IN SUPPORT OF THE WORKING CLASS:

The Alumni Applied Research School of the Global Labour University 2013 in Mumbai and beyond

EDITORIAL

The publication you are seeing on your screen or maybe even holding in your hand sets out to discuss „pro-labour activities" of the Global Labour University (GLU) Alumni Applied Research School (AARS) which took place in Mumbai/India from 25/9 to 05/10/2013.
Every year, alumni of the GLU programmes have the chance to meet in one of the five GLU campuses (Berlin/Germany, Campinas/Brazil, Johannesburg/South Africa, Mumbai/India, Pennsylvania/USA) to share knowledge and skills gained from existing (research) projects and develop new ones. In addition, through such a platform, GLU Alumni develop strategies and common understanding to address global socio-economic capital exploitation.

In this publication, ongoing GLU Alumni discussions and projects are presented. The publication is intended to provide activists in labour and other social movements as well as other individuals with information on ongoing debates relating to global labour issues.
In place of an introduction Baba Aye presents to the readers the Annual Thematic Conference of the International Centre for Development and Decent Work (ICDD), which was the intake of the meeting in Mumbai (Page 1).
You'll then find an article by Jô Portilho and Natália Cindra (Brazil), Steven Toff (USA), Anil Roham (India) and Natalia Nikulova (Russia) on the different challenges in their respective labour movements, which were discussed during the AARS (Page 2).
Akua Opokua Britwum writes on the multiple activities of the „Gender and Trade Unions Group", one of the oldest working group of the GLU (Page 4), while Patricia Chong reports on the latest developments of a project which has almost concluded its activities on workers' education and its role for political consciousness (Page 5).

As part of a bigger research project of the GLU, alumni undertook a survey on union strategies against economic inequalities. Edlira Xhafa, as coordinator of this study, reports in a small text about the survey (Page 5).

A visit to different unions in Mumbai led to a text by Baba Aye and Luciole Sauviat describing and conceptualising different union types in India. Without assuming that it would be possible, as visitors, to understand the Indian union landscape in a few days, they nevertheless see differences of organisation which can be generalised (Page 6).

Finally, new exiting groups were formed and started to work: the International Labour Organisation (ILO) proposed to the alumni to develop an online course on international labour rights and Tandiwe Gross describes the state of this project (Page 8); Alumni started an international research on precarious workers and their collective campaigns for dignified working and living conditions. The rationales of this empowering project are explained by Dan Hawkins (Page 9), while Rhea Chatterjee and Tandiwe Gross present a new solidarity action platform launched by a group of young GLU Alumni (Page 10).
Enjoy reading and join us in advancing the interests of the labour movement!

Editorial Board: *Luciole Sauviat, Baba Aye, Zacharia Elias, William Ashaley*

ICDD ANNUAL THEMATIC CONFERENCE LOOKS AT: "THE ROLES OF WORK, FOOD AND CASH IN OVERCOMING POVERTY"

by Baba Aye

A major highlight of the activities of GLU Alumni during the last Alumni Applied Research School (AARS) was our participation in the 4th Annual Thematic Conference (ATC) of the International Centre for Development and Decent Work (see here: (http://www.uni-kassel.de/einrichtungen/icdd/home.html)).
The ATC which held on September 28-30, 2013 had as its theme: "the Roles of Work, Food and Cash in Overcoming Poverty". It was a very thought-provoking conference which considered the important task of reducing poverty as one which is "a multi-dimensional reality" involving "issues of livelihood, access to resources, decent work" and "the building of developmental capacities and institutions to build and sustain an effective democratic polity".

The Conference started with an opening session at the TISS Library Conference Hall in the evening of Saturday 28th September. The Dean of the School of Management and Labour Studies, Professor D.K Srivastava welcomed all participants, noting that it was a great honour for TISS to play host to leading intellectuals from 34 countries across the globe. He further stressed the importance of the theme and the topics that would be discussed in the course of the various panels of the Conference. Mrs Shubhada Choudhary of the DAAD office in Mumbai also joined Prof. Srivastava in welcoming everybody to the Conference.

Prof. Christoph Scherrer, the Director of ICDD and Mr Frank Hoffer, Sr. Research Officer of the ILO gave inspiring speeches which embodied the important role that ICDD research is playing in linking concepts between qualitative human development and the world of work as well as the broader society at large. Special lectures were then presented on the broad theme by Dr. Jomo Sundaram, Asst. Director General of the FAO and Mr. Olivier de Schutter, UN Rappoteur for Human Right to Food. De Schutter gave particular examples on how programs against hunger can take into account the additional burdens and family responsibility that women have in many countries. The video of his speech can be screened online (click here: (http://www.uni-kassel.de/einrichtungen/icdd/events/annual-thematic-conference/atc-2013.html)).

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After this, a book presentation was made of the proceedings of the ACDD ATC 2012 proceedings. The book which was edited by Christoph Scherrer and Debdulal Saha is titled The Food Crisis: Implications for Labour. It has nine chapters divided into three parts: "food insecurity"; "decent work deficit and rural labour" and; "social protection". Copies were made available for the audience and can be downloaded for free (click here: (http://www.uni-kassel.de/einrichtungen/fileadmin/datas/einrichtungen/icdd/Publications/The_Food_Crisis_-_Implication_for_Labor_-_Scherrer__Saha__eds._FINAL.pdf)).

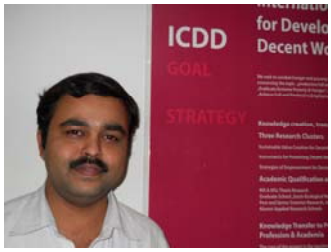
The conference continued with three more plenary sessions and seven tracks of parallel sessions with four papers presented in the different panels. Generally, examined: the interfaces of the distribution of the products of work and social structures of the political of such distribution; poverty alleviation and access of the poor and working people to institutional finance; "the role of agriculture in developing countries....as the primary source of income for many poor people"; the decent work agenda in relation to the informalisation of work and the challenges this poses for overcoming poverty, and; the pervasiveness of inequality, as a major drawback to the task of building more just and inclusive societies, necessary for social coherence.

Finally, members of the GLU research project "Combating Inequalities", (click here for project presentation: (http://www.global-labour-university.org/298.html)) gave an introduction on this urgent issue and Edlira Xhafa presented the intermediary findings of the GLU Alumni research on union policies and practices against inequalities (more in Xhafa's article on the topic).

There were several brilliant presentations and debates in the course of the various sessions. GLU Alumni participated actively in these, in some cases as presenters and in all cases with well thought out interventions from the floor. Continuing with the Alumni Applied Research School after the ATC, we were intellectually more refreshed and full of energy for the remaining glorious days in Mumbai.

TRADE UNION CHALLENGES

During the 2013 AARS, GLU alumni had the opportunity to discuss various topics of relevance to labour movement in their countries. Under the question "What main challenges do we face in our unions?" alumni shared current issues and possible solutions through a debate full of international solidarity.



Anil Roham presented about *Globalisation and Trade Union Challenges In India*. He highlighted the gap between the production of goods for export and the expansion of informal employment. In his view, "India has emerged as one of the fastest growing economies in the world spurred first by reforms under its phase of domestic business – oriented liberalization and later by external market oriented liberalization. Yet this growth has brought mixed economic and social outcomes. On the one hand, rising total factor productivity in Indian Industry and exports has become more skillful and capital intensive. This evidence suggests that some Indian products are moving into higher tiers of value chains and the companies are generating demand for more skilled workers. However, on the other hand, problems of unbalanced growth between regions, low quality informal work and adverse impacts of trade liberalization on more employment – intensive sectors and agriculture are still persisting".

In addition, **Roham** suggests that this new economic pattern interferes with labor relations, weakening trade union representation while causing new demands of the working class. "Transformation and integration of the global economy has led to a relative decline of traditional labour–intensive industries where unions density had been high. Consequently, trade Union membership in these industries has declined. In the emerging workplaces of the new economy a younger, educated workforce is generally more individualistic and materialistic and less inclined to join unions. The size of firms in terms of numbers employed is also decreasing progressively due to the deepening of capital and victimisation that makes unionisation difficult. With the workforce that is becoming increasingly divergent, there are additional problems in uniting young people. In such scenario, the situation seems to be more complex but it is anticipated that increased economic growth complimented with the increased number of matured industries will bring changes. Already, the prevalence of high infant mortality in fast growing businesses has made some young people realize the need for unions not for wage, benefits and career progress bargaining only but for protection against unfair dismissals."

Steven Toff from the AFL-CIO shared his views about recent changes made in the US labour movement.

After years of declining membership, the national central federation, AFL-CIO, announced at their September 2013 convention, a new approach in working with allies. Instead of simply functioning as a traditional umbrella organization for unions throughout the country, the AFL-CIO hopes to forge new and stronger alliances with non-union organizations that affect the lives of working class families. Present at the convention, and symbolic of this new shift, were organizations like workers' centers, immigrant rights organizations, women's organizations, environmental groups, and students/youth.

Steven suggests that "This historic step is not unprecedented in the United States, but the AFL-CIO truly hopes to formalize these working relationships on an entirely new level. However, it remains to be seen how effective such a move will be. Many questions remain regarding what this shift truly means. It could mean that social justice allies could become a part of what we have traditionally known as "the house of labor". There has even been discussion of allowing organizations to have voting rights in the federation just like for instance a construction workers' union would.

While discussing and considering the possibilities of strengthen-

ing labor's relationship with social movement allies might seem exciting, there are still some serious concerns. Some have criticized this initiative as a shift from traditional strategies aimed at weakening the labour movement. However, in any case, what labor has been doing for a long time has not worked, and any change, experimental as it may be, should be an interesting one.

Truth Commission of Rio de Janeiro - Challenges to investigate persecution of the labor movement

Natália Cindra (Comissão da Verdade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro – CEV-Rio) and **Jô Portilho** (National Confederation of Financial Sector Workers – CONTRAF/CUT) highlighted two aspects of Brazilian social struggles.

Natalia debated the challenges and the first findings of the CEV-

Rio, that it is a State Commission that investigates the severe human rights violation during a Brazilian military dictatorship. Natalia's presentation emphasizes the findings of the Labor Movement Working Group that researches the history of labor movement resistance in Brazil. **Natália Cindra** noted that, "between 1964 and 1985, Brazil was under a military dictatorship just like other several Latin American countries in the past. During those 21 years, many intellectuals, artists and activists were kidnapped, imprisoned, tortured and/or killed. "Up to our days, there are families that have not buried their missing relatives whose bodies are still missing".

During that time, labor and other social movements were persecuted and highly oppressed.

30 years later after the military dictatorship, social movements and former political prisoners were able to establish the National Truth Commission (CNV) and local commissions, such as the Truth Commission of Rio de Janeiro (CEV-Rio), in order to investigate the severe human rights violations that happened between 1964 and 1985. The work just began, but four Central Unions are involved and several local trade unions, that are helping to articulate the subject. CEV-Rio already can say that the number of persecuted is even bigger than the official number.

Emphasizing the issue of Decent Work, **Jô Portilho** submitted *Current Trade Union's Challenges: new law project outsourcing and labor laws in Brazil destruction*.

She explained how one of the greatest challenges for the Brazilian trade union movement in the last 30 years has been dealing with the consequences of outsourcing. Although current law does not permit outsourcing of core work, a new labor bill is being discussed in the Brazilian parliament that could change the existing situation. The proposed law, PL 4330, would allow all levels of outsourcing in private and public sectors, even in core work. The Brazilian labour movement is running a national campaign against the bill.

The trade union movement and several members of Parliament believe that the new law would reduce fixed costs for business and increase corporate profitability at the expense of workers, by attacking job security and wages. Business interests have invested heavily in an intense lobbying campaign with lawmakers poised to vote on the project.

GLU alumni were moved by the presentation and an impromptu suggestion was made that we take pictures of each other with signs voices our opposition to the law, thereby showing the international attention and support that the opposition movement enjoys.

Next steps towards developing New Trade Union Movement in Russia

Natalia Nikulova from the Interregional Trade Union of Russia (ITUA) addressed the issue of the need to revitalize the union structure in order to mitigate the current challenges facing Trade Union movement in Russia. Natalia contends that the trade union movement needs to be reshaped by taking into consideration a number of key issues including:

- Structural inability to defend interests of union members in the framework of the current legislation.
- The need to restore consciousness of local union members
- Restructuring of local union executive bodies' attitudes and approach towards ITUA executives. Promotion of mutual understanding on a wide range of issues of concern to both parties.
- Review of roles and responsibilities as well as structural arrangements at different levels (i.e. local / regional and national levels).

It is anticipated that possible solutions will be developed as ITUA is organizing a Special Congress to change the statute, structure and budget system. In view of this, the expected outcome is differentiation of representative's functions on three levels (local, regional and national) with changes in collective bargaining committees and financial structure changing.

At the end of the discussion GLU alumni have taken the initiative to support the international labour movement activities by sharing information as well as pictures with sign of voices to awake the international community to observe the basic human and labour rights. The Trade Union Confederation of Brazil (CUT) is one of the global institutions that support this initiative by creating a public photo album on its webpage to exhibit the international solidarity photos (more than 50 pictures of workers from different corners of the world saying "NO TO PL 4330", a labour law project to allow all levels of outsourcing and precarization). This campaign is being disseminated through the internet and has been sent to members of the Brazilian parliament.

DON'T AGONIZE, DO ORGANIZE!

GENDER AND TRADE UNION RESEARCH GROUP

by Akua Opokua Britwum

Introduction to the group work

The gender and trade union research group was set up by the Global Labour University (GLU) alumni in September 2009 to provide a forum for alumni researchers to engage union gender democracy. The first meeting in Berlin (2009) outlined group objectives and detailed specific research agenda. Members of the group agreed to conduct research into trade union gender dynamics and in addition continuously explore the status of women in their various trade unions. In terms of research the group decided to work around 3 interrelated projects: women and trade union leadership; trade union structures and policies for gender equality; and union Bargaining Agenda for Gender (BAG). Specifically the group expects through these research projects to:

- Make gender issues more visible within unions and the wider international labour movement;
- Provide examples of creative, innovative and good practice across labour movements;
- Create opportunities to develop strategies collectively and enhance skills, and knowledge of group members;
- Develop an enduring network of members across nations and continents.

The first year saw the production of country case study reports by members from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ghana, South Korea, Nigeria, Philippines, South Africa, Turkey, UK, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Patricia Chong coordinated this project. The group decided to produce a synthesis report drawing information from the case studies. The report compared and contrasted the specific country situations, identifying and analysing the emerging themes within a wider setting of labour market re-structuring and the varieties of patriarchal, racialised and cultural frameworks. Themes were organised around two main issues: structure and culture. Under structure the report highlighted labour, both formal and informal, noting that not only were women firmly located in informal and precarious work but that labour force participation rates continue to increase in these sectors as globalisation continues to fragment work and workforces. Women and men therefore are increasingly competing, pushing down already meagre earnings. Cultural systems in all countries covered were underscored by patriarchal attitudes: shaping the family, work place as well as trade unions.

The group spent ensuing year filling gaps in the first report and carrying some more in-depth analysis. The result was a paper presented at the 2011 Annual thematic conference of GLU and subsequently published as a chapter in the GLU ILO publication (book download: (http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_187420.pdf)). Karen Douglas coordinated the production of the paper for presentation at the conference. The group has in addition published an article on the GLU gender data base in the Global Labour Column (see (http://column.global-labour-university.org/2013/06/gender-and-tu-database-basis-for-change.html)).

Period of consolidation

In September 2011, the group recognised the volume of material it had accumulated and decided to consolidate its efforts in two directions. The first was to publish and the second, institutionalise its data gathering as an on-going project. In 2012 it decided that the consolidation of the group's exertions should assume the form of permanently updating its existing data into a data base to track changes and feed back into the union movement by gathering information on where and how women are gaining formal leadership positions in the trade union movement. To facilitate the collection of comparable data across national boundaries it created two online questionnaires: one, seeking information on union confederations or peak bodies and the other, asking for details on individual national unions. The questionnaires solicit information from around the globe, pleading the involvement of all GLU alumni. The aim is to publish a commentary with the accumulated data every 5 years. Carol Jess coordinates this project.

By way of reaching a wider readership, it was decided in September 2012 to put out the rich information gathered since 2009 in a book form publication to be launched in 2014. This publication will cover women's trade union experiences in 8 countries. The chapters document the gender profile of labour market situation in the respective countries of group members and the gender pay gap. Some chapters examine national peak confederations and others, sector specific, examine the gender dynamics within female/male dominated unions or the experience of atypical workers in union federations. Other chapters examine outcome of union equality practices and workplace structures set up to ease women's burden of combining home/workplace demands.

Engaging women union leaders

Yet another project was added in 2012, to tell the stories of individual journeys of group members as women and men activists challenging gender norms in trade union movements. The telling of such stories highlighted events that triggered interests in the union movement generally and the union gender agenda in particular. Also signalled were motives for remaining gender activists and alternative spaces discovered to pursue gender trade union activism. The telling of the stories also noted that some women's organisational forms, as in the Indian examples of SEWA and LEARN, could provide evidence for cooperative forms of leadership away from the hierarchical style associated with trade unions.

At the Mumbai meeting in 2013, it was decided to explore women's agency by engaging women trade union leaders. It is believe that the time has come to explore the impact of union gender democracy in existence and find out how women union members and leaders have utilised this space. Group members aim to do this by asking women union leaders what they want out of their unions. In addition, it is expected to identify any women-initiated projects for the benefit of women workers. Jabula Maruping is coordinating this project.

The group maintains that trade unions, as representative organs of working people have a responsibility to address their gender democracy deficit beyond women's leadership in union structures. The location of women's power in trade unions remains

strong at the individual level for some women leaders as a result of several decades of union equality structures and policies women power gained in trade unions it yet to translate into group consciousness for collective action to undermine union patriarchal system. This remains the key challenge for trade unions in the coming decade.

WORKERS' EDUCATION AND ITS ROLE FOR POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

by Patricia Chong

History of Project:

In a time of neoliberal attacks against the labour movement, it is pertinent for union activists to ask: what is the meaning, aim and form of Workers' Education and (how) does it impact on political consciousness? What methods work? What does not? And why? GLU alumni, themselves graduates of higher education specifically for trade unionists, are well suited to try and answer these questions. Thus, the Workers' Education and its Role for Political consciousness GLU Alumni research project was established at the 2011 Summer School in Johannesburg South Africa. The comparative research project includes nine case studies of unions from seven countries in Africa, Asia and America:

- Labour Rights' NGOs, labour struggles in Indonesia (Rita Tambunan)
- Labour Education of Brazilian Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT) with focus on the course 'International policies and trade unionism'. (Bertram Jansen)
- Union school of the Ghana Trade Union Congress (Bernard Adjei)
- Workers' education of the Wuchang Passenger Train Depot / China (Yuguo Chen)
- Course design training of the Canadian Labour Congress (Patricia Chong)
- Labour education of the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (Wezi Galera Shaba and Paliani Chinguwo)
- Rain and Harmattan schools of the Nigerian Labour Congress (Edwin Anisha)
- Workers' education of the Edmonton (Canada) Branch of the Industrial Worker's of the World. (Butz, Rob and Roberts, Laura).
- Labour college education of the Ghana Trade Union Congress (Mary Akosua Torgbe and Andrew Addoquaye Tagoe)

Sharing case studies and education materials

The Workers' Education group met autumn 2013 during the Mumbai, India Alumni Applied Research School and developed the following plans that we hope other GLU Alumni and all interested persons involved in workers' education will contribute to:

1) Collecting & Sharing Political Education tools

- GLU Alumni are to send best political Education Tools to Luciole Sauviat

(***Please see submission process at end)

- Steve Toff to create a blog to share our case studies and education tools that will be available / launched on May 1st, 2014
- Shankar Lamichhane to act as Academic liaison / contact person
- Coordination to send blog link through GLU Facebook, GLU Emailing list, etc.
- GLU Alumni to share with their organization
- New section on GLU-Alumni web page devoted to (edited) GLU Alumni case studies

2) GLU Research Paper

- Research Project Coordinator Luciole Sauviat has submitted a draft on the synthesis of the research for publication
- Rita Tambunan has submitted a draft on workers' learning in the context of the Indonesian labour struggles.

*** GLU Alumni Interested in Submitting Political Education Tools for Webpage

A) GLU Alumni interested in submitting political education tools should please send an email to Project Coordinator Luciole Sauviat to express their interest: (luciole.sauviat@global-labour-university.org) the latest until the 30th February 2014

B) Luciole will send interested participants guidelines, relevant definitions, submission formats, etc.

C) Final education tools to be send to Luciole by 1st March 2014 will include:

- target audience (who is the workshop for?)
- facilitators instructions (explanation of how to run the workshop)
- handouts for participants (if necessary)
- materials needed
- time needed (how long is the workshop?)

D) Luciole and Patricia to do editing / standardization work

E) GLU Alumni education tools will be uploaded to GLU Workers' Education blog for May 1st, 2014

Share internationally and have access to the best workers' education tools!

TRADE UNIONS AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY: PERSPECTIVES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

by Edlira Xhafa

The survey „Trade Unions and Economic Inequality: Perspectives, Policies and Strategies" is part of an ongoing initiative of the joint Global Labour University (GLU) network project „Combating Inequality" (more info at (http://www.global-labour-university.org/298.html). The survey is a product of the tireless efforts of GLU alumni around the world, who have been actively engaged in discussing the survey with their own trade unions and in filling the questionnaire.

The survey provides insights on trade union views on the indicators of economic inequality, the top three being: increasing job insecurity and precarization of work; declining real wages; and increasing wage gaps in the labour market. The survey also looks at the trade unions' views on the causes and impact of economic inequality on their respective societies, as well as the importance of such issues in the trade union agenda. Furthermore, the survey

offers an overview of the main policies and strategies adopted by trade unions to tackle issues of economic inequality and an overall self-assessment of such policies and strategies. Although work in progress, the survey analysis offers interesting insights which may serve as a basis for a broader debate among the trade union movement on the issues of economic inequality.

An article discussing the findings of the survey will be published in the special issue of the "International Journal of Labour Research" in May 2014. (download here: (http://www.ilo.org/actrav/what/pubs/international-journal-labour-research/lang--en/index.htm)).

THREE MODELS OF UNIONS IN INDIA

by Luciole Sauviat and Baba Aye

Introduction

After a week of intense and fruitful discussions at the Alumni Applied Research School, the GLU alumni went on a tour kindly organized by the comrades in TISS, which took us to a major port in India and meetings with two different types of unions in Mumbai. The first port of call was the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust. While the visit was more of an excursion, we had the opportunity to meet with a few union officers and former officers. This was in the course of a parley which the management had organized to regale us with the impressive records and capacities of the port. The second destination was to the secretariat of a garbage collectors' union. The members of thus union are precarious workers, working for sub-contractors as refuse collectors and had been unionized in the course of long drawn battles to win union rights. Finally, as it grew dark, we arrived at the third and final destination of our tour. This was a union of informal economy workers, in a shanty town within the city.

The experiences we had helped us to put in perspective three different types of union organizing in India. In the formal sector of the ports, we found a union which the management had paternal relations with, and which with these ties had secured some concessions for its members. The second union could be considered a model for organizing contingent labour in precarious work. It also showed some linkages between trade union organizing and the Marxist-Leninist currents in the country. The third union is actually more of an organization of working people in the informal economy, creating spaces of combination for solidarity and mutual help.

In this article, we take you all through the journey of the three union models that we had the opportunity of seeing at close quarters in Mumbai.

The Docks and a Union in the Formal Sector

We took the bus to our first destination, which was the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust. There we were expected by the Mumbai Port Trust and the Dock & General Employee Union. We were first invited to visit this huge containers' port of 2584 hectares. Permission appeared not to have been obtained for us to be shown the port facilities and we went on a boat tour. After this short boat cruise, we went to an official building; There, in a spacious conference room, several officers, among them, a former general secretary of the union, who is now a member of the company's management, showed us a minutely detailed PowerPoint presentation on the port's past, and future development. We also got an insight into the subsisting collective agreement for the employees of the state -owned terminal (two others being Public Private Partnership) through a booklet. Without knowing much about working conditions in the Indian public sector, this agreement seemed quite good. It included provisions like washing and children education allowances, maternity leaves of 180 days, adoption leaves of 135 days, a small paternity leave of 15 days and several loan possibilities.

This collective agreement, more than the future investments in liquid and cement containers and terminals, was the point of departure for many questions concerning the workforce and the union. After the questions and answers session, it was clear that this nice collective agreement covers only the small part of the workforce which is directly employed by the state (about 800 workers). In India subcontracted workers are called contract workers and make up the main part of the work force. As it is usually the case with a subcontracted workforce (in this case one without formal contracts), they don't have the same wages and working conditions as the directly employed workers.

Concerning gender balance in the union, women seemed to be present at the committee level, while absent at higher leadership levels like in so many unions across the world. The visit ended with a sumptuous meal at the Ports Guest house, presented by the management. We then set off for our second destination.

The Garbage Collectors' Union

The office of the garbage collectors' union is the secretariat of one of the many Communist Parties of India. The party makes this office available for several other workers' organizations. On getting to the premises, we entered in a small office with several framed photos from Jawaharlal Nehru (the first president of independent India) to Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, and (unfortunately, as many of the GLU alumni thought) Stalin. There were pictures as well of Indira Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi and some other Indian political figures from the past, on display. Following a few words of introduction by several men working for the union, they showed us a short film about the working conditions of Mumbai contract garbage collectors in 1996, when the union started to organise these category of workers.

At that time they worked under unbearable conditions. Just to mention a few: collecting garbage - including from the hospital dumping ground - with their bare hands, without any water facility and so the workers had to eat on the garbage heap on the truck since they were not allowed in canteens and public transports; working 14 hours a day, without any day off for a wage of 70 Rupees[1] a day. The municipal corporation is in charge of the garbage collection on certain dumping grounds, where directly employed and contract workers are divided by different plights[2].

The contract garbage workers of this union are all so-called Dalits, from the ex-untouchable caste[3], so to say the lowest one, because it was considered to be outside the caste system. While they could see that municipal workers had better working conditions, since they were working on the same premises, they seemed to believe that they didn't have the right to demand anything. Therefore organising was a tedious adventure. The organisers of this new union initiative, partly paid by formal sector unions, accompanied the workers on their daily tour, for nine months. During that time, they tried to understand the workers' situation, explained that they were there only to support their self struggle and strategized with them on the most pressing and achievable demand. The first step was to demand water facilities on the dumping grounds. They were successful and from then on, with the feeling that things could change for the better, they continued to struggle. Nowadays, they work only 7 hours per day and have one day off per week. They are also now equipped with partly mechanized garbage trucks and protective clothes, while their wages have been raised from 90 to 300 Rupees[4] per day in the last 6 years.

Knowing about the difficulties to survive financially as a union in this kind of sector, our group was interested about the commitment of the workers towards their union, especially with regards to paying dues. In this case it seemed not to be an issue. The union now has approx. 6800 members (about 800 of them are permanents) Since the workers know exactly that their dues are for them to be able to struggle (and not to self perpetuate an institution), 97 % are said to respect their membership subscription obligations. Indeed the achievements of the trade union have been converted into guidelines for contract workers in this occupation in the city. However, its enforcement is entirely dependent on the pressure put by the union. Therefore, while non-members are also included in the regulations, they do not get the benefits if they do not have the means to enforce them. Coming back to the photos decorating the walls of the office, we wanted to know the political affiliation of the union. We were told that there is none, but some officers are party members. They are however all in agreement to organise as a (part of) class and not just as a trade association.

The success of this union is partly because of the fact that, it does not regard the subcontracted company but the municipal corporation as its bargaining partner for negotiations on the wages and working conditions of its members. In a persistent way, the union shows that the contract workers are actually working for the municipality and thus insist that it takes responsibility. A decisive moment of this tenacity of the union was when a garbage collector died in the course of work and the municipality tried to shy away from bearing responsibility. The union members simply left the corpse of the man in front of the municipality's office.

The struggle is obviously not over, not only until the abolition of capitalism, but until the contract workers are regarded as directly employed by the municipality. The union went the legal way and sued for this right. Since, with the appeal process, it could take 10 years for final judgment, in the mean time the union has agreed on a temporary compromise including that workers already employed by a contractor would have to be retained if another contractor takes over a garbage collection contract with the municipality. And meanwhile it continues protesting and negotiating for the job and income security of membership.

Organising in the Informal Sector: Community and Mutal Aid

Our last visit, by which time it was already getting dark, was to an informal settlement. We had to watch out, where we put our feet in order not to stumble; the way was very narrow and winding. Finally, we arrived at a brighter place, where an orange, yellow and red tent was set up. We were late and the union's members including a Buddhist monk were waiting for us.

We arrived at the community of the All Mumbai Asagahtit Kangar union, which means: Mumbai union for unorganised workers. People living in the community joined and soon the place was so crowded that the audience had to lift the wall of the tent to see the venue. In the background of the tent, there is a photo of B. R. Ambedkar a famous Dalit who struggled against caste dicrimination and was one of the main architects of the Indian constitution. We were to subsequently learn that most of the members of the union were from the ex-untouchable caste.

A union member, in beautiful white and shiny dress sang a welcome song about humbleness and happiness. This was an island in the roughness of the city of cement and smog. The union's president informed us that members are household workers, waste pickers and the so-called street corner workers who are day labourers that wait for employers to pick them at the corners of Mumbai streets. The union has 450 members, 150 of them are women. The meeting is in Hindi, since very few members speak English. Our coordinator from the university translated.

The president of the union told us about the basic functions of the union, which we would rather describe as a mutual aid association than a trade union. Firstly, the members have to pay 10 rupees monthly dues when they join the association and then they get help in order to access basic services, like an identity card (inhabitants of this community are internal migrants and don't have ID) and a food ration card. Half of the members could now access health insurance and the association gives some children scholarships for computer training. Additionally they started a cooperative bank. Similar to trade union, they are also involved in some kind of negotiations. For example they demand two days per month off for domestic workers and go to the authorities or the employers to put pressure in case of non wage payment.

One of our GLU comrades wanted to know, about the place and the colorful tent, where we were meeting, which contrasted so much with the shanty town dumping ground. "This place is a

commons", was the answer. A place, where children can play and marriages take place. They built the tent, installed electricity, a sound system, and brought chairs, to welcome us.

Workers from the three different trades represented by the association came to share their experience since joining the association and finally each of us was individually welcomed with a rose from

different female members of the association. Tea and cookies were served, after which the monk made a small speech. After all these, the president of the association as well as a swarm of children accompanied us like diplomats to our bus in the direction of our upper middle class hotel in the heart of Mumbai.

Conclusion

It was worthwhile for GLU alumni to have made this tour and we all felt very grateful to the TISS comrades who packaged and coordinated the entire itinerary of that day's tour of the different union types. There were lessons to learn from the spectrum of models which we saw. They partly reflected the diverse nature of enterprises in India and do in a sense give inkling of the dominance of the informal economy, which can be found in many parts of the world. Even in the strictly formal set-up of the ports, it is noteworthy that the bulk of workers are contingent/subcontracted staffers (who are not organized).

The garbage collectors' union model shows how the gap between the formal and the informal spheres of the world of work could be bridged with the challenge that the union has given not only to the direct employers of its members, but to the municipal authority which is the end user of their services. This is akin to the provisions of Global Framework Agreements at the international level where multinational corporations are made to bear responsibility for decent work in the enterprises within their supply chain (though a lot of these MNCs find a way around such provisions until tragedies such as that which resulted in the deaths of more than 1.100 textile workers in Bangladesh in April 2013 occur).

The All Mumbai Asagahtit Kangar union, on its own part shows the inclination of working people to organize in defense of their dignity and to win some extent of decent work within spaces of social life outside the formal world of work. While it might not be a trade union in the strict sense of the word, it stands on the same basis of solidarity which is the primary ethic and "a survival tool of the working class".

The GLU Alumni at the AARS were so impressed by the work being done by the last two unions that it was resolved upon to donate some money out of our solidarity fund to each of them, as our token of support for their organizing work. On a final note, while these three models might not be the only models of union organizing in such a vast land like India and with the changing nature of work in an era of global neoliberalism which impinges on every country, our tour did present insight which was both enlightening and inspiring for our common struggles.

1 1,13 US Dollar at the time of writing

2 Since rubbish is scattered in so many streets of the city obviously, not all garbage collection is organised by some authorities like in this case and so additionally to directly employed and contract workers, self-employed garbage pickers are an important part of the garbage economy.

3 The untouchable caste has been abolished in the Indian constitution and there are some affirmative action programs (quotas in schools, universities, in the parliaments..) nevertheless discrimination and physical violence against Dalits remain.

4 1,45 to 4,82 USD at the time of writing

NEW BLENDED ONLINE COURSE ON "GLOBAL WORKERS' RIGHTS"

by Tandiwe Gross

The GLU network is currently developing a new 3-months blended online course on "Global Workers' Rights" which should start as a pilot course in 2014. The course will be designed for three different target groups: (a) students in existing GLU master courses on the 4 campuses who will be rewarded with credit points, (b) students in other M.A. programmes of associated universities campuses who will be rewarded with credit points and (c) trade union activists (both GLU alumni and other activists) who do the course as "stand alone" training course in their country facilitated by a local tutor and rewarded with a certificate.

Global Workers' Rights

The struggle for human dignity

Blended means that the course will combine residential and online elements: students will meet once per week in their local "class" facilitated by a tutor. During this residential session there will be an online element, i.e. a video-conference with another campus doing the course at the same time, or an online lecture from an external expert. Additionally, students will be required to carry out research tasks and discuss the results online, for example in moderated online discussions.

The course will start out by discussing the history and concept of Global Worker's rights embodied in the idea of International Labour Standards (ILS). It will then introduce the system of ILS and the way trade unions can use them to realize worker's rights worldwide. An overview on the content of key ILS and on economic arguments for workers' rights is complemented with technical skill-building on how to map rights violations in the world.

The impact of trade agreements, corporate social responsibility and international campaigning on workers' rights is also discussed, while another module is dedicated to the question of how to realize workers' rights for informal and precarious workers.
Practical strategies for strengthening global labour rights are streamlined into the whole course, by using case studies, success stories and interviews with experts.

The pilot course for students in the M.A. Programmes is scheduled to start in fall 2014. The 3-months stand-alone pilot course for trade unionists is scheduled to start in spring 2015 and is open to GLU alumni and other trade union activists and social activists. More specific information about the structure, fees and certificate of the pilot course will follow in fall 2014.

Both GLU alumni and other interested trade unionists or social activists are strongly invited to be part of this project which we consider very important for the Global Labour Movement. If you would like to get involved in the course development, participate in the pilot course for trade unionists and/or function as a local tutor for the course in your trade union, please send an email to Frank Hoffer (hoffer@ilo.org) or Harald Kröck (harald.kroeck@global-labour-university.org). By increasing practical skills for furthering worker's rights in a globalized environment, we hope that this course will support trade unionists and social activists in effectively meeting the challenge of globalization. We therefore hope for your active engagement and participation in this endeavour.

PRECARIOUS WORKERS AND THEIR COLLECTIVE CAMPAIGNS FOR DIGNIFIED WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS

by Dan Hawkins

The globalization-neoliberal project of the past 40 years has pushed forth a host of political and economic structural reconfigurations. In terms of its effects on the world of work, one of its most pervasive impacts has been mass informalization and the precarization of work across the globe. Indeed, the ILO estimates that approximately "397 million workers are living in extreme poverty; an additional 472 million workers cannot address their basic needs on a regular basis". The impoverization of workers has taken place alongside the steady process of global capital concentration and a related trend of heightened wealth inequality. Particularly during the new millennium, workers the world over have had to confront the strengthening of global production networks (GPNs), which have squeezed labour costs and impelled the growth of an international division of labour grounded on destructive competition, especially based on South-South worker exploitation.

Alongside the theoretical perspectives that highlight how such a trend has resulted in the spread of informalization, more recently, attention has been turned to examining how labour flexibility within globalization has and is affecting the degree of worker "protection" and worker "security". The switch to a focus on workers' protection over-and-above the general task of inserting workers and informal employers into the formal legal environment is a major progression as it implicitly recognizes that, especially in developing country contexts, the legal-normative threshold is often very distinct from the socio-economic reality . Additionally, while differentiating between the informal wage worker and the informal self-employed entrepreneur, based on the capital exploitation and alienation of the first, against the lack of dependency and the freedom to organize his/her working time, of the second the perspective which focuses on the "degree of protection" as a medium of analysis, allows one to escape the complicated issue of "class positions". It also leads to escape any related ideological and "identity" differences each group may have, focusing instead, on the extent to which these workers/entrepreneurs can improve their life conditions via State subsidies of basic social protection or affiliation to the social security regime as a contributor.

Why focus on the provision of basic social protection as being the major factor in measuring the real transition from informal to formal labour relations?

With the promotion of the ILO's Decent Work campaign by the ex ILO Director General, Juan Somavia, there was a seismic shift in terms of this multilateral, UN institution's role in regulating and harmonizing the tensions inherent in the world of work under a capitalist system of production. Previously, the ILO, as a trilaterally structured institution, had generally focused on the regulation of the formal labour market as well as on exploring ways of formalizing informal economic units of production. With the move to promote decent work as a universal objective for all member countries and their workers, the ILO prioritized not only employment generating policies but also the promotion of rights at work, of social protection and social dialogue (both between employees and employers as well as between each group and the State). These objectives, it was hoped, would lead towards promoting "opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity" (ILO, 1999). The ILO's regulatory mandate, as such, moved to include all workers, irrespective of whether they work in the formal or informal economies, as well as promoting not just more jobs but better quality jobs, a policy explicitly set to counter the precarization of labour under the reign of neoliberal political economy.

Nonetheless, almost 15 years on, decent work, measured by a plethora of indices, has not attained much foothold in the practical arena of labour relations, especially as it has been pitted against the hegemonic discourse of "competition" between countries, and by implication, between workers . Indeed, despite the fact that providing access to social protection regimes is one of the four strategic objectives of the ILO's Decent Work initiative, only 28% of the world's countries have comprehensive social security protection systems, as stipulated in Convention 102 of the ILO. Furthermore, the ILO estimates that only 20% of the world's working population has "effective access to comprehensive social protection". Nonetheless, faced with such a daunting global panorama of worker precarization— whether it be it through the mass shedding of public sector jobs by States, or by the seemingly never-ending maze of labour triangulation and externalization, by firms — workers have resisted, pressuring both employers and the State to ameliorate their miserable conditions, recognize worker

organizations, and negotiate for better and safer work.

This worker pressure and struggle has manifested itself in a plethora of ways and, not surprisingly, it has led to a number of outcomes, depending on the constellation of forces involved, the political and economic conjunctures in their temporal and spatial spheres, and the degree to which workers have been able to leverage new and more traditional sources of power to force change. In some countries, governments have enacted policies that specifically aim to formalize employment. In other countries, cities and economic sectors, legislative reform has not been the core priority for workers and they have, instead sought redress through mobilization, organization and electoral politics.

Visualizing worker struggle against informality and precarity: modes of worker organization

Obviously, the vast diversity of actors, sectors and socio-economic and political contexts within which unprotected workers organize and struggle to improve their plight, ensures that there is no one-model-fits-all approach to visualizing and conceptualizing how these struggles materialize, take shape and achieve certain goals and objectives. Nevertheless, when examining worker struggles across various socio-political topographies, one must also look for points of intersection between the local and the global as a means of illuminating trends and commonalities, helping to discern strategies and the effects of their selection. Doing so, requires an examination of shared categories of informal workers across the globe as well as how their particular struggles for more work- and life-based protection face similar challenges and how they may adopt either similar or distinct forms of organization and redress.

This collective case-study attempts to examine the heterogeneities and similarities of precariously protected workers' struggles, in various countries, to attain more dignified working conditions. It specifically focuses on identifying concrete change that either allows workers to make a concerted transition towards attaining formal employment, or pressureing to at least progress towards such a status, by way of attaining basic social welfare and/or social security coverage, and thereafter pressuring to attain more institutional protection and better working conditions via some type of collective bargaining process. The study will undertake a multi-country case-study format. Each researcher will examine a specific sector or economic activity, in their country of residence, in which workers, collectively, either through a traditional union or through workers' center, cooperative or NGO, etc., have joined together to counter their lack of protection at work and devised novel strategies that seek to improve their plight and counter the downward trend in terms of working conditions and degree of workers' protection and security.

The objective of this collective research project is to map out best practices of workers coming together, despite the vast structural, institutional and legal impediments to such collective action, thereby offering the union movement newfound hope and strategies to fight back against the capital-State onslaught.

NEW ALUMNI PROJECT "SOLIDARITY ACTIVISM GROUP"

by Rhea Chatterjee and Tandiwe Gross

The GLU alumni network is growing: we are a group of individuals across the world who are committed to the cause of labour through research and activism. For this reason, this year's summer school took the decision to create a new group dedicated to creating a platform for alumni to give voice to the struggles they are part of, thereby increasing the scope for global solidarity. The specific aims of the group are thus to:

- Increase the visibility and offer support to local labour struggles, particularly those involving GLU alumni
- Enhance networking among GLU alumni on practical issues of solidarity related to their activist work in the labour movement
- Offer an international voice for struggles which don't make it to big online campaigns and increase the scope of existing online campaigns

This is how we would like to get there:

A. *Campaign newsletter*: Collect information on urgent campaigns from the alumni network and prepare a newsletter which summarizes these campaigns and the ways they can be supported by alumni (online petition, support picture etc.) If applicable, the newsletter will be translated into other languages to increase the scope. The goal of the campaign newsletter is to motivate alumni from all over the world to support local struggles, for example by sending a protest picture like the one against the new Brazilian bill PL 4330 which would allow outsourcing of core business activities.

B. *Solidarity Fund*: Deliberation with the alumni reps about labour struggles to be supported with the alumni solidarity fund.

C. *Intensified support for major labour struggles*: If applicable, develop mechanisms for intensified support for major struggles in the future (i.e. labour rights at FIFA world cups etc.).

How to get involved

1. If you are part of a labour struggle and you want it to appear in the newsletter

Please write a maximum 1 page summary describing the struggle with proposed solidarity actions (what people can do to support, i.e. sign this online petition; take a support picture) and send it to tandiwe.gross@gmail.com

Please consider that you should be somehow connected to the labour struggle (as a volunteer or full-timer) so that we have some link between the GLU network and the struggle. The struggle can be an established campaign which already has support tools (eg. online petitions, social media action) or a local struggle which

does not have any international support yet

2. Join our group

If you would like to join the group please drop a mail to one of our group members.

Natália Cindra Fonseca (Brazil), nataliacindra@gmail.com, LPG 8 (2011-2012)

Natalia Nikulova (Russia), naty_nikulova@list.ru, Engage 3

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