project unions, encouraging them to approach the offices of these global bodies in their own countries and get involved in their activities, as well as lobby their own government about implementation, and raise public awareness. The unions are urged to feed back to him about their experiences and what needs to be raised at the international level.

4



International Labour Standards

There are some basic rights that all workers in the world have, which all governments and employers should respect. They are embedded in what are called the ILO 'core' or 'fundamental' Conventions:

- No forced labour: ILO Conventions 029 (1930) and 105 (1957)
- Freedom of association and the right to organise and bargain collectively: ILO Conventions 087 (1948) and 098 (1949)
- No discrimination in pay, employment or occupation: ILO Conventions 100 (1951) and 111 (1958)
- Abolition of the worst forms of child labour: ILO Conventions 138 (1973) and 182 (1999)

Some international standards concern employment specifically in agriculture. Each government should 'ratify' them - that is to say put them into national legislation - though they often try to avoid doing so:

- Minimum wages in agriculture: ILO Convention 99 (1951)
- Labour inspection on farms and plantations: ILO Convention 129 (1969)
- Governments to promote the "establishment and growth of strong and independent rural workers' organisations" in the interests of economic and social development: ILO Convention 141 (1975)
- Health and Safety in Agriculture: ILO Convention 184 and Recommendation 192 (2001)

There are also ILO Recommendations and Codes of Practice which give guidance to governments, and which can/should be actively promoted by workers. They include:

- HIV/AIDS in the world of work: ILO Recommendation 200 (2010)
- Safety and Health in Agriculture: ILO Code of Practice (2010) (see page 30)

WWW



For more information

All ILO Standards, their texts and information about them such as which governments have ratified which Conventions, can be found at: <http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/lang--en/index.htm>

These workers are still needing proper protection from dangerous chemicals - which is their right



C184: The ILO Convention on OHS in Agriculture

ILO Convention 184 (C184) on Safety and Health in Agriculture is a key international standard. Passed in 2001, it confirms that waged agricultural workers - whether permanent, temporary or seasonal - have the same health and safety rights and level of protection as other workers. For example, it says that:

Employers in agriculture have the duty to:

- “ensure the safety and health of workers in every aspect related to the work”. (Article 6)
- carry out appropriate risk assessments in relation to the safety and health of workers and adopt preventive and protective measures; ensure adequate and appropriate training and give workers instructions and information they can understand on the hazards and risks associated with their work, and the action to be taken for their protection; employers must also take immediate steps to stop any operation where there is an imminent and serious danger to safety and health and evacuate workers. (Article 7)

Workers in agriculture have the right to:

- be informed and consulted on safety and health matters, including risks from new technologies;
- participate in the application and review of safety and health measures, and to select safety and health representatives and representatives in safety and health committees; and
- remove themselves from danger when they believe there is an imminent and serious risk to their safety and health, and inform their supervisor immediately. They shall not be placed at any disadvantage as a result of these actions. (Article 8)

When the OHSE project started in 2006, only one African country (Sao Tome and Principe) had ratified the C184. So the project made C184 and the need to take action on it a significant focus. There were two more ratifications by African governments during that period - Burkina Faso in 2009 and Ghana in 2011 - and unions in more countries have been encouraged to lobby their own governments to do the same, and raise more awareness such as on 28 April, International Workers' Memorial Day (see page 34). At the time of writing, no other African government has yet done so. But some of the project unions are hopeful.

Zambia

National Project Coordinator Kunda Mutebele says, “We are taking advantage of the political will that exists in the political party in power right now. We are saying, ‘If you want agriculture to make a major contribution to a self-reliant economy, then you have to look at the safety and health of the agricultural workers. They are the drivers’. The Government has done it for mining. So they must for agriculture too.”

Kenya

KUSPAW has been having meetings with the Ministry of Labour about C184, urging the Government to adopt C184. Union Education Officer Lincoln Aveza is optimistic. “We have been presenting them with information, and we are getting a positive response”, he says.

“We tell the unions to always mention C184 whenever they meet a government official.”

Omara Amuko, IUF African OHSE Coordinator



ILO Code of Practice (2010) on Health and Safety in Agriculture

In 2010, the C184 was complemented with a new Code. In the run-up to the discussions for this at the ILO, the IUF sent out a questionnaire to its affiliated unions, including those in the Project, asking them what they thought should be in it and to record in particular the use of hazardous pesticides in their country, such as Paraquat and Endosulfan (see page 32).

During the ILO discussions, among the Workers' Delegates was Anja Westberg from the Kommunal union in Sweden (see page 13), joined by the IUF African OHSE Project Coordinator Omara Amuko.

They were able to add in a lot of experience coming out of the OHSE Project in Africa. The IUF projects also fed into the national union delegations to the ILO, helping to strengthen their arguments for what should be in the Code.

As a result of their combined efforts, the text was much improved from the workers' point of view. For example, it reconfirms that workers have the right to:

- withdraw from imminent danger without risking repercussions from management
- elect their own representatives onto OHSE Committees

It suggests that countries should adopt a system of Roving Safety Reps (see pages 8 and 13), and it now addresses better the concerns of women agricultural workers.

The Code is a supplement to C184 and is not binding on governments and employers to implement. However, it can be very useful, for example helping to inform workers about what they should try to include in the text of a CBA that they are negotiating with management.

For more information

ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Agriculture, 2010, available in English, French and Spanish:

http://www.ilo.org/safework/info/standards-and-instruments/codes/WCMS_161135/lang--en/index.htm



First reduce the risks

The use of PPE to protect workers from danger should be the last resort. Before that, there must be every effort to eliminate any risks they face. This is a key element of the ILO Code of Practice.

Hierarchy of control measures for reducing risks in the workplace

- Eliminate or substitute the hazardous agent with a less hazardous one.
- Reduce the hazard/risk at source through the use of engineering controls.
- Minimise the hazard/risk by using safe working procedures or other organisational measures.
- Where unacceptable risks remain, provide suitable personal protective equipment (PPE).

From: ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Agriculture, 2010, page 27.

This 'hierarchy of control measures' is something that the IUF emphasises, including in the IUF African Regional OHSE Project. One example is the IUF's global campaign for elimination of the most toxic pesticides, especially Paraquat and Endosulfan (see page 32). Affiliates involved in the project have been very active in getting their governments to ban the use of such products, and evidence gathered by the project is used in IUF efforts at the international level. Another example is action to end the use of tractors without cabins.

ILO Convention C182 (1999) on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour

Agriculture is a main location of child labour. The ILO reports that still today some 98 million children work on farms and plantations across the world.

Through the OHSE Project, the African unions have been encouraged to lobby their governments and employers about C182. This is a 'core' Convention of the ILO which means that there is a duty on everyone in all countries to eliminate hazardous child labour. Unions are encouraged to use 12 June, World Day Against Child Labour, to highlight the need for action.

Malawi

Children still do a wide range of jobs on the tobacco estates, such as land preparation, tending and transplanting seedlings, applying fertilizer, weeding, and plucking and sewing the leaves.

Constant handling of tobacco leaves without the use of PPE exposes anyone to hazardous levels of nicotine which is absorbed through the skin. For children, this is particularly dangerous. Among those sorting leaves are also women carrying their babies. However, until recently, Malawian workers had very little awareness about these serious risks.

On World Day Against Child Labour on 12 June 2013, TOAWUM joined the Malawian Congress of Trade Unions in an event to raise awareness in the tobacco-growing district of Mchinji, near the Zambian border. There, National Project Coordinator Raphael Sandramu spoke about what he calls the "evils" of child labour and the importance of sending children to school.



Children still do a wide range of jobs on tobacco estates in Malawi



International Environmental Standards

The United Nations and its various international bodies have been discussing 'sustainable development' for several decades. The first Earth Summit 'Agenda 21' was in 1992, and they have been held again in 2002 and 2012. Over this period, many international environmental standards have been agreed. Some aim, for example, to control better the use of dangerous chemicals and other materials, including:

- Basel Convention (1989) on hazardous wastes and their proper disposal
- Agenda 21 Chapter 19 (1992) concerns the environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals
- Rotterdam Convention (1998) on chemicals such as pesticides and insecticides
- Stockholm Convention (2001) on persistent organic pollutants (POPs)
- FAO Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides (2003)
- SAICM (Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management) (2006) aimed at minimising the bad effects from chemicals on the environment and human health by 2020.

The Inter-Organisation Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) brings together various global bodies – the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the FAO, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the ILO – to help governments implement these agreements. But there needs to be much more public pressure to make this happen, including from the trade unions.

The IUF is involved in the meetings and activities of, for example, UNEP, FAO, and SAICM. As IUF African OHSE Project Coordinator Omara Amuko says, "When such things are discussed, the workers cannot be left out".

To keep the pressure on governments to improve and implement such treaties, the IUF also collaborates with international NGOs. For example, together with the Swedish Conservation of Nature, Swiss Berne Declaration and Pesticides Action Network (PAN), they have been campaigning for a global ban on the toxic pesticides Paraquat and Endosulfan. As a result of the campaigning, in 2011 Endosulfan was eventually included in the annexes to the Rotterdam Convention (PIC) and Stockholm Convention (POP). The focus remains on Paraquat. The IUF also works with such groups as Banana Link to end the use of toxic chemicals in the production of bananas.

Information from these activities at the global level has been passed on to the unions in the project through training and factsheets. It provides solid arguments with which to challenge those employers who want to continue using toxic chemicals.

For more information

'Stop Paraquat Now!' leaflet:

<http://iuf.org/sites/cms.iuf.org/files/Paraquat%20ban-e.pdf>

UNEP: www.unep.org/hazardoussubstances/

FAO: www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4544e/y4544e00.htm

SAICM: www.saicm.org



Campaigning for a global ban on the toxic pesticides Paraquat and Endosulfan



The Right to Food

Another international concern is the urgent need to overcome hunger in the world. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations was founded in 1945 with a mandate to raise levels of nutrition and standards of living by improving agricultural productivity. In its activities at the FAO, the IUF highlights such problems as land-grabbing by big multinational corporations to produce biofuels, which displaces small farmers and adds to malnutrition among rural communities.

Also, since the late 2000s, the ILO has had a Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in the context of Decent Work, so as to contribute to the work of the UN Task Force on the Right to Food and Nutrition. Among the countries of focus of this Programme are Kenya, Tanzania, and Malawi, as well as Benin and Burkina Faso. For the IUF, employment standards, environmental issues and food security are very much linked, and it encourages its affiliated unions to take these issues up with the Programme and their governments. This includes the demand that 'decent work' should include a living wage so that workers can get enough nutrition for themselves and their families. Official minimum wages usually do not meet such basic needs, even though access to food is a human right.

FOR FOOD RIGHTS AND A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM IUF mandate 2013-2017, extracts

ORGANISE:

- For living wages for all food workers to ensure they and their families have food security;
- Increase the capacity of unions to negotiate for sustainable food systems;
- To promote systems of food production and processing closer to the point of consumption;
- Alliances with civil society organisations to ensure the world's food resources are used for the common good.

FIGHT:

- For enforceable pesticides policies based on reduced use and banning of the most toxic pesticides in the transition to organic farming;
- For governments to fulfill their international treaty obligations to ensure their citizens have adequate, affordable and safe food and potable water;
- For a sustainable food system based on decent work and living wages for workers throughout the food system;
- For real investment in agriculture which can benefit workers and support a transition to socially and environmentally sustainable food production.

WIN:

- Inclusion of unions in developing national policy on pesticide use and food security;
- Universal access to potable water for agricultural workers;
- International agreements with agro food TNCs which facilitate organising throughout the supply chain to advance the right to food;
- The establishment of strategic food reserves at national and international level in the interest of workers and small food producers.

Malawi

This is a country where access to food and nutrition can become a severe problem. So all IUF affiliates got involved in discussions with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. As a result, such issues as the very low wages in the tea sector, the violation of trade union rights, and the presence of child labour in the tobacco sector were included in the Rapporteur's work in July 2013.

For more information

'Agricultural Workers and their Contribution to Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development', IUF, FAO and ILO, 2007:
http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fao_ilo/pdf/engL_agricultureC4163.pdf

ILO Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in the Context of Decent Work:
<http://www.ilo.int/sector/activities/topics/food-security/lang--en/index.htm>



International Days of Action

International Workers' Memorial Day – 28 April

This is an international day of remembrance and action for workers killed, disabled, injured, or made unwell by their work, marked every year. In some countries, it is now a day that is officially recognised by the government. Across the world, workers and communities use it to raise awareness and fight for safe and healthy workplaces.

African unions in the project are increasingly using the International Day to mobilise for OHSE demands. In 2011, they focussed on the ILO Convention C184 (see page 29) and lobbied their governments to improve/implement OHSE laws.

In 2013, they joined in the international campaign against the toxic herbicide Paraquat. Globally, this involves the IUF and nearly 100 other organisations, including the Pesticides Action Network (PAN). The demand is that Paraquat should be included as a banned substance in the Rotterdam Convention (see page 32).

Malawi

On 28 April 2013, TOAWUM organised a march and meeting in the district of Kasungu Boma to join in the demand for a ban on Paraquat, and to lobby the Malawian Government to ratify ILO Convention C184. They anticipated up to 100 tobacco workers would turn up, but were very pleased when nearly double that came. They were successful in getting coverage on one of the best-known radio stations in the country.



Kenya

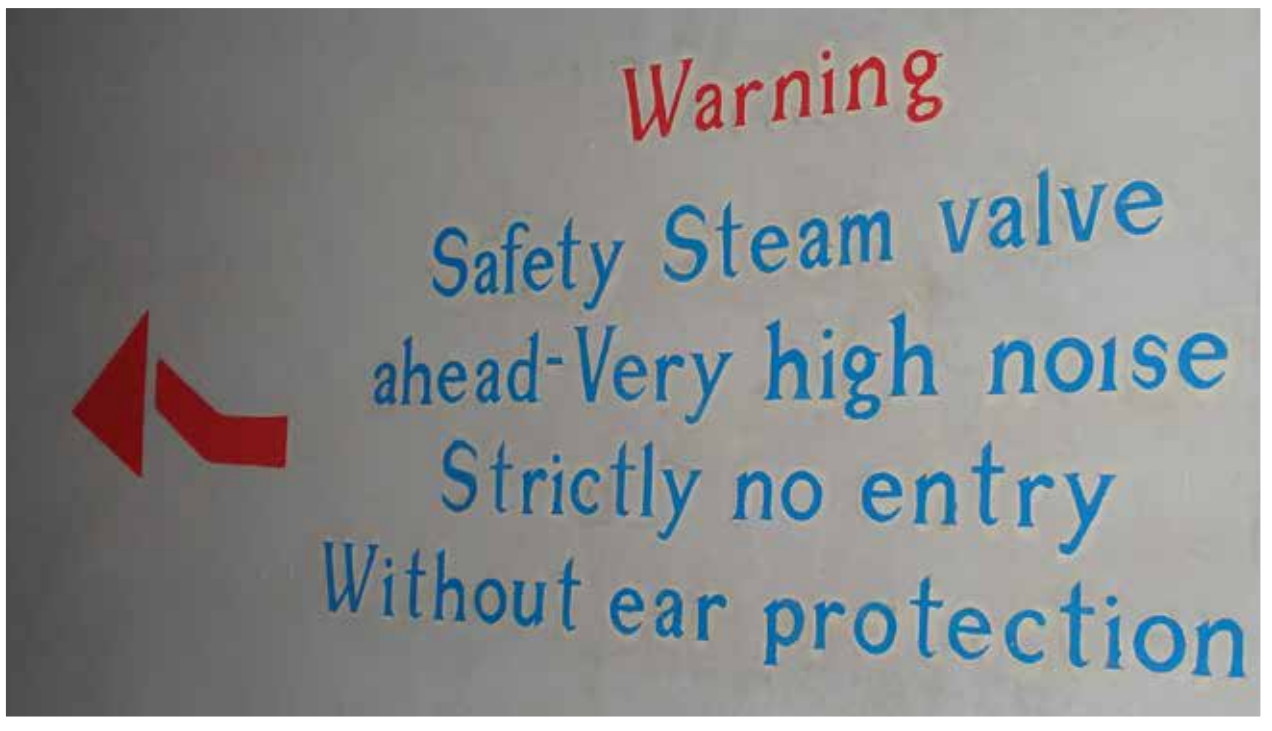
KUSPAW started marking 28 April in 2014, with activities at NZOIA Sugar Company. It is planning to expand to other workplaces, and to push the Government to gazette the Day as a public holiday.

Other international days on which IUF unions are encouraged to take public action include:

May Day, International Workers' Day – 1 May

World Day against Child Labour – 12 June (see page 31)

World Aids Day – 1 December (see page 39)



Cross-border activities by workers sharing the same employer

International union activities relate not only to governments but also to employers. Many large companies in the agriculture/horticulture sector have operations in several countries.

Working with the other IUF projects, the African OHSE Project has helped to stimulate more cross-border knowledge and activities on OHSE issues by unions with members employed by the same company.



Illovo Sugar Group

This company, based in South Africa, is Africa's biggest sugar producer. It is a subsidiary of the giant multinational corporation Associated British Foods, and it has agricultural and manufacturing operations in six Southern African countries: Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, and Zambia. It exports to markets across Africa as well as to the European Union and the USA.

Throughout this booklet there are examples of how the unions at Illovo in Malawi and Zambia have taken up OHSE issues with Illovo management. This includes replacing aerial-spraying of chemicals (**see page 37**) and providing women workers with the correct PPE and training in how to use it (**see page 24**). There are also examples of Illovo management initiatives in raising OHSE awareness among workers (**see page 20**) and in HIV testing at company clinics (**see page 40**).

Being involved in other regional IUF activities too, such as the Global Sugar Project (**see page 7**), SPAWUM in Malawi and NUPAAW in Zambia have been able to share OHSE information and strategies with other Illovo unions, such as the Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU) in South Africa and SINTIA in Mozambique.

5

Key improvements won

Previously, the farm and agricultural workers and their trade unions in these countries of Africa were more concerned with wages. In a situation of poverty, having more income is of course vital.

Through this project, workers have become much more aware that working in a safe and healthy environment is also essential. Only with good physical and mental health can they continue to earn for themselves and their families.

They have also taken up questions affecting the wider community – that it is essential that farms, plantations and factories respect rather than damage or pollute the environment, that food security is crucial, particularly in Africa.

The unions involved in the project have gained a lot in capacity to handle these key questions. This in turn means that workers appreciate much better the role that their unions can play. They are more willing to join and be active in the unions, and as a result the unions become stronger in human and financial resources.

● More knowledge about the hazards that workers face

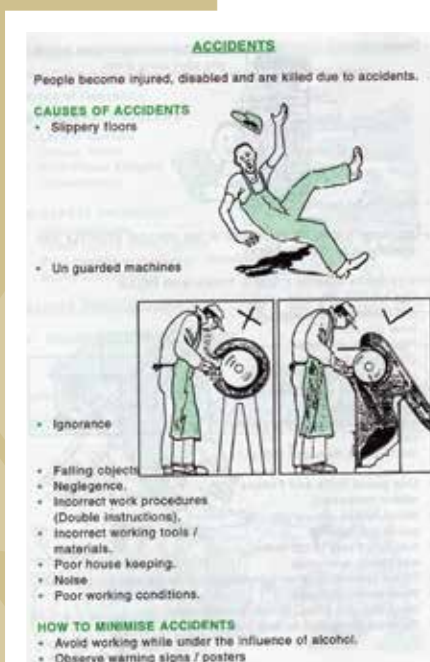
“Reporting has become more regular. There is still a problem of non-reporting of minor accidents and hazards. But once they are reported, we do get the problems removed.”

Ndete Amunabi, National Project Coordinator, KUSPAW, Kenya

The project has very much improved the knowledge of workers and union officials about the hazards found in different types of work, and the risks faced by different types of workers (permanent/casual, and men/women/children).

Knowing the problems better gives workers and their unions more opportunities to find solutions, and win better protection.

“...once they are reported, we do get the problems removed.”



● More knowledge about workers' OHSE rights

Learning more about workers' OHSE rights – especially those that are embedded in ILO Conventions and other international instruments (**see Section 4**) – unions in the IUF African OHSE Project have been able to develop stronger demands in their negotiations with governments and employers.

They have used their knowledge to win better Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) (**see for example pages 41 and 43**) and have argued forcibly for improvements to laws and regulations governing OSHE for farm, plantation and horticultural workers (**see page 42**).

● Fewer risks from hazards

The theme of 'prevention is better than cure' running through the project (see page 31) has been achieving results. Affiliated unions have been getting governments to ban the use of Paraquat (see page 32), and workers are much more aware of the need to avoid using toxic chemicals wherever possible. Where this has not yet been achieved, more of them know to stay out of high risk areas and to wear proper PPE. They are voicing these demands much more actively with management.

Zambia

NUPAAW and one employer have been carrying out joint workplace risk assessments and agreeing an action plan based on the 'hierarchy of control' principles (see page 31). Elsewhere, workers know far more about how to avoid risks.

National Project Coordinator Kunda Mutebele explains:

"In the chemical stores, mixers are usually just given instructions on what to mix. We tell them about the chemical groups, which types are being used, the long- and short-term effects, and what to do in the case of an accident.

There should also be entry intervals, the period of time before which the workers can go back in after spraying. In one cut-flower greenhouse, we found workers picking on one row while others were spraying on the next. But the union told the workers about C184 and the rights that it contains. Management was furious, alleging that the workers were 'refusing to work'. So the workers went to the union. We had to sit with the management and tell them that the workers were right, also according to Zambian law. We explained that if managers refused to respect the entry interval, we would call in the inspectorate. Since then, if the workers don't get the proper conditions, they refuse to enter."

Malawi

SPAWUM has also made the handling of chemicals a big priority. The Illovo Sugar Company used to spray its fields by aeroplane. But, after the workers raised their concerns about the levels of pollution (see page 18), the union, supported by the National Project Coordinator, complained and got the company to change its practices. Now the spraying is done by knapsack operators.

However, SPAWUM then realised that the knapsack operators were not getting enough training and the PPE was not of good enough quality. So the union had further meetings with the management, involving the sprayers, and now the company is providing proper PPE. Also, the sprayers are being rotated every two years so that they are not over-exposed, and they are sent for medical check-ups every season. The union reports a big drop in cases of allergic reaction.

Meanwhile on the tobacco estates in Malawi, TOAWUM also reports that chemicals are now used with much greater care. "We raised with workers the need to read the labels and become aware of the hazards, and this is now widely practised", says National Project Coordinator Raphael Sandramu.





OHSE Regional Project Coordinator Omara Amuko believes that for the next stage the unions need not just the trade names of the chemicals used but also the chemical formulae. Then they should train the workers to know look out for these formulae, in case the trade names change.

However, it is not just a question of better protection against toxic chemicals, but getting management to use less of them. Toxic chemicals should be replaced with less toxic ones, or where possible removed altogether by using other non-chemical pest control techniques.

Uganda

Over the years, NUPAWU has succeeded in getting various managements to change the chemicals they are using, and even to stop using them altogether. For example, at the Uganda Hortech flower farm, they were using Thionex and Polytrine for killing caterpillars, and these have been replaced with less toxic Silwet and Dinamic. Where the infestation is not so serious, the union encourages hand-picking as an alternative to using any chemicals.

● Fewer accidents

Agriculture and horticulture involve the use of much equipment and machinery, and accident rates - including fatal ones - are very high. Workers need access to awareness-raising and training, and protective equipment/clothing. Happily, several unions participating in the project have been reporting a drop in accident rates.

Kenya

KUSPAW reported that, between 2010 and 2012, the Nzoia and Mumias sugar companies reported no cases of accidents at all, and Chemelil only one.

Zambia

NUPAAW now keeps a database of accidents, compiling the data that comes in from its regions and branches. In 2010, 6 fatal accidents and 40 others were recorded. The following year this had dropped to 25 cases, and by 2012 there were only 10 reported.

● More rest breaks

Workers who spend hours doing just one task many times over need break times to rest. Otherwise, their bodies become damaged, often with a condition known as repetitive strain injury. In agriculture, this includes bending over to weed or pick. Also, those who spend too long in cold storage rooms can suffer physical damage. Some workers, for example on Ugandan horticultural farms, are known to do exercises during their breaktimes. But this should be part of management's responsibility towards their workforce. So project unions have been taking this up too.

Malawi

"This is one of the burning issues", says union President Prince Jesnao. During the sugar crushing period, workers do 8 hours a day / 7 days a week. Clearly they need periods of rest. SPAWUM has been in negotiations with government and Illovo management, and is involving workers in the discussions. He is optimistic they will win the rest times that the workers need.



● HIV/AIDS: more testing and access to ARV (antiretroviral drugs)

HIV/AIDS is another serious issue taken up by the IUF African OHSE project. It is not an occupational illness, but it is certainly a workplace health issue.

As a result of the project, a number of unions, such as those in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia, have stepped up their efforts on combating HIV/AIDS. They are engaging more with government and employer programmes to combat the disease, and taking part in public awareness activities on World Aids Day each year (see page 34). They are providing workplace support, for example by developing a system of Peer Educators among workers who encourage more to go for HIV/AIDS testing, to know their status, and get ARV treatment. Many workers have responded well.



Zambia

NUPAAW reports that at first they had to deal with stigma against workers infected by HIV/AIDS. Plus the workers themselves thought they should stop work on 'medical grounds'. National Project Coordinator Kunda Mutebele says, "We told them 'No, you can work'. We had to raise the issue within the union, persuading members and officers that it is the duty of employers and employees to provide care and support."

NUPAAW developed a system of Peer Educators, trained to be 'champions' to raise the issues among their fellow workers and give them support. Training was done at residential courses, where they came from their workplaces to share experiences, and learn about such things as ILO Recommendation 200 on HIV/AIDS (2010). NUPAAW also developed a booklet and gave them other materials to guide them.

"There were employers who didn't see HIV/AIDS as a workplace issue", Kunda continues, "But we had to bring management on board. It is such an important issue. So we explained to them about the peer educators system. At first they said it should be after working hours or at weekends. But we said 'No, it is a workplace issue. Your supervisors also need training'.

We persuaded them that they were losing competent people, thus affecting their business. We approached the Zambia Export Growers Association (ZEGA), which is an influential body, and said 'We need to speak as one'. ZEGA spoke to their members and sponsored training for supervisors. They also came on board for activities on World Aids Day, where we raised awareness through song, dramas, and shows.

Now, we bring in clinics to provide screening, and HIV/AIDS NGOs for counselling. People who are open to declare their status can get time off to collect their drugs or if they are feeling unwell. If they are not able to be open, they can confide in their peer educator."

See page 17 for the progress made at York Farm outside Lusaka.

Malawi

SPAWUM also reports that HIV/AIDS is now "mainstreamed in the union activities/programmes at all times". Union President Prince Jesnao says, "Many workers were reluctant to go for testing, for fear of being discriminated against by their spouses and their community. So we sensitised them at meetings and trainings about the importance of knowing your status. This led to over 6,800 getting HIV testing at the company (Illovu Sugar) clinics in 2013. Those who were tested positive have been put on ARV treatment. The number of deaths has dropped, and many workers are now healthy. It also means that they are more productive to the company."



● Stronger OHSE structures in unions

These vital issues concerning the well-being of the workforce, as well as the local community and environment, cannot be left just to management who are too often driven by very narrow concerns about cost and profits.

So, a key aim of the project was to stimulate the development of better union structures to handle OHSE issues, both at the workplace level and within the wider union, on a long-term and consistent basis.

Often the laws of a country do give workers' representatives the right to participate in workplace Health and Safety Committees. However, the laws are not properly implemented, and many workers do not know that they have such rights.

Kenya and Malawi

The establishment of a Health and Safety Committee is a legal requirement at any workplace where at least 50 workers are employed, but the law was hardly enforced. Many large workplaces had no such committee. Labour inspection was almost never done, particularly in the agricultural sector, due to the lack of government resources and shortage of labour inspectors.

Through the project, many workforces now elect their own OHSE representatives and, working with the union, have demanded implementation of their right to a workplace OHSE Committee, (see page 4 on Uganda and page 18 on Malawi).

“Unless the workers are aware of the law and the importance of having a health and safety committee at the workplace, they cannot make demands for one, and the laws remain just on the statute books.

Through awareness-raising, the project opened the doors for the unions to form such committees. Once these committees are in place, they conduct regular inspections for hazards, and the workers are also now coming forward to ask for information about the health and safety of the work they do, and they are demanding PPE.”

Omara Amuko, IUF African OHSE Project Coordinator



● Better union engagement with management

With workers and their representatives gathering better data, gaining in knowledge about OHSE issues, and setting up workplace OHSE Committees, there is much greater confidence and capacity to negotiate with management.

“OHSE Committees are working better with management as a result of the project. Rather than just managers saying, ‘Oh yes. We will look at it’, the unions are now involved in discussions and negotiations with them. By building databases of occupational accidents, we have a better analysis of when and why they happen. We get down to the roots to find out. And this gives us better information with which to challenge the employer.”

Kunda Mutebele, National Project Coordinator, NUPAAW, Zambia

Strengthening OHSE Committees at workplaces has changed how employers as well as workers are approaching these issues.

“Employers too have embraced the project. This is indicated by their support, allowing education and training activities to take place on their premises, giving time off to Study Circle Leaders to organise study circle groups, and taking actions on the recommendations of the health and safety committees.”

Omara Amuko, IUF African OHSE Project Coordinator

This, in turn, has led to much better integration of OHSE issues in Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs).

Ethiopia

Ziway Roses plc employs over 8000 workers, producing some 10 million roses each year for export, mostly to Europe. In April 2012, the Basic Workers Association (a member union of NFFPFATU) reached a Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Ziway management.

The Ziway CBA says that one of its objectives is to “facilitate ways to improve the safety methods and equipments promoting the health of the workers and work place safety”. It includes:

- A detailed list of the PPE to be supplied to different types of worker, and disciplinary procedures for any workers who fail to use it properly.
- The company will pay for glasses or hearing aids which any workers need as a result of their work.
- Anyone who physically or sexually assaults another worker will be immediately sacked.
- The company undertakes to provide the necessary skilled staff, equipment and medications for the on-site clinic where workers can get free treatment, even for sickness unrelated to work; if a worker needs to be transferred to hospital, the company will also bear those costs.
- A Health and Safety Committee which includes workers’ representatives.

In January 2014, the company also opened a shower-room for workers who use chemicals.

The Ziway CBA says that employees’ safety is of “vital importance” to the company.

● New/better OHSE laws

Legal health and safety protection for workers in agriculture has traditionally been weaker than for workers in other sectors. Project unions have been putting an end to this discrimination in legal rights.

Zambia

National Project Coordinator Kunda Mutebele says, “Knowing ourselves about C184, we set about creating more awareness in the Ministry of Labour and the public to look again at our own Zambian law. The OHS Act of 1994 applied to factories and mines, where inspectors could go in with the right to penalise and even close a company. But this didn’t happen with farms and plantations. Then, in 2010 a fire broke out at the Kafue Sugar factory near Lusaka, causing the death of two welders. Labour inspectors were called in but only made some ‘recommendations’. We thought this was discrimination. So, in collaboration with our national union centre ZCTU, we launched a campaign for a ‘Factories and Other Workplaces Act’. We are optimistic we will have it by the end of 2014.”

However good the laws may be, though, in all countries of the project the unions report problems with implementation and respect for the law. Governments put too few resources into their labour inspectorate, so that inspectors rarely visit workplaces to inspect their OHSE standards.

Uganda

“Winning the new OHS Act in 2006 was a big battle. When I became a Workers’ Representative MP in 2001, OHS was not a serious matter in Parliament. Brother Pejobo (see page 1) was also in Parliament at that time and we started to demand a proper law to protect workers. We had to make a lot of noise, over and over again, explaining the suffering experienced by workers.

After much lobbying, the Minister of Labour tabled a Bill in the House. We went to our national union federation NOTU to do workshops, interview workers, make representations, and so on. We used FM radio and TV channels to educate the masses. In 2006, after all the pressure, the Act was passed. The employers continued to argue that it would be ‘too expensive to implement’ and wanted it repealed, but we stood firm and we got the Act.

However, the Ministry has too little budget and so the law is only poorly implemented. The flower industry employers are particularly stubborn, and some government ‘big shots’ have shares in these companies. Also, opposition amendments to the Act mean that victims only have access to a civil court of law (rather than the High Court), and many of these courts do not know how to handle industrial relations. So we have a good law but it is not very operational.”

Theopista Ssentongo, Workers’ Representative Member of Parliament, and NUCMAW, Uganda

“We set about creating more awareness in the Ministry of Labour.”



● More workers protected

As well as getting better OHSE protections written into law and CBAs, project unions are also now including a wider range of workers in these protections.

One key achievement of the project has been the widespread involvement of women workers, winning much better OHSE standards specific to their needs (see pages 23-25).

Another is the involvement of workers on different types of employment contracts. Rather than just relating to workers with permanent contracts, the unions in the project have begun to make sure that those who are casually employed are also included – seasonal workers, those on short-term contracts, those employed by outsourced suppliers, and so on. In fact, at least two of the project unions have even managed to get casual workers included in their CBAs.

Malawi

SPAWUM successfully negotiated to include casual workers in workplace OHSE programmes just like the full-time, permanent workers. The company in question, Illovo Sugar, was developing an outgrowers' scheme in the country, for which it needed the agreement of local Chiefs. As an organising tactic, SPAWUM took the opportunity to convince the elders to allow the company to promote sugar cane growing provided the workers (their people) would become union members and would not be exploited. With Illovo Sugar operating across various Southern and Eastern African countries (see page 35), this was an important development.

Kenya

Since the early 2000s, the CBA between KUSPAW and Chemelil Sugar Co. Ltd. has included contracted workers brought in from outsourced suppliers. It also refers to the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 2007 in Kenya which applies to all workplaces where any person is at work, whether temporarily or permanently, including those supplied by contractors.

Of course, having such principles included in the CBA is only one step. They also have to be implemented. One problem the unions find is that the constant turnover of workers through casualisation makes it difficult to ensure that OHSE structures and processes that have been set up can actually keep running.

“NUCMAW negotiations include a provision for an OHS Committee at the workplace, and Committee members get training. But, with the current trends of privatisation and outsourcing, those workers brought in don't have the health and safety knowledge. Meanwhile, permanent workers with knowledge are laid off. So there are more gaps in trained people for OHS Committees.”

Theopista Ssentongo, Workers' Representative Member of Parliament, and NUCMAW, Uganda

Similarly, managers can change and the new ones may not have enough OHSE knowledge or experience. However, KUSPAW in Kenya is one of the project unions feeling positive that more managers now understand the advantages of safe working environment for all the workers - for the company's own productivity.





● More members/more active/better unions

Increases in union membership

Over two years of the project 2010-2012, all participating unions reported significant growth in their membership:

- Ethiopia: NFFPFATU went up by nearly one-fifth to almost 160,000 members
- Kenya: KUSPAW went up by over a half to about 6,400 members
- Malawi: SPAWUM went up by over a half to about 4,800 members
- Malawi: TOAWUM went up by one quarter to about 25,000 members
- Nigeria: AAEUN went up by over one-third to about 24,000 members
- Zambia: NUPAAW went up by over one-third to about 25,000 members

Of course, not all this increase can be attributed to the OHSE project alone. However, the unions do say that the extra resources that meant they could get to the workplaces and interact with the workers, which stimulated many to join.

“Our union got involved in the IUF OHSE Project in 2006. A lot of accidents were being reported then. But, through the project, the union put in resources and effort, involving union negotiators and establishing more health and safety committees. There has also been higher recruitment into the union. Various areas have joined because of the project activities.”

Ndete Amunabi, National Project Coordinator, KUSPAW, Kenya

More members mean higher levels of income for the unions from membership fees. This gives the unions more resources to run their activities, attracting yet more workers to join and contribute. This should make the unions more self-sustaining for the long-term.

Plus, as we have seen, the unions are not just benefiting from greater numbers of members, but also from their greater energy.

- Better activism; greater motivation about OHSE and generally
- More/better involvement by local/workplace union leaders, better negotiating skills
- Better involvement of women in the unions, at all levels
- Union adoption of OHSE policies, integrated into union activities
- More/better workplace committees: better risk assessment and recording/reporting of accidents.

“We are very thankful to the IUF for the continued support in OHSE that has assisted the unions in Malawi to grow from strength to strength.”

Raphael Sandramu, OHSE Project National Coordinator, Tobacco and Allied Workers Union of Malawi (TOAWUM) and Plantation and Allied Workers Union of Malawi (PAWUM)



All participating unions reported significant growth in their membership.

● Better collaboration between unions

Unions in the project are reporting much greater collaboration, whether between various unions in the agriculture/horticulture sector, or with their own national union federation.

Activities include information exchange, joint workshops, and joint lobbying to their government for ratification of ILO Convention C184 and implementation of its accompanying Code (see pages 29-30) so as to gain improvements in employment legislation and to get them properly implemented. This collaboration is strengthening the labour movement in each country.

Malawi

Through the OHSE Project, the National Project Coordinator, Raphael Sandramu, has carried out Study Circles training programme on tobacco, sugar and tea plantations where different unions have membership, and this has encouraged the unions to collaborate more. The sugar workers' union SPAWUM now has its own OHSE Coordinator, Prince Jesnao, but its collaboration with the other unions continues. For example, they have joint meetings with the Ministry of Labour, and share training seminars.

Meanwhile, the Plantation, Agriculture and Allied Workers Union (PAWUM) in Malawi had become disaffiliated from the IUF by not paying its affiliation fees. But through the Project, it has become an IUF member again.

Kenya

KUSPAW reports much better collaboration with other unions at a national level, particularly for the ratification of C184 (see page 29).

Another impact of this and the other IUF projects in Africa is that there has been much more cross-border collaboration, notably about toxic pesticides, as well as on C184 and the Code. Such activities mean that not only do unions become more aware of each other, and build their information and strategies by sharing. They also gain in confidence.





Everyone has an interest in the safe production of a sustainable food supply.

● Community-welfare and environmental benefits

Unions say that greater awareness among managers and workers about environmental issues is leading to much less use of toxic chemicals and better management of wastes. Less pollution is clearly needed for better food security.

What is more, in several countries companies are putting their wastes to productive use, to everyone's advantage.

Kenya

KUSPAW saw that stagnant water at various sugar plants was encouraging mosquitoes to breed, increasing the risk of malaria. So they got management to improve the drainage systems.

Meanwhile, the Mumias sugar company led the way in using bio-wastes to produce the biofuel ethanol and now, instead of sending its polluted waste water to the rivers, it is purifying and bottling it for sale to consumers. Other companies such as Chemelil and Kibos Sugar and Allied Industries are following suit.

Uganda

Here too, Kakira Sugar is using its 'bagasse' sugar cane wastes, in this case to generate large amounts of electricity to run its own operations and for the national grid, **see opposite**.

Malawi

Illovo Sugar is similarly using 'bagasse' as bio-fuel to run its boilers and generate electricity, and purifying its waste water of pollutants so as to re-use the water to irrigate its cane fields.

Nigeria

In the north of the country, the AAEUN found that pollution from the use of toxic chemicals in local fishing was affecting land and the communities who live and work there, particularly after flooding. These problems were caused "largely as a result of ignorance", according to National Project Coordinator Esther Timothy Cooney. Through the project, the union was able to run a number of workshops to raise awareness in the community - among farm owners, as well as workers and union members.

● Greater public profile for unions and OHSE issues

As we have seen, unions are making themselves and these vital issues of health, safety and the environment much more visible to the general public. After all, everyone has an interest in the safe production of a sustainable food supply. Unions are doing this through demonstrations, such as on International Days of Action, by gaining access to the media as in Malawi (**see page 34**), and via drama as in Zambia (**see page 39**).

Many unions are also developing better collaboration with other civil society organisations, particularly those campaigning against the use of toxic chemicals, and those fighting for gender equality.

Uganda: A combined effort

Kakira Sugar is the leading sugar producer in Uganda, and part of the giant Madhvani Group which also has operations in other countries such as Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa and India. The Group's activities account for some 10% of Uganda's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Kakira Sugar has 7,500 employees. Plus over 7,000 small farmers supply the plant. Company facilities include 3,450 houses for employees, 12 schools for employees' children, and a 75-bed hospital, and these are proudly mentioned on its website, in its CSR policy called 'Our Family of People'.

Sadly, however, the company does not also mention on-line that it has a CBA with the NUPAWU union, one that was agreed in 1986, nearly 30 years ago. Its OHSE Manager, Geoffrey Wabomba, told unionists from various countries on an IUF OHSE Project visit to the plant in October 2013:

"Management of Kakira Sugar works together with NUPAWU in all activities concerning the unionised employees. If the union was not here and the management was not as positive, we would not be where we are today. Together, we talk about the negative and the positive.

New workers do have sensitisation on safety, and they are encouraged to report hazards. Ear plugs and helmets are provided, although they are not always properly used.

One of our biggest challenges is PPE for the spraying team. We don't think we have found yet the appropriate clothing because, when workers carry agrochemicals in backpacks, it can affect their skin. We also had to improve on air quality because inspectors said they would close us down if the level of dust continued. There are committees at Section, Department, and Company levels, and quarterly OHS meetings. It is a combined effort, union with management."

According to the company's statement on Corporate Social Responsibility to the Environment, "The Management of Kakira Sugar is committed to providing a safe, healthy and pleasant environment for the employees and the public... It endeavours to produce sugar on a sustainable and environmentally sound basis.

Concern is given to wetlands, river zones, steep slopes and shallow soils". It has a UNEP Certificate for Cleaner Production, whose concepts the company says it applies routinely in all its operations.

Since the mid-2000s, Kakira Sugar has been using the residues (bagasse) from its sugar-making processes as bio-fuel to generate electricity. This not only powers all of its own operations, workers' homes and local street lights, but also supplies a large quantity to Uganda's national grid.

www.kakirasugar.com



Kakira Sugar
has 7,500
employees



6

Lessons: How to overcome the challenges

The unions involved in the IUF African OHSE Project have lessons which they can pass on to others:

Challenges from **Employers**

They employ many workers on casual contracts

“Unemployment compels workers to take on willingly hazardous and risky jobs for fear of remaining unemployed. It is more common to see casual workers using equipment or applying pesticides with bare hands. We try to recruit them and raise their awareness today, but then tomorrow they are gone again.”

Joyce Tumwesiga, Director of Education and Training, NUPAWU, Uganda

Putting workers onto short-term contracts, employing them as ‘seasonal’ even where the seasons do not affect the work, and so on is a key way for employers to side-step their employment responsibilities. Such ‘casual’ workers are often excluded from CBAs and/or legal protections. In some places, it means that they cannot join the union or benefit from protections that the union has won. Or the high turnover of workers means that the unions have to keep on repeating their awareness-raising and training efforts.

However, casualised employment also runs very high risks for employers in terms of occupational health and safety. Costly accidents are far more likely to happen where there is a high turnover of workers who are untrained.

- ▶ **Remember that the ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Agriculture (2010) (paragraph 1.2.4) specifically includes casual workers, including seasonal, temporary, contract, etc.**
- ▶ **Unions should work hard to include casual workers in their Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) with employers, and in their OHSE training. It might seem like a lot of effort for little return, but this helps to build a ‘preventative culture’ among workers for the long-term.**

Employers often view OHSE as a cost rather than a legal responsibility and moral duty

This attitude leads managers to cut corners wherever possible, for example not preventing risks where they should, or only doing it to a cheaper, sub-standard level.

“The project sensitised both employers and workers about the dangers that workers face daily. For example, processing coffee produces a lot of dust which the workers inhale – they were using just bits of cloth, whether they were clean or not. So we got them to understand about the danger of not using protection. And that led to a reduction in absenteeism due to sickness. An indirect result was that productivity increased.”

Theopista Ssentongo, Workers’ Representative Member of Parliament, and NUCMAW, Uganda

- ▶ **Persuade employers of the high risk of accidents, which can be very costly both in financial terms and also for their public profile. By contrast, taking a positive attitude to OHSE can even benefit the company by improving productivity.**

ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Agriculture (2010) specifically includes casual workers.

Many employers are unwilling to negotiate with unions

“We are still dealing with employers who don’t want to hear the word ‘union’. It is hard to get them to do a check-off system for union dues. But we were able to use the project funds to meet some difficult employers and get them to allow us to hold meetings with their employees.”

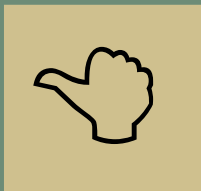
Raphael Sandramu, TOAWUM/PAWUM National Project Coordinator, Malawi.

- ▶ **Unions have had to deal with this from the moment they were first formed. There is no other way than to have persistence and endurance.**

Managers are often not very knowledgeable or experienced about OHSE issues.

Managers also need awareness-raising and training, but some firms are not willing to bear these extra costs. Or, when managers change, those who have been trained may be replaced by untrained ones, and the process has to start all over again.

- ▶ **Unions can help also to educate managers about OHSE risks and prevention.**
- ▶ **Use positive examples from other employers to show reluctant managers, such as this:**



Benefits of a Safety and Health Plan?

- ✓ To save costs because accidents are expensive.
- ✓ To comply with legal requirements.
- ✓ To demonstrate goodwill to employees and the community, i.e. to avoid bad publicity.
- ✓ People do not get injured or killed.
- ✓ Property, machinery and materials are not destroyed.
- ✓ Production flows more smoothly.

From an OHSE training slideshow presentation by management at the Chemelil Sugar Company, Kenya

“We are speaking on an informed basis. We challenge employers by saying ‘You are dependent on your workers. You have to think of them. It is they who do the spraying; not you’. Employers need to know their own workplace.”

Kunda Mutebele, National Project Coordinator, NUPAAW, Zambia

Challenges from **Governments**

Inadequate legal protections

Labour inspection of workplaces is key if workers are to benefit from any legal protection that exists. It is an international right recognised under ILO Convention on Labour Inspection (Agriculture) 129 (1969). However, too often the laws are too weak to meet the challenges of making farms, plantations and food processing factories safe and healthy.

- ▶ **Unions have to lobby (and even sometimes educate) government officials and elected representatives about the need to be proactive in passing and upholding adequate OHSE laws. Not only is this good for the workers, but for the community and environment at large, reducing poverty and promoting sustainability.**

Turnover of government/civil servants

It can be very frustrating when unions are making some progress with government, and then the politicians or officials change. Often, the new people have little knowledge about OHSE issues.

Malawi

National Project Coordinator Raphael Sandramu says that the unions have been making frequent visits to the Ministry of Agriculture there. They have learned that it is much more effective if they collaborate in this. What they also have found, however, is how often Ministers and their civil servants change. "We always meet new faces and have to restart discussions", he says, which is tiresome and delays progress.

Failure to implement the laws that do exist

Sometimes this is political: those in power are more concerned to support employers than to safeguard workers and communities. They take a 'light touch' approach to enforcing laws, and allocate too little budget for this. Sometimes it can be due to corruption of government officials, including OHSE inspectors.

There are usually too few labour inspectors to ensure even a token of appearance at more than a tiny proportion of workplaces. Those inspectors who do exist often have inadequate training and resources, particularly for transport to more remote farms and plantations. It is also the case that some inspectors can be corrupted, paid to keep quiet even when conditions are very bad.

Another problem is the growing privatisation of inspection and OHSE certification. Governments award contracts to private companies to administer and carry out inspection systems. However, private companies are even less accountable than governments.

- ▶ **Unions must take up the political issues of protecting workers and communities, fighting corruption, privatisation, etc. They have to be prepared to sustain this work over the long term.**
- ▶ **Unions can step in and improve recording and reporting systems, presenting quality data to the labour inspectorate.**



Unions can present quality data to the labour inspectorate.

Challenges from **workers/unions**

Ongoing lack of awareness among workers

Many workers don't see the need, for example, to use PPE even when they are given it, or they ignore instructions about not going into a recently-sprayed area, or they fail to report accidents.

"We tell workers, 'You must wear the PPE provided. If you don't, you are not only putting your own health and safety at risk. In our country, employers have the right to sue a worker who is not using the PPE it has provided'."

Lincoln Aveza, Education Officer, KUSPAW, Kenya

Also, while accidents or immediate reactions to workplace conditions are easier to identify, there is often a lack of awareness about long-term impacts such as industrial-related diseases, or harmful effects on the wider environment and food safety.

- ▶ **Unions need to know about the kinds of long-term occupational diseases their members may face, and how to identify them, and then pass this knowledge on to their members.**
- ▶ **Unions should also take up the impact of workplace OHSE on society and the environment, particularly in the case of agricultural/plantation-based unions on food security.**
- ▶ **Recommendation R133 that accompanies C129 says that governments should support education campaigns to promote better health and safety in agriculture and horticulture.**

The need for repeated training

Large numbers of workers are employed on casual employment contracts. Active unionists are often harassed and even sacked by managers. Some of those trained by the unions leave for better jobs. All this means that there can be a high turnover of trained OHSE Reps and Study Circle Leaders. Also, technology and production methods change and therefore so do the hazards faced by workers and communities.

- ▶ **OHSE training programmes are not one-off. They have to be on-going, built in to the activities of the unions.**
- ▶ **Unions need to keep up with changes in science, technology and production methods. One example is to know the chemical formulae of pesticides, not just the brand names.**

Lack of union resources

Some unions do not have enough money to get organisers to where the workers are. Or they lack the funds and people to sustain on-going training, or to provide such things as legal support.

"In Malawi, there are 5,000 farms with over 3.7 million workers. But there is also a lack of reliable transport to remote places. I usually have to travel by motorbike and my colleagues use bicycles. So reaching these workers is a problem."

Raphael Sandramu, National Project Coordinator, TOAWUM/PAWUM, Malawi.

- ▶ **There is no alternative but to build union membership so as to increase the financial and human resources needed to protect workers.**



Large numbers of workers are employed on casual contracts.

For more information

Throughout the booklet, we give the websites where you can find more information.

For IUF publications, you can also search the IUF Publications page at

www.iuf.org/w/?q=node/3891

Or for hard copies, please contact the IUF Secretariat. See opposite for the contact details.

And here are more sources of useful information:

International Labour Organisation (ILO): www.ilo.org

Health, Safety and Environment: A Series of Trade Union Education Manuals for Agricultural Workers, ILO Actrav, 2006:

http://www.ilo.org/actrav/info/pubs/WCMS_111413/lang--en/index.htm

'Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety', ILO SAFEWORK, 2012: an online resource of information and good practice:

www.ilo.org/oshenc

More ILO training materials on OHSE can be found at **[http:// www.ilo.org/safework/info/instr/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/safework/info/instr/lang--en/index.htm)** including:

'Ergonomic checkpoints in agriculture: Practical and easy-to-implement solutions for improving safety, health and working conditions in agriculture', ILO, 2012:

[http:// www.ilo.org/safework/info/instr/WCMS_176923/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/safework/info/instr/WCMS_176923/lang--en/index.htm)

'Tackling hazardous child labour in agriculture: Guidance on policy and practice', ILO, 2006:

[http:// www.ilo.org/safework/info/instr/WCMS_110200/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/safework/info/instr/WCMS_110200/lang--en/index.htm)

'Chemical safety training modules', ILO, 1998:

[http:// www.ilo.org/safework/info/instr/WCMS_112985/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/safework/info/instr/WCMS_112985/lang--en/index.htm)

World Health Organisation (WHO): **www.who.int**

Pesticides Action Network International: **pan-international.org**

Pesticides Action Network Africa (PANAF): **www.pan-afrique.org**

In your own country, check for:

- ▶ **Trade union health and safety specialists**
- ▶ **Your own government's OSHE agency**
- ▶ **ILO office, particularly any specialists in OHSE**
- ▶ **Academics specialising in OSHE**
- ▶ **Labour-related NGOs (non-governmental organisations), women's rights organisations, and other civil society organisations with whom you can campaign.**

The future: Organise! Fight! Win!

Organise

- ▶ Encourage affiliated unions to use OHSE more effectively as an organising tool
- ▶ Ensure gender concerns about OHSE are addressed
- ▶ Organise to ensure OHSE protection is provided to all workers, whatever their status

Fight

- ▶ Further erosions of workers' rights to a safe and healthy workplace
- ▶ For the right of trade unions to have access to workplaces to represent workers on OHSE issues
- ▶ Privatisation of labour inspection and the further encroachment of private certification into OHSE
- ▶ Ongoing efforts by employers and some governments to shift blame and responsibility from employers to workers

Win

- ▶ Increased awareness and mobilisation amongst affiliated unions on OHSE
- ▶ More ratifications of all ILO Conventions on OSHE
- ▶ More commitments from companies/TNCs to work with the IUF on OHSE issues.

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The IUF is the global union federation that brings together trade unions in the plantation and farming sectors across the world.

Promoting occupational health, safety and the environment is one of our key areas of work.

This booklet describes the activities of one of our OHSE projects, involving farm and plantation workers in several countries of Africa from the mid-2000s. It highlights the key lessons learned, with the aim of involving yet more workers in yet more countries in these vital issues.



Organise, Fight and Win!

