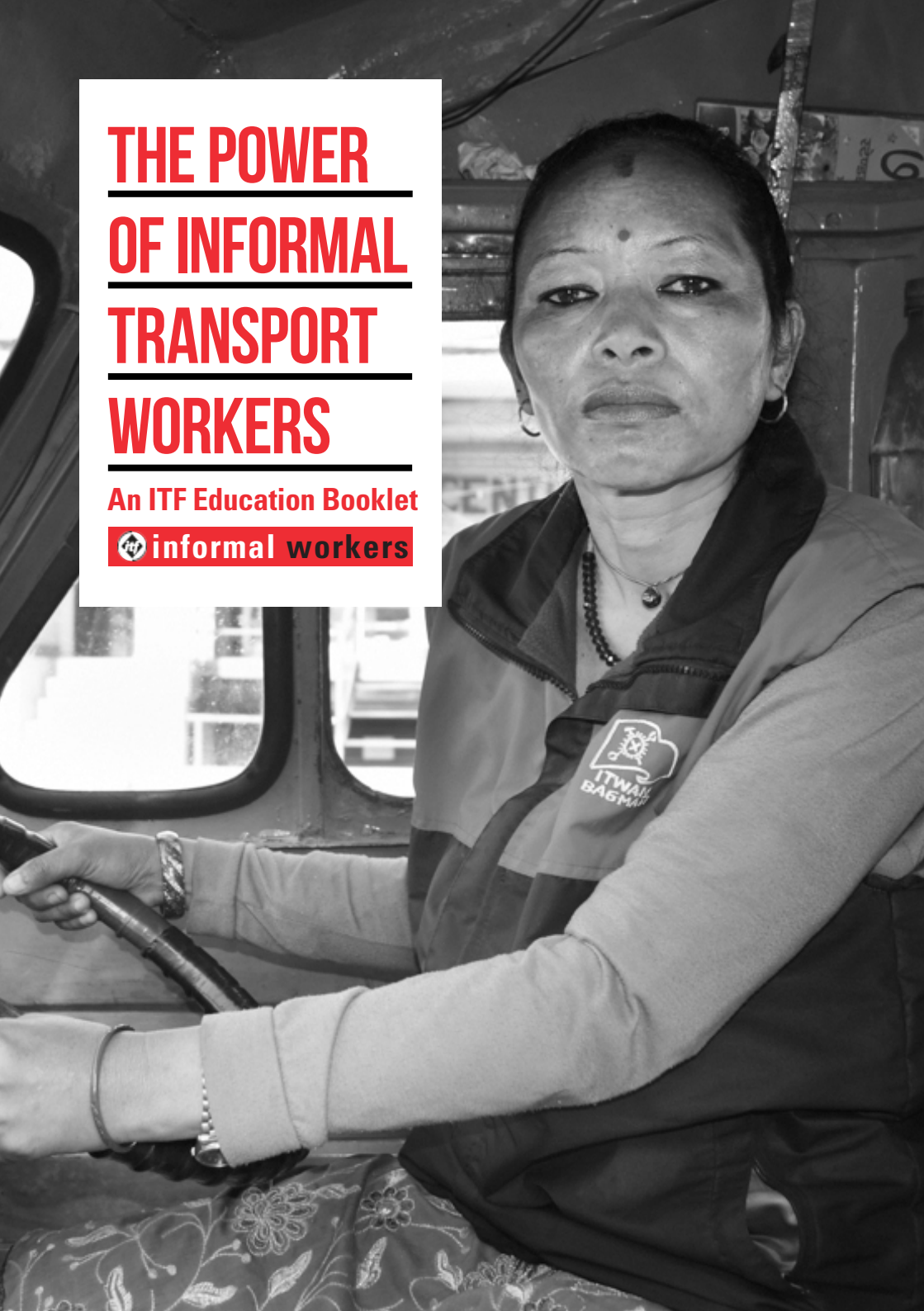


# THE POWER OF INFORMAL TRANSPORT WORKERS

An ITF Education Booklet

 **informal workers**





## PREFACE

In 2013, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) launched the Informal Transport Workers Project to improve the capacity of unions to organise and represent informal transport workers.

The project was based on identified “mentor unions” in Asia, Latin America and Africa who had demonstrated skills and experience in successful organising.

The project enabled them to organise regional policy seminars and training workshops in their respective regions, and to support other unions in their regions in developing skills and policies to build informal workers' organisations.

The mentor unions developed new organising methods, adapted from the ITF's strategic organising approach – mapping informal transport hubs, building alliances with informal associations, researching employment relationships, and supporting collective bargaining with employers, governments and transport authorities.

This booklet attempts to draw together some of the lessons learned about the informal transport industry, the issues faced by informal workers, new models and methods in organising, and implications for the trade union movement.

Further details, reports and background documents about the project can be found at [www.informalworkersblog.org](http://www.informalworkersblog.org). This booklet is accompanied by a video ‘The Power of Informal Transport Workers’, to be found at [tinyurl.com/mk42rrp](http://tinyurl.com/mk42rrp).

Many thanks to FNV Mondiaal, ITF staff, project mentors and participating unions, particularly John Mark Mwanika (ATGWU, Uganda).

Dave Spooner & Jess Whelligan  
Global Labour Institute, Manchester  
January 2017





# THE POWER OF INFORMAL TRANSPORT WORKERS

Most of the world's transport workers are informal. They face police harassment, criminal extortion, job insecurity, low incomes, discrimination, and no access to social security.

Yet they provide essential services for millions across the world.

In Asia and Africa most urban passenger transport is entirely informal, providing employment for many thousands of workers in a wide range of occupations.

Women informal workers are the most precarious and low paid. They face discrimination, violence, sexual harassment and abuse.

Informal work is now also widespread in the "developed world" with the proliferation of transport jobs in the "gig economy". The number of informal transport workers is growing globally.

And globally, informal transport workers are fighting back.

In 2013 the ITF launched the Informal Transport Workers Project to support transport unions in organising and representing informal workers, led by "mentor unions" from Uganda, Niger, Nepal, the Philippines & Colombia.

The results have been outstanding, with more than 100,000 informal workers newly organised in ITF-affiliated unions.

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TRADE UNION  
MEMBERSHIP  
MEANS **POWER FOR  
INFORMAL WORKERS.**

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MASS MEMBERSHIP OF  
INFORMAL WORKERS  
MEANS **POWER FOR  
TRADE UNIONS.**



# WHAT IS INFORMAL WORK?

Less precarious

**"DECENT WORK"**



The International Labour Organisation describes informal work as



*all economic activities that are –  
in law or in practice –  
not covered  
or sufficiently covered  
by formal arrangements.*

They can be own-account (self-employed) workers and employers in their own informal enterprises, contributing family members, members of informal producers' cooperatives or employees holding informal jobs. There can be some confusion between "informal" and "precarious work". Perhaps the best way of understanding it is to think of precarious work as a continuum from "decent work" through precarious work with elements of insecurity, to fully informal and unprotected employment.

More precarious



**INFORMAL WORK**



# TRADE UNIONS AND INFORMAL WORKERS

In the second half of the 20th century, many trade unionists were sceptical about the idea that unions should organise ‘informal’ workers, believing...

- Informal workers are not ‘real’ workers with trade union rights, as there are no collective bargaining relationships with employers
- Informal workers are a threat to organised labour by undermining hard-fought gains in labour standards
- The informal economy is a ‘third world problem’ which will inevitably shrink and disappear as industrialisation spreads through the world, or
- They are simply impossible to organise

In many countries these views were entrenched in labour legislation, where informal workers were not recognised to have fundamental labour rights, were not included in labour market statistics, were not covered by social protection programmes, and/or were not represented or consulted in crucial decisions affecting their livelihoods and working conditions.

While some of these views persist, there has been a big shift in union policy, nationally and internationally, over the last two decades.

## UNDERSTANDING INFORMAL WORK

Much has been achieved in understanding, defining and documenting the informal economy<sup>1</sup>.

In 2002, the ILO’s International Labour Conference included a major discussion on the informal economy. This was a crucial point in establishing a new consensus in the international trade union movement.

It recognised that informal workers are workers, and that the trade union movement had a duty to support and enable them to build effective organisation and representation<sup>2</sup>.

1. Notably the work of Women in Informal Employment Globalizing & Organizing (WIEGO) [www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org).

2. This was subsequently reinforced in the 2014-15 ILC General Discussion on the transition from the informal to the formal economy, and the adoption of ILO Recommendation 204.



## THE INFORMAL ECONOMY IS EXPANDING – WORLDWIDE



*Contrary to earlier predictions, the informal economy has been growing rapidly in almost every corner of the globe, including industrialized countries – it can no longer be considered a temporary or residual phenomenon. The bulk of new employment in recent years, particularly in developing and transition countries, has been in the informal economy.*

### ILO

It is evident that in large areas of the world, notable Africa and Asia, employment in the transport sector is almost entirely informal.

Understanding the importance of organising among informal workers is also growing in the global north, where trade unions are facing major changes in the nature of work itself, particularly for young workers. A central priority for national unions and international union federations is now the fight against the rise of precarious work (agency and temporary work, short or 'zero-hour' contracts, casual work, disguised self-employment, etc.). Informal employment is the most precarious form of work, and there are indications of a growing informal economy in the global north.

Many of the characteristics and methods of organising among precarious workers in London, Paris or New York are strikingly similar to the informal workers' organisations of the global south, and indeed many of the leaders and organisers are migrant workers from the global south.





## **IT IS POSSIBLE TO ORGANISE!**

There are numerous examples from all over the world that prove that it is possible to organise informal workers.

Many of these were initiated or led by women, including domestic workers, home-based workers, waste-recyclers, and street vendors. Some have built their own international organisations, notably StreetNet International, the global network of street vendors and market traders, and the International Domestic Workers' Federation, launched in 2013.

While increasing numbers of informal workers are organising, or at least becoming more visible, it would be wrong to assume that they are necessarily being organised within the trade union movement. Most organisations representing informal workers are associations, cooperatives, self-help groups, or NGOs with varying degrees of membership democracy.

Some of these operate just as if they were a union, but not registered as such – either because of legal obstacles, trade union indifference, hostility or simply that those leaders do not think that trade unions are

relevant to informal workers. In transport, large numbers of workers' associations or informal cooperatives are to be found wherever the informal economy dominates the sector.

It would also be wrong to assume that these 'membership-based organisations' of informal workers, including registered unions, are necessarily democratically accountable to their members. Many are democratic, but others are frequently dominated by powerful families, politicians, informal economy employers, or criminal gangs.

## **REVERSING TRADE UNION DECLINE**

Trade unions in most countries are still facing a decline in membership and power, despite the enormous investment in organising in recent years. In many countries, the decline in formal employment has reached a critical point where unions are unable to meaningfully represent workers to employers or government, or face complete collapse. For some unions, the recruitment of large numbers of informal workers has become essential for survival. Despite the difficulties and challenges involved, there is little choice.







## REMEMBERING OUR HISTORY

In the very beginning, all workers were informal workers. The earliest trade unions in the world were formed by informal workers, who pioneered the struggles for what we now call 'decent work'<sup>3</sup>.

In fact, 'decent work' has only been available for a small minority of the world's workforce: mostly in the global north, mostly men, and for a relatively brief episode in history (in effect since the Second World War).

Increasingly in the 21st century, global changes in the economic and political climate mean small and shrinking islands of decent work are struggling to survive in rising seas of informal and precarious employment. Many unions are having to re-learn from the struggles of earlier generations how and why unions were created in the first place.

SOUTH END DOCKERS FORMED UP FOR SELECTING, 7 A.M. (WET MORNING).



**Irish dockworkers** queue up for a day's work, 1901.

3. "Opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men". <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang-en/index.htm>





# THE INFORMAL PASSENGER TRANSPORT INDUSTRY

Urban passenger transport in developing countries is dominated by the informal economy. In many cities, passenger transport is entirely informal. Other transport sectors, including road haulage, maritime transport, docks and even aviation, include significant numbers of informal workers.

Informal transport workplaces – bus terminals, taxi ranks, motorcycle taxi stands, minibus parks – are major transport hubs with national economic and political importance.

There are numerous forms of informal passenger transport, ranging from large long-distance buses to bicycle taxis. These include very large numbers of auto-rickshaws, minibuses, motorcycle taxis, and various forms of unregulated private hire taxis.



**AUTO-RICKSHAWS** - three-wheeled vehicles, variously called “tuk-tuks”, “autos” “tempos” etc – are found throughout the world, but particularly in Asia. There are an estimated 150,000 auto-rickshaws in Mumbai alone.

**MINIBUSES** provide the backbone of passenger transport within and between cities throughout the global south, locally known as “matatus”, “kombis”, “taxis”, “jeepneys” etc. According to the authorities, there are more than 100,000 matatus in Kenya, 150,000 kombis in South Africa, and 50,000 jeepneys employing 150,000 drivers in Manila, Philippines alone.





### **MOTORCYCLE TAXIS,**

couriers and delivery services are becoming more and more popular in congested cities. It is very difficult to assess how many motorcycle taxis are operating, as many are unregistered or unlicensed. But there are huge numbers involved. In Kampala, Uganda, for example, the authorities estimate there are 120,000 boda-boda operators, which is almost certainly an under-estimate. In 2013, according to researchers at Standard Bank, the boda-boda industry in Uganda was the second largest employer after agriculture.



# UNDERSTANDING THE INFORMAL TRANSPORT WORKPLACE



Informal transport workplaces are in themselves major hubs in the transport industry, with huge potential for strategic leverage by trade unions. These are not just terminals, taxi stands and bus stations, but major regional hubs for all sorts of economic and political activity, where the informal workers have enormous associational and disruptive power.

Informal workers are also crucial to organising in key transport corridors. The Northern Corridor in Africa, for example, is dependent on informal truck drivers and other informal workers throughout the distribution chain, including the bus industry.

*The buses you see leaving Mombasa for Nairobi, Kampala, Kigali in Rwanda and Bujumbura in Burundi carry heavy cargo and are a major vehicle for trade. The passengers are mainly long distance traders and their cargo is carried in the lower compartments. There is also statistical evidence that around 70 per cent of cross-border trade in eastern Africa is not by trucks but small scale traders where informal workers play a major role.*

**Joe Katende,**  
former ITF Africa regional secretary

Kampala taxi terminal







## OCCUPATIONS

In a typical minibus terminal, you will find many different occupations – drivers, conductors, despatchers, porters, loaders, mechanics, tyre-repairers, electricians, hi-fi technicians, painters, cleaners, inspectors, terminal managers, clerks, booking clerks, ‘time-keepers’, ticket agents, toilet attendants, security guards, parking attendants, food vendors, hawkers, public telephone operators, waste-pickers, tour guides, musicians, entertainers ... even informal traffic police – paid in tips by drivers to direct traffic out of traffic jams.

These workplaces challenge conventional ideas of what constitutes a “transport worker”. A major bus park in any city of the global south is a complete micro-economy, where every occupation provides an essential service.

For some transport unions, organising the informal workforce may require some rethinking about who is, and who is not, eligible to be a member.

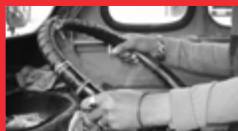
# THE INFORMAL PASSENGER TRANSPORT WORKFORCE

**DRIVERS, CONDUCTORS,  
‘BACK-RIDERS’ (PHILIPPINES)**

**OPERATORS/OWNERS – “SAHUS”  
(NEPAL), OWNER-DRIVERS**

**SECURITY GUARDS, PARKING  
ATTENDANTS, INFORMAL  
TRAFFIC POLICE (!)**

**PORTERS, LOADERS,  
“MALETROS” (COLUMBIA),  
“TURN-BOYS” (UGANDA),  
PUSH-CART OPERATORS**



**FOOD VENDORS, HAWKERS, PUBLIC  
TELEPHONE OPERATORS, WASTE-PICKERS,  
TOUR GUIDES, MUSICIANS, ENTERTAINERS**



**DESPATCHERS, “KHALASI”  
(NEPAL), “CALL-BOYS/  
CALL-GIRLS” (EAST AFRICA),  
“BARKERS” (PHILIPPINES),  
“KANEKS” (INDONESIA),  
“PREGONEROS” (COLUMBIA)**

**INSPECTORS, STAGE MASTERS,  
STAGE CLERKS, BOOKING CLERKS,  
‘TIME KEEPERS’, TICKET AGENTS,  
TOILET ATTENDANTS**

**MECHANICS, TYRE-  
REPAIRERS, ELECTRICIANS,  
HI-FI TECHNICIANS,  
PAINTERS, CLEANERS**



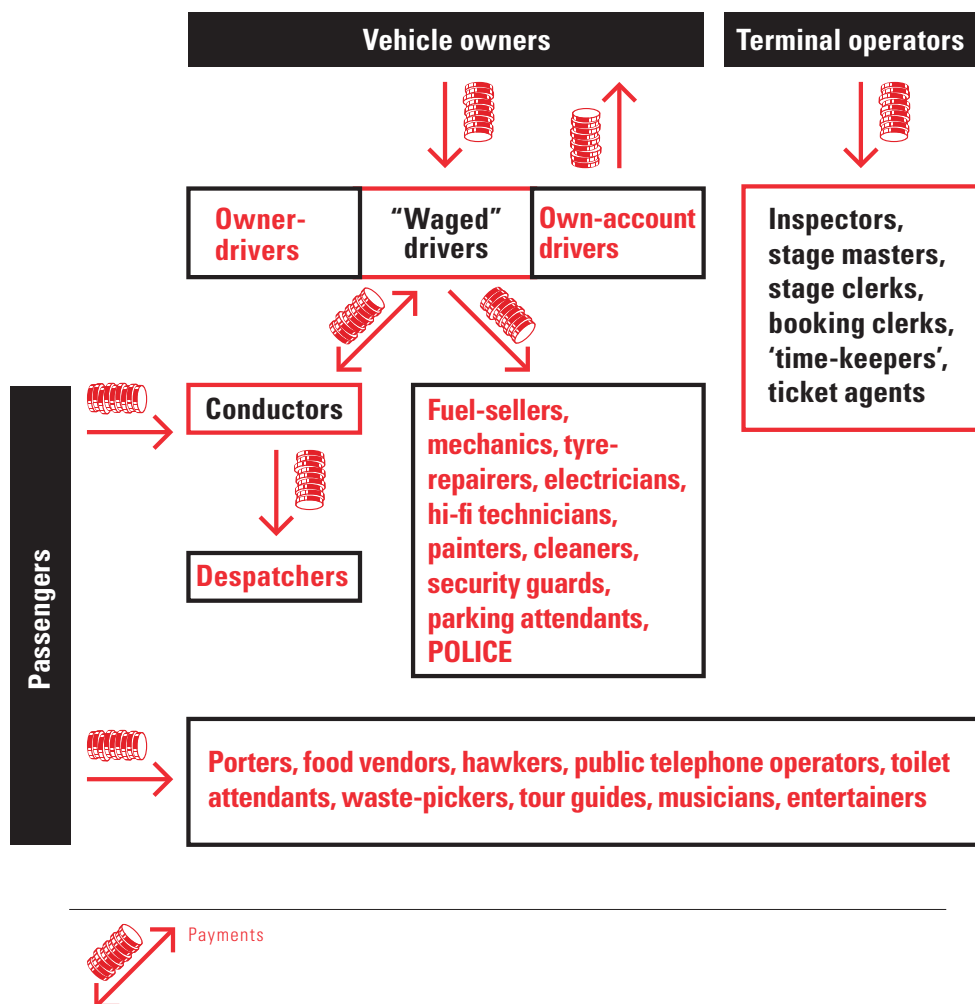


## EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS

Some workers are informally employed on a casual basis, some are self-employed. Some are paid by vehicle owners, some by drivers or conductors, some by the terminal, and some by the passengers themselves. It is a complex economy.

Vehicle owners may be owner-drivers, and working informally themselves, or they may own three, ten or a hundred vehicles.

A terminal might be owned and operated by the local government, a private company or the land owner. It might be managed by a workers' association, providing a significant source of revenue for the organisation.





## WOMEN WORKERS

Contrary to popular characterisation of informal transport as an all-male industry, there are many thousands of women employed in and around informal transport workplaces.

In some countries, there are significant numbers of women drivers, vehicle-owners, conductors and others in high-profile positions. Nevertheless, women are most commonly found to be in the most precarious, vulnerable and low paid jobs – cleaning, vending, catering etc.

In Indonesia for example, according to women union activists, women form perhaps one-fifth of the workforce in a typical bus terminal, working informally as despatchers ('keneks'), ticket-sellers, tour guides, musicians and entertainers, vendors, hawkers, bicycle-rickshaw ('becak') operators, and parking attendants.

In Uganda, a typical bus and minibus ('taxi') terminal has women working informally as conductors, hawkers, vendors, security guards, despatchers ('call-girls'), ticket inspectors, booking clerks, and public telephone operators (charging passengers to use their mobile phones).

In Colombia, women activists found informal women workers in the main Bogotá bus

terminal including vendors, cleaners, toilet attendants, petrol pump attendants, security guards, couriers and ticket-sellers.

Women face many barriers when attempting to get access to better jobs within the informal transport industry, or to achieve transition from informal to formal work.

In many countries, vehicle owners believe that women are incapable of driving the larger vehicles that give opportunities for better pay and conditions. In Nepal, for example, there are many women who operate 'tempos', three-wheeled electric minivans, but vehicle owners block their entry to work in larger, more lucrative buses and minibuses.

There are also many obstacles for women to gain access to the training, licensing and experience necessary to progress to better jobs. Vehicle training is dominated by men, and women face widespread discrimination and harassment when attempting to improve their skills.

These barriers, along with the more general context of discrimination against women in the transport workplace, push women into the most precarious and low-status occupations within the informal transport economy.





### **'TEMPO' WOMEN DRIVERS IN KATHMANDU**

In Nepal, teams of women union activists in NETWON and ITWAN documented a wide range of roles and occupations undertaken by women workers in Kathmandu's informal urban transport system. The teams found taxi drivers, micro-bus drivers, conductors, despatchers ("khalasi"), street vendors, loaders, booking clerks, push-cart operators, 'time-keepers' and others.

Most importantly, they surveyed some of the thousands of women 'tempo' (electric auto-rickshaws) drivers, found in nearly equal numbers to men. Many of the women drivers

belong to the Tamang community, originally from the mountainous parts of north and east Nepal. The Tamangs have suffered many years of marginalisation and discrimination.

Tempos are owned by businessmen ('sahus'), who may own anything between 1 and 20 vehicles. The tempo drivers are in effect informally employed by the sahus, although the drivers have no contracts or letters of appointment, take all the financial risk, and can be sacked at any time.

They charge the drivers a fixed rental fee, typically USD 24-30 per day. The drivers have to earn this from passenger fares before they can start earning income for themselves.



If the drivers are unable to collect sufficient fares, they will make a loss and many can end up in debt. In addition, the drivers have to pay the conductor and the khalasi, plus fines to the police. The system forces the drivers to work very long hours, typically from 06:00 to 20:00.

The long hours make it very difficult for the women to cope with both work and family responsibilities, with little time available for child-care. The long hours and bad working conditions cause large numbers of women to suffer serious medical problems. The lack of maternity rights is a particular problem. The vehicles themselves are precarious and can be very dangerous, with the drivers having little protection in road traffic accidents. If anyone is killed in an accident involving a tempo, the driver is automatically banned for life.

The women face various forms of discrimination. It is very difficult for the tempo drivers to progress on to larger (and more lucrative) vehicles such as micro-buses, as sahus refuse to believe that women are capable of driving four-wheel vehicles. The women also face a lack of experience, so have little opportunity to drive the larger vehicles, and without the opportunity they gain no experience. All the driving instructors are men, from whom the women complain that they suffer sexual harassment.

The women also face a higher level of police harassment – verbal abuse, confiscation of licences, and imposition of fines, from which the traffic police arresting officers gain a commission.



## INFORMAL TRANSPORT IN THE GLOBAL NORTH

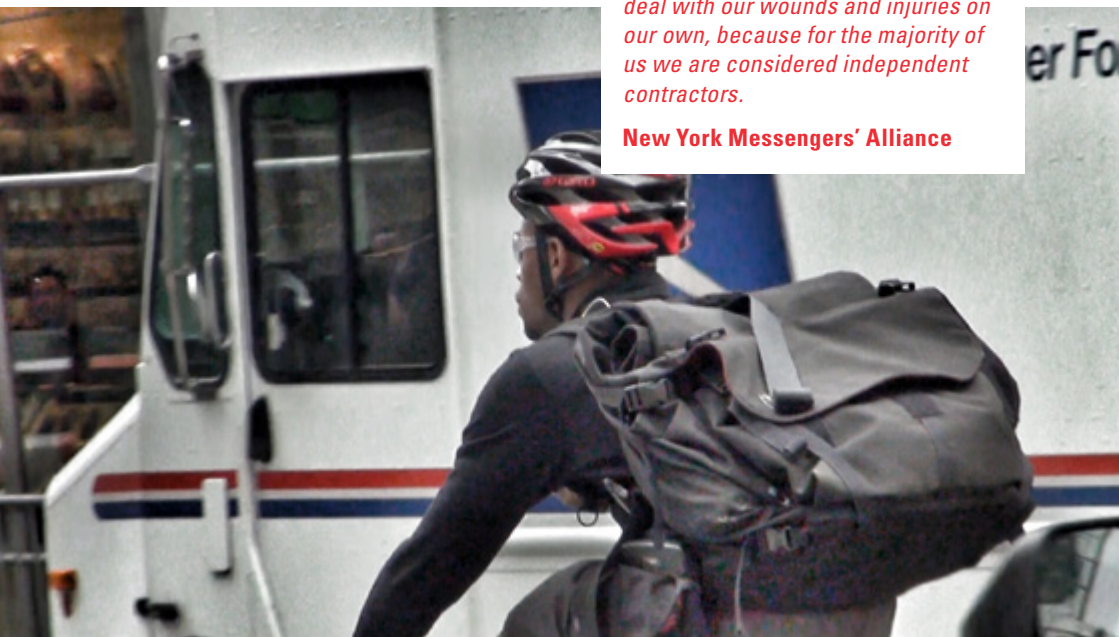
Many of us continue to equate the informal economy with the 'third world', when in reality informal transport is growing throughout the world.

For city-dwellers, the most obvious informal transport workers are the large and growing number of messengers, couriers and delivery workers, 'employed' by Uber, Postmates, Deliveroo and other app-based courier companies.

“

*We work for many different companies, with wages and benefits varying greatly. However, it is too often the case that we have to hustle and scrape together jobs while barely making minimum wage. We put our bodies on the line to make sure people get the packages and goods they need on time. And when we are injured on the job, which is an all too common occurrence, we have to deal with our wounds and injuries on our own, because for the majority of us we are considered independent contractors.*

**New York Messengers' Alliance**



The motorcycle taxi industry is now attracting the attention of major corporations throughout the world, with Uber and rival companies fighting for market share, both for passenger, messenger and delivery services. In Indonesia, for example, Go-Jek has more than 200,000 drivers, and recently raised \$550 million to fight rivals Uber and Grab. The UK-based company Deliveroo has more than 20,000 riders, is active in 84 cities across 12 countries, and is growing rapidly. Uber itself launched UberMoto in 2016, initially in Thailand, Vietnam and India.





# INFORMAL WORK IN THE EUROPEAN TRUCKING INDUSTRY

Hundreds of thousands of truck drivers from across eastern Europe and central Asia are delivering goods across the EU for some of the world's biggest multinationals. Employed on temporary contracts that are signed in their home countries, these drivers work for months away from home, without being paid the wages they are legally entitled to in the western European countries they are working in.

These 'non-resident' drivers are some of the most precarious and vulnerable workers in Europe, and perhaps the world. Some are

paid as little as €100 per month, less than 5% of the minimum wage they legally should receive. Drivers form nomadic communities across car parks, lay-bys and industrial areas at weekends when they must rest. They cook, sleep, wash and live in their vehicles, and often do not have access to showers, functioning toilets or clean water.



*I drove from Belarus to Lithuania, then through Poland to Germany and on to Switzerland. First, I was carrying wood, later furniture, then flowers. I think I'm bringing something like coffee pods along on my way back. I'm away for months on end sometimes. I'm not sure how to explain this to you but I'm often very sad. I think of home – we have a little yard, it's beautiful there. But there's no work. What else can I do? Just getting my driving licence cost me a fortune, I can't just quit. I need to earn money.*

**Anatoli, 35, from Belarus**





## KEY ISSUES

### TRADE UNION RIGHTS

The first and most fundamental issue for informal workers is respect for their fundamental trade union rights. It is now clear that all workers, irrespective of their employment relationships, are entitled to the same basic rights: freedom of association (i.e. the right to form or join a union of your choice), the right to collective bargaining, freedom from discrimination at work, and freedom from forced or compulsory labour.

These rights were reinforced by the ILO in 2015 in a “Recommendation concerning the transition from the informal to the formal economy” agreed at the International Labour Conference by representatives of government, employers and unions<sup>4</sup>.

Unsurprisingly, few (if any) governments have fully adopted such policies and informal workers continue to be deprived of their rights in large parts of the world.

But many unions find a further obstacle is the lack of awareness among informal workers themselves. When asked, informal workers very often express the belief that unions are only for formally-employed workers – those with ‘proper jobs’. Some have never even heard of trade unions, and may have little understanding of what a union is, especially those who have never worked in formal employment.



### CANDONGUEIROS IN ANGOLA

In Angola, drivers of minibus taxis (‘candongueiros’) have to pay high daily rental fees to vehicle owners, leading to the need to work extraordinary long hours, starting at 05:00, and even then they frequently face a loss at the end of the day.

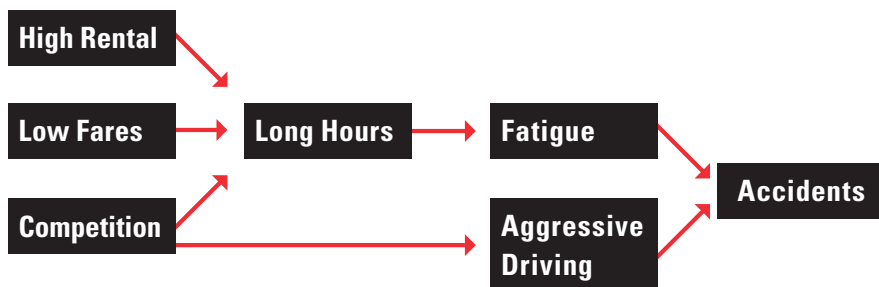
Luanda is one of the most expensive cities in the world, and informal workers complain that they do not earn enough to live on. The owners themselves are often policemen, powerful businessmen and/or politicians, organised into their own association. All the financial risk is carried by the drivers, the conductors, and the other workers dependant on the taxi industry.

The drivers and conductors have no contract, no fixed working hours, no fixed income, no days off, no assistance when sick or injured, and no other forms of social protection. Verbal contracts with owners are on a daily or weekly basis.

4. ILO Recommendation 204 - Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (R 204)



## LOW PAY, LONG HOURS



### E-RICKSHAWS IN NEPAL

Since 2013, hand-pulled rickshaws are being replaced with battery-powered rickshaws (e-rickshaws), which are now a common sight on the plains of Nepal. E-rickshaw drivers survive on very low incomes, and face many problems, such as difficulty in obtaining licenses, lack of parking, and haphazard registration of new e-rickshaws coming on to the streets.

NETWON, one of the two mentor unions in Nepal, estimates that a driver will typically earn USD 10-11 per day, even when working 12-14 hours, before additional costs of servicing and maintenance.

Around 70 per cent of drivers are self-employed, owning their vehicles, although most of them have to borrow half the money needed to buy a vehicle, costing USD 2,500-4,000. This means that they have to repay the debt with interest from their meagre earnings.

The remaining 30 per cent are informally employed by others, obliged to pay the owners around USD 7 per day in rent.

Nearly all informal transport workers face very low pay, long hours and bad working conditions.

For many, throughout the world, the problems stem from the widespread system of rental of vehicles from owners by self-employed drivers. The rental charges are frequently very high, forcing drivers to work very long hours before they can start to earn money to take home.

The problem is worsened where the fares are low, supply is greater than demand, and there is heavy competition for passengers between operators. The competition also leads to aggressive and dangerous driving. The long hours and aggressive driving inevitably lead to a large number of accidents.



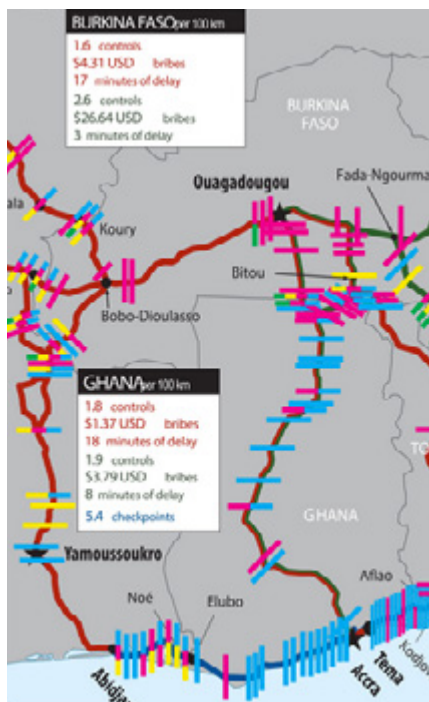




## POLICE HARASSMENT AND EXTORTION

Throughout the world, informal transport workers are vulnerable to extortion and corruption from traffic police. In many countries, police are very badly paid – sometimes unpaid for months at a time, suffer terrible living and working conditions, and have no labour rights of their own. In these circumstances, it is of little surprise that incomes are supplemented with bribery.

An extensive 2015 study of police corruption in west Africa, for example, tracked payment of bribes by truck drivers on the route between Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and the port of Tema in Ghana<sup>5</sup>:



West Africa Trade Hub. Red and blue bars represent customs and police stops respectively, in their customary or most frequent locations

The problem is similar for passenger transport operators. Many informal workers include police bribes in their daily calculations of costs, alongside vehicle rental, fuel, licenses etc. In Angola, for example, minibus taxi drivers explain that there are few and unclear stopping points to pick up passengers, which causes constant police harassment and demands for payment by the police. This is a common problem.

## VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Throughout the world, informal women transport workers frequently experience violence, abuse and sexual harassment. Women conductors in Kampala, for example, report that they are sexually “used” then “dumped” by their male counterparts; vendors are subjected to sexual harassment and beatings, with no protection from the police; and despatchers (‘call-girls’) are victims of sexual harassment, discrimination and teasing from passengers and fellow workers.

In Kathmandu, women workers demanded that the authorities hire women driving instructors to provide an escape from sexual harassment from male instructors and examiners.

They face discrimination, preventing access to more skilled and better-paid work as drivers, conductors and despatchers.

Women workers in informal transport workplaces are most likely to be in the most precarious occupations, such as cleaners, vendors, hawkers etc. Vendors in particular have no security or rights over their selling space and are frequently subject to seizure of their goods, arrest and beatings. Vendors are frequently injured by police attacks or by being hit by vehicles.

5. Foltz and Opoku-Agyemang, “Do Higher Salaries Lower Petty Corruption? A Policy Experiment on West Africa’s Highways”, International Growth Centre, 2015



## SOCIAL PROTECTION

In common with most other informal workers in other industries, informal transport workers have little or no access to social protection – health insurance, pensions, maternity pay, etc.

In the absence of access to state-supported social protection programmes, there are numerous self-help groups, informal associations and cooperatives established to provide a minimal level of mutual support through contributions to welfare funds, covering funeral costs for members' families, for example.

### PHILIPPINES – MOBILISING AGAINST JEEPNEY “PHASE-OUT”

The Philippines government plans to replace the iconic jeepneys with electric vehicles and hybrid vehicles, but are offering the drivers and owner-drivers little or nothing in support for the transition. They are only accepting bids for fleets of vehicles, rather than single vehicles, meaning that only big companies will have the necessary capital - the “corporatisation of small operator public transport” according to unions.

The two ITF affiliated unions, the National Confederation of Transport Unions (NCTU) and the PISTON Land Transport Coalition, are campaigning for a fair transition or, if not, a complete stop to the planned phase-out of old vehicles.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

In many cities, informal transport operations are major contributors to air pollution, and governments are under pressure to ‘modernise’ old vehicle fleets, reducing carbon emissions through the introduction of electric vehicles for example.

This is, of course, to be welcomed both for the future of the planet, and for an improved immediate environment for passengers and transport workers. Nevertheless, it can also lead to major conflicts where the informal workers are not given opportunities to negotiate for a fair transition. Too often, governments set rules that effectively destroy the livelihoods of informal operators, preferring to hand over the investment in new fleets to major companies with access to capital.



TV coverage of PISTON demonstrations against Jeepney phase-out



## BUS RAPID TRANSPORT

A major priority issue for many informal transport workers is the huge expansion of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems, particularly in Africa.

BRT is a bus-based public transport system designed to improve capacity and reliability, relieve congestion and have a lower environmental impact relative to the dispersed and unregulated bus networks found in many cities. Typically, a BRT system includes roadway that is dedicated to buses, and gives priority to buses at intersections where buses may interact with other traffic; alongside design features to reduce delays caused by passengers boarding or leaving buses, or purchasing fares.

This potentially offers a major opportunity for the transition of transport workers from informal to formal employment, as well as significant environmental and economic development. But it also threatens the livelihoods of many thousands of informal workers.



Bogotá BRT

“

*BRT is a relatively new system which has seen a huge expansion over the past 10 years. Most unions will face the challenge of organising in this new public transport system.*

*This new public transport model is decisive in reducing pollution and emissions in big cities. They are both reasons for expanding and improving BRT, otherwise the private car will destroy cities if growth continues.*

*But there are lots of problems with the implementation of BRT - accidents, working hours, split shifts, overtime and casual jobs. These are big challenges, which we also have in conventional bus transport. There are possibilities to resolve these issues, but we need strong unions and we cannot rely on management.*

*We need more policies and knowledge on how to address the transition from informal work. Unions can't only represent the interests of the formally employed. We have to raise the issues of how to make the transition smooth and just.*

**Asbjørn Wahl,**

Chair of ITF Urban Transport Committee  
and Climate Change Working Group



# ORGANISING STRATEGY

## MAPPING THE WORKPLACE

Before attempting to organise among informal workers, it is essential to understand the nature and dynamics of the informal workplace through mapping exercises. This is most likely to be through surveys of bus terminals, taxi stands, main passenger routes etc, designed to build a detailed picture of:

### The workforce.

How many workers? What are their occupations? How many men/women? Where are they located?

### Employment relationships.

Who employs who? Who pays who? Do some have any form of contract, informal or formal? Where does the power lie?

### Issues.

What are the major immediate issues faced by the workers? Are there some immediately achievable campaign objectives?

### Organisation.

What organisation is already in place (associations, cooperatives, self-help groups etc)? How do they function? Are they democratic? Do they collect membership dues or regular contributions? Do they have leaders who command popular support and respect?

## HOW TO ORGANISE?

Union organisers are often faced with strategic choices between different forms of organisation:

- Should we recruit informal and precarious workers directly into our union?
- Should we strengthen an existing workers' organisation of informal and precarious workers?
- Should we attempt to 'affiliate' whole associations into our union?
- Should we be supporting the development of a new organisation specifically for a group of informal workers?

If creating a new organisation, what is the most appropriate:

- Formally registered trade union?
- Trade union 'disguised' as a voluntary association?
- Co-operative?
- Community-based organisation?
- An informal group, then formalised as capacity and membership develops?

The choices are of course completely dependent on the local context – the nature of the informal workforce, the extent and nature of informal workers' pre-existing organisations, the organisational needs of the workers themselves, the labour laws and the political environment.





## ARE THE WORKERS ALREADY ORGANISED?

Most informal transport workers are already organised, but not necessarily in unions. In a large informal workplace, such as a big city bus terminal or taxi stage, you are likely to find a range of workers' organisations already in place.

Some may be completely informal, simply small self-help groups of workers supporting one another – raising money to help those sick or bereaved, fending off competitors, defending the group against local gangsters, police etc.

Others may be large, well-established and formally registered associations with financial resources and experienced leaders.

Informal workers' associations do not simply represent the interests of their members, but play an important role in providing order and management in these otherwise chaotic (and frequently violent) workplaces – particularly the large passenger transport hubs in major cities.

## IS YOUR UNION FIT FOR PURPOSE?

Does your union have agreed policies, services and a constitutional framework (membership rules, structures, procedures etc), which meet the needs of informal workers, and enable them to be fully active members?

It may require changes to the way the union works and the allocation of resources.

For some activists, it might require a different way of thinking about what a trade union is, and who a union is for. If the union activists and leaders have not had a chance to seriously discuss these issues, and reach common agreement, the organising initiative will be half-hearted at best. At worst, it could lead to serious splits and divisions later on.

If a serious organising initiative among informal workers raises questions of major structural change within the union, you may have to pay

close attention to democratic processes of decision making, ensuring that everyone has had the opportunity to contribute and be heard through education and open discussion.

Some divisions may be caused by long-standing union leaders who resist the large-scale recruitment and organisation of precarious and informal workers out of fear that they may lose their positions. It is of course inescapable that if a union organises a large new group of workers, they have every right to stand for election and challenge those holding power.

Some unions have responded to this challenge by giving informal workers 'associate' status within the union – at least for a transitional period - giving membership cards and limited rights of consultation and services. Full membership rights are reserved for those with formal employment status (e.g. with contracts or collective bargaining agreements with an employer), most importantly, the rights to vote and stand for election.

## REVIEWING THE UNION CONSTITUTION

Once the union has agreed policies to organise informal workers, you may need to review your constitution, rules and structures. Some constitutions may only admit members who have an identifiable employer, or exclude self-employed workers. Some structures assume that workers have a stable employer and a regular workplace - union branches organised around single bargaining units, for example - that may exclude informal workers.

## REFORMING LABOUR LAW

In some countries, labour laws may prevent union organisation of informal workers.

This is sometimes simply because they have not been reviewed or updated for a long time - in some cases perhaps since colonial rule.



In other cases, governments may be deliberately attempting to ensure that informal workers are excluded from the trade union movement.

Either way, if the law prevents union membership for informal or precarious workers, the law itself may need to be challenged.

Laws banning union membership on the basis of employment relationships are a clear breach of the fundamental right of freedom of association. The ILO's recently adopted 'Recommendation Concerning the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy' (Recommendation 204<sup>6</sup>) clearly states that governments:



*Should ensure that those in the informal economy enjoy freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, including the right to establish and, subject to the rules of the organization concerned, to join organizations, federations and confederations of their own choosing, and that...*

*... workers' organizations may seek the assistance of the International Labour Office to strengthen the capacity of the representative employers' and workers' organizations and, where they exist, representative organizations of those in the informal economy, to assist workers and economic units in the informal economy, with a view to facilitating the transition to the formal economy.*

This means that unions have the right to seek the support of the ILO in convincing governments to respect labour rights for informal workers.

Meanwhile, until labour law is amended to recognise the trade union rights of informal workers, clear policies are needed to work in alliance with groups of informal and precarious workers who may be organised outside conventional union structures.

There are numerous examples of informal workers' organisations that function as if they were a trade union, but are not registered or recognised as such, including informal associations, self-help groups, co-operatives, and NGOs (non-governmental organisations).

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Many informal transport workers earn little, earn erratically, and are vulnerable to external economic shocks. Some people claim that it is impossible to build a financially sustainable union based on dues paid by informal workers.

The most common systems for the collection of union dues are clearly not appropriate. The introduction of a 'check-off' system, where employers deduct union dues from workers' regular pay-checks on the union's behalf, is obviously near-impossible when so many of the workers are self-employed, or informally employed on a day-to-day basis.

The more laborious and labour-intensive methods of directly collecting regular payments from individuals, while good for keeping regular contact between members, activists and leaders, are also difficult. Workers may frequently shift routes and vehicles, and informal workers generally are more likely to be

6. ILO Recommendation Concerning the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy (R204), International Labour Conference, 2015. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_377774.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_377774.pdf)





transient – frequently moving from job to job in the search for less precarious work.

But some informal workers' associations are financially strong – perhaps stronger than the unions themselves. Contrary to stereotypes, many informal transport workers are highly educated, with strong organisational skills, capable of managing relatively sophisticated financial systems.

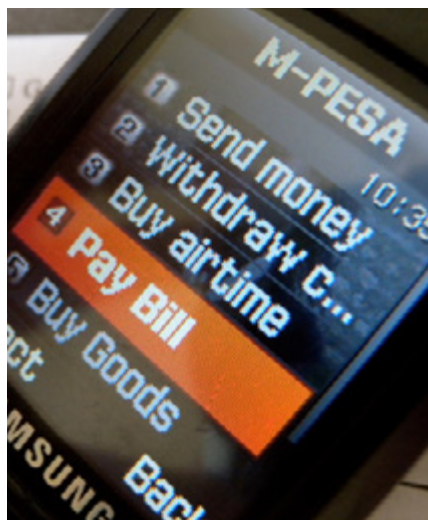
In many cities, taxi/minibus parks and bus terminals are major hubs in the transport industry, where informal workers' associations do not simply represent the interests of their members, but play an important role in providing order and management in these otherwise chaotic (and sometimes violent) workplaces.

Local and national governments do not have the capacity to regulate or manage the industry, and therefore delegate responsibility to the associations to provide order.

In a typical terminal, an association controls the flow and despatch of vehicles, and collects a fee from each driver as they are despatched. In large terminals, this generates considerable income for the association or the union.

Nevertheless, some associations and unions may not have the ability to raise funds so easily, especially those without the potential power of major transport hubs.

In such cases, new mobile phone technologies are offering some innovative possible solutions. SMS-based mobile banking is commonly used by informal workers and potentially provides an easy means to collect dues. As an example, according to the mobile money company M-Pesa in 2015, they had 20 million users in Kenya – half the population.



## **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

In the 'formal' economy, collective bargaining is understood as a relationship between employer and employee. More precisely, as defined by the ILO, collective bargaining refers to:

"All negotiations which take place between an employer, a group of employers or one or more employers' organisations, on the one hand, and one or more workers' organisations, on the other" (ILO Convention No. 154).

Most informal workers are either self-employed or in some form of disguised employment where the employment relationships are not clear. Yet they can and do engage in collective bargaining with a wide range of people and organisations, which challenges this standard definition.

Unions or associations representing informal workers are faced with major issues that directly affect their livelihoods, working conditions or rights, which demand negotiation.



The first task is to identify who might be the 'bargaining counterparts' to resolve the issues facing the workers. These might include, for example, government agencies responsible for social protection, owners of bus terminals, police, urban planners, or vehicle licensing authorities.

Secondly, just as in the formal economy, the union has to seek recognition from such bodies as the legitimate representative of the workers, and establish a procedural agreement for negotiation. This may require some action to persuade them to acknowledge their responsibilities. On the other hand, especially in complex or chaotic workplaces, the authorities may welcome a well-organised and representative structure with whom they can negotiate.

Finally, the union may be able to secure a formal collective bargaining agreement.

There are numerous examples of such successful agreements.

In Niger, SYNATRA successfully signed a collective agreement for taxi drivers with the government. In Togo, the Federation of Transport Workers (FESYTRAT) gained recognition and collective bargaining agreements with the government,

leading to reductions in fuel prices.

The Union des Routiers du Sénégal (URS) gained collective bargaining agreements with employers for medical insurance cover; with the government to reduce the number of checkpoints on the major cross-border routes to neighbouring countries. URS also won a reduction in fuel prices, following a threat of strike action.

The National Confederation of Transport Unions in the Philippines (NCTU) gained collective bargaining agreements and recognition with the local governments in Cebu and Batangas.

IDEA in Cambodia won collective bargaining agreements with supermarkets and hotel chains to secure parking rights for tuk-tuk drivers.

SNTT in Colombia signed collective agreements with public transport companies in the Tolima region, and reached agreements with Ubaté Municipality on vendors' rights.

There are of course many informal transport workers who are clearly employed, albeit informally, and there are likely to be such employment relationships within the union's membership.

A union of workers in the minibus industry, for example, may include people who own more than one vehicle, and employ one or more drivers who are also union members. Owner-drivers may informally employ conductors, conductors may employ despatchers, and so on. While all these workers face common issues (police harassment, working conditions etc.) which require collective bargaining as one unified organisation, there may be occasions when the union has to provide a framework for bargaining between its members.



## UGANDA — HUGE EXPANSION IN MEMBERSHIP

The Amalgamated Transport & General Workers' Union (ATGWU) started organising with informal workers in 2008, when the Airport Taxi Operators Association were encouraged to affiliate, after ATGWU leaders had been inspired by an ITF seminar on precarious workers.

By 2016, twelve informal workers' associations had affiliated, boosting union membership from less than 5,000 to more than 80,000 workers within three years, winning significant victories against police harassment, and gaining recognition and respect for union rights and collective bargaining.

The ATGWU strategy for organising informal economy workers was based on an understanding that these workers are in many cases already organised, not within the trade union movement, but through credit and savings cooperatives, informal self-help groups, community-based organisations, and, most importantly, associations. Some of these associations are already large, well-organised and have substantial resources.

ATGWU proceeded to organise several other associations, including long-distance truck drivers, airport cargo handlers, traders, and small groups of traders, taxi drivers and motorcycle taxi riders ("boda boda"), some 4,500 workers in all.



This dramatically changed with the affiliation of two large and powerful associations in 2015.

The Kampala Operational Taxi Stages Association (KOTSA) was the first major association to join, representing 36,000 taxi (minibus) drivers and conductors organised in the Kampala taxi parks ("stages").



KOTSA faced numerous problems – particularly the law forbidding gatherings of more than ten people without permission – unless they were a union.

Before formally accepting any association into affiliation, ATGWU demands that there be a democratically elected leadership. Yet the police intervened three times to stop KOTSA having meetings with the members, let alone organising elections.

On 9 June 2015, KOTSA elections were arranged at the ATGWU offices. Police immediately intervened to stop the process, in effect occupying the ATGWU compound and expelling the workers.

The police action was firmly resisted by ATGWU leaders, declaring that the elections were bona fide trade union meetings, as permitted by law. They immediately announced



to the media that it was calling a strike in protest against the police closure of its offices, with the threat of shutting down the airport and – with KOTSA membership on the streets – bringing Kampala to a standstill. The ITF wrote to president Museveni in protest at the police action.

Prompted by president Museveni, fearing an escalation of action by ATGWU and KOTSA, supported by the ITF, the police backed down. On 10 June the association succeeded in completing its elections, which took place without police disruption.



Police at KOTSA election. Still from news broadcast

The confrontation and subsequent victory proved to be a pivotal moment in the organisation of informal workers for ATGWU. The whole event was widely publicised in the media, and had an enormous impact on the morale and confidence among informal association members. It was not only a victory against police interference in the business of the associations, but against the day-to-day police harassment and extortion suffered by informal transport workers.

The Kampala Metropolitan Boda-Boda Association (KAMBA), representing 38,000 boda-boda (motorcycle taxi) riders, joined in September 2015. They had also been suffering similar police harassment and interference. ATGWU's victory in enabling KOTSA to gather and hold elections without police harassment spurred KAMBA's interest in joining.



ATGWU demonstration. Still from news broadcast



*Rather than attempting to recruit individual informal workers into union membership, we undertook a sequence of discussions and education events with some of these associations, eventually affiliating each association into the union as a whole. The detailed process was not pre-planned, but rather a sequence of engagements with associations, each leading to contact with the next.*

*In each case, after initial discussions, we 'mapped' the association – developing an understanding of the membership, the issues they faced, structure etc. The association would then be invited to submit an application for affiliation, including their legal status, office location, banking details, constitution, recent minutes, and list of members. Union representatives would then visit the association and meet the leadership, when they would discuss a draft memorandum of understanding. If all is satisfactorily agreed, the MOU would be signed, and the association admitted into membership.*

**John Mark Mwanika, ATGWU, Uganda**



## NEPAL – ORGANISING ELECTRIC RICKSHAW WORKERS



Drivers celebrate new NETWON E-rickshaw union

In Nepal, ITF affiliates ITWAN and NETWON organise among ‘e-rickshaws’ – electric powered tricycles.

NETWON launched a new Nepal E-Rickshaw Drivers Union in July 2016. Within a year, some 8,000 drivers had joined, including significant numbers of women, from an estimated 15,000 vehicles.

District committees of the new union are now able to negotiate directly with government agencies, over the issue of licences, for example, and there has been a great increase in collective bargaining power with traffic police, transport offices, municipal offices and related government organisations.

Some of the committees have been able to establish their own welfare trusts, collecting up to USD 5,000 from monthly collections, providing support to members suffering accidents or other misfortune.

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*The potential of the e-rickshaw union was demonstrated on the Informal Workers Day of the ITF Action Week in October 2016. That day, the rallies, assemblies, pamphlet distribution and other events proved the support and the potential of this new union.*

**Ajay Rai, NETWON, Nepal**



ITWAN organising rally with e-rickshaw drivers

Nevertheless, there is still much to be done to consolidate and develop the new union. In common with many other informal workers’ unions, the low incomes and scattered and transient membership presents challenges in the regular collection of union dues. Of the 8,000 members, less than 2,000 are able to make regular contributions, which is itself an important achievement. In Nepal, as in many other countries, new mobile phone-based micro-banking may offer an important step forward in efficient dues collection and membership administration.





## FORMAL-INFORMAL SOLIDARITY IN BURUNDI

The National Transport Workers' Federation in Burundi (Federation Nationale des Travailleurs des Transports – FNTT), includes both unions and associations, covering formal and informal workers. FNTT recognised that informal workers were not organised and had many problems.



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*We started to make contact with them, but it was not easy because they didn't have any representatives. Even those who had formed associations were regularly harassed by the administration or the police. So the FNTT executive committee went to different transport services, such as trucks, buses, taxis, motorcycles and bicycles, and explained to them the difference between an association and trade union, how they operate, and how to establish either form of organisation.*

*They were positively interested and started to create associations such as the Truckers' Association, Truckers' Association of Kayanza, Bus Drivers' Association, Private Drivers' Association, Taxi Drivers' Association and Lorry Drivers' Association. There was also a Motorcycle Taxi Drivers' Association, Bicycle Taxi Drivers' Association and many others in the provinces. All these affiliated to the FNTT.*

*The organisation of informal workers has been a great success for FNTT, as many informal workers have formed unions, and now know how to assert their rights.*

**Deogratias Birihanyuma, FNTT, Burundi**







## NEW YORK TAXI WORKERS ALLIANCE — ORGANISING IN THE “MOBILE SWEATSHOP”

Founded in 1998, NYTWA is the 18,000-member strong union of NYC taxicab drivers. The alliance fights for justice, rights, respect and dignity for the over 50,000 licensed men and women who labour 12-hour shifts with little pay and little protection in the city’s ‘mobile sweatshop’. The members come from every community, garage, and neighbourhood.

Through organising, direct action, legal and health services, media presence, political advocacy, and the cultivation of allies and supporters, NYTWA — a multi-ethnic, multi-generational union — builds power for one of the most visible, yet vulnerable, immigrant workforces in the city of New York.

In 2012, NYTWA won a liveable income raise, first-time regulations of taxi companies, and a health and disability fund for drivers, the first for taxi drivers nationwide and one of the first for independent contractors. In 2011, NYTWA launched the National Taxi Workers Alliance as the 57th union of the AFL-CIO — the national trade union centre in the USA. The NTWA is the first non-traditional workers AFL-CIO union since the farm workers in the 1960s, and the first one ever of independent contractors.

The alliance campaigns for structural change in the industry as well as providing support and services for individual drivers. NYTWA has increased drivers’ incomes by 35 per cent -45 per cent, secured over USD 15 million in emergency aid to drivers, and provided free or discounted legal, financial management, and health services to over 10,000 drivers and families.



*We are committed to a progressive, internationalist, democratic labor movement that stands in steadfast solidarity with workers’ movements of the U.S. and around the world.*

*The taxi bosses have had a national trade association since 1917 — just ten years after the gasoline-powered taxicab came to the U.S. To this day, they hold lavish annual conventions and trade shows and, in their first order of business, they meet with our regulators. Money meets politics meets labor exploitation. In 2011, the National Taxi Workers Alliance was born to crush the chains that bind hundreds of thousands of taxi workers across this nation. The bosses and regulators have their associations, their legacies, their eras. This is all ours.*

**Bhairavi Desai**, NYTWA Executive Director, on the creation of the National Taxi Workers Alliance, 2011



## ORGANISING WOMEN INFORMAL WORKERS

There are many thousands of women working in and around the informal transport economy, most commonly found in the wide range of service occupations in and around major transport hubs.

ITF unions are increasingly giving voice and visibility to these women workers, who have frequently been overlooked or ignored.

Small teams of women in several countries have been trained in workplace mapping techniques, and have developed a detailed understanding of the issues faced by women in the informal workplace.



When given the opportunity, women in informal transport have demonstrated that they are capable and willing to organise themselves within the trade union movement, and take positions of leadership. Women leaders from the informal economy have been elected to national leadership positions in Uganda, Niger, Kenya, the Philippines, Cambodia and Nepal, and there has been a 300 per cent increase in women's union membership across the six countries.

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NCTU women's committee, Cebu, Philippines





*We know from anecdotal evidence that even though there is a rise in women in informal transport, they remain a minority in transport work (for example, there are especially few working as drivers). Women are more likely to be found in auxiliary services such as selling tickets, cleaning, working as vendors at bus stations and stops, and selling petrol at the roadside. This means that they are in the most survivalist and precarious of jobs in the sector, earning the least money.*

*It is also clear that the women in informal transport employment are largely invisible to policy-makers, governments, development NGOs and many trade unions, and thus not included in consideration of social protection, urban policy, livelihoods and economic development, union organisation and representation.*

**Jodi Evans**, ITF Women's Officer

### **WOMEN'S UNITY IN NEPAL**

Women union activists from the informal transport economy in Nepal established a new joint committee between the two ITF-affiliated unions, NETWON (from the Congress Party tradition) and ITWAN (socialist). This first such joint body is building solidarity and joint practical activities between the unions.





# INFORMAL TRANSPORT WORKERS CHARTER

*Throughout the ITF's informal transport workers project, participating unions described, shared and debated the key issues facing informal transport workers, identified as a direct result of their local experiences in mapping and organising. Discussions at the mid-project mentor unions' meeting led to a draft 'workers charter', circulated to all project participants for local discussion, and finally amended and unanimously adopted at the project evaluation workshop.*

*The Charter subsequently became the focus of events staged by informal transport workers' unions in the ITF's Action Week in October 2016.*

In many parts of the world, transport – particularly urban passenger transport – is largely in the informal economy. The informal transport industry provides a meagre livelihood for millions of us, yet denies us our basic rights and respect. We provide essential services to society and the economy, yet we are largely invisible to law-makers, policy-makers and city planners.

## **WE THEREFORE DEMAND:**

### **RESPECT FOR OUR BASIC RIGHTS**

1. Respect workers' fundamental rights – informal workers are workers too! Implement ILO Recommendation 204: concerning the transition from the informal to the formal economy
2. Revision of labour and employment laws to ensure that all workers, irrespective of employment relationships, have equal rights under the law

### **TRADE UNIONS, COLLECTIVE BARGAINING & CONSULTATION**

3. The right to be a member of a trade union of our choice, with equal democratic rights and benefits as members in formal employment
4. The right to collective bargaining and consultation with national and municipal governments and related agencies on all issues and policies affecting transport workers
5. The right of informal transport workers to represent themselves to the relevant authorities through their unions and democratic associations, rather than others making representations on their behalf



6. Access to financial support for informal transport workers to assist the transition to improved transport systems and vehicle fleets
7. Specifically, the right to collective bargaining and consultation on the introduction of Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) systems, anti-congestion measures, re-routing and fleet modernisation, to ensure:
  - a. formalisation of informal employment without loss of livelihoods
  - b. public (state or cooperative) ownership and accountability of BRT operating companies and franchises
  - c. democratic oversight of BRT planning processes
  - d. compensation to owners in compulsory vehicle phase-outs
  - e. affordability of transport for low-income passengers

## **RECOGNITION OF ALL WORKERS IN TRANSPORT ECONOMY**

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8. Recognition of the wide spectrum of occupations and trades undertaken by large numbers of informal workers whose livelihoods depend on the transport industry and transport workplaces

## **RIGHTS OF WOMEN**

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9. Recognition of the rights and livelihoods of women workers in the informal transport industry, including:
  - a. an end to violence and sexual harassment against women
  - b. an end to employment discrimination, and equal opportunities for training, skills development and access to higher-paid transport occupations
  - c. adequate rest, sanitation and personal security facilities for women in transport workplaces
  - d. affordable quality childcare and other care services
  - e. equal pay for women and men
  - f. access to free or affordable sexual reproductive services





## HEALTH & SAFETY IN THE INFORMAL TRANSPORT ECONOMY

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10. The right to a safe and healthy working environment, including:
  - a. enforced limits on working hours
  - b. enforced legal responsibilities of vehicle-owners in the maintenance and safe operation of their vehicles and the provision of adequate insurance to protect drivers in the event of accident, theft or disaster
  - c. adequate parking, rest areas, sanitation, shelter, lighting, and food preparation facilities in transport workplaces
  - d. provision of adequate protective clothing and uniforms
  - e. reduction in emissions harmful to vehicle operators, passengers and the environment
  - f. repair and upkeep of roads, including safety infrastructure

## ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

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11. The right to social security, health care, maternity protection, decent working conditions and a minimum wage
12. Extend the coverage of social insurance to those in the informal economy and adapt administrative procedures, benefits and contributions, taking into account their ability to pay

## END TO HARASSMENT, EXPLOITATION AND CORRUPTION

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13. The end to arbitrary harassment and extortion by police, military, border officials and other authorities, and protection from organised crime
14. Legally enforced elimination of exploitative disguised-employment practices by vehicle owners, such as high day-rate rental charges to drivers and operators, resulting in excessive working hours and dangerous driving conditions
15. Rises in tariffs and fares to compensate for rises in fuel prices
16. Protection from exploitation of vulnerable people in transport workplaces, including women, children and people with disabilities



## INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

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17. Recognition of the ITF by international, regional and sub-regional inter-governmental institutions with responsibility for transport infrastructure development and regulation as internationally representative of informal transport workers, and the establishment of appropriate collective bargaining and consultation procedures

### ADOPTED BY

### ITF INFORMAL TRANSPORT WORKERS PROJECT EVALUATION WORKSHOP

28 JULY 2016, KAMPALA, UGANDA

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Amalgamated Transport & General Workers' Union	ATGWU	Uganda
Communication & Transport Workers' Union of Tanzania	COTWU	Tanzania
E-Rickshaw Drivers' Union	EDU	Nepal
Fédération Syndicale des Travailleurs des Transports du Togo	FESYTRAT	Togo
Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association	IDEA	Cambodia
Independent Transport Workers' Association of Nepal	ITWAN	Nepal
Kampala Metropolitan Boda-Boda Association	KAMBA	Uganda
Kampala Operational Taxi Stage Association	KOTSA	Uganda
Kenya Long Distance Truck Drivers' & Allied Workers' Union	TAWU	Kenya
Matatu Workers' Union	MWU	Kenya
National Confederation of Transportworkers' Unions	NCTU	Philippines
Nepal Yatayat Mazdoor Sangh	NETWON	Nepal
Public Transport Operators' Union	PUTON	Kenya
Sindicato Nacional de Rama y Servicios del Transporte de Colombia	SNTT	Colombia
Syndicat National des Travailleurs Autonomes de l'économie Informelle du Niger	SYNATRA	Niger
Union des Routiers du Sénégal	URS	Sénégal



# WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

## A SUMMARY OF KEY QUESTIONS AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR TRANSPORT UNIONS

The organisation of informal transport workers within the trade union movement can lead to greater power for informal workers to claim their rights, improve their livelihoods, and have a stronger more democratic political voice. They can also transform unions into mass organisations with greater power for all transport workers – whether formal or informal.

Nevertheless, the organisation of informal workers presents new challenges for the trade union movement. These are some of the key questions that unions might need to consider, and some activities that could be used by union educators, to address these challenges.

### DO WE UNDERSTAND THE INFORMAL TRANSPORT INDUSTRY IN OUR COUNTRY OR CITY?

Have we attempted to map the informal transport industry? Do we know how many workers there are? Where they are? What do they do?

### DO WE UNDERSTAND THE WAYS IN WHICH THE INFORMAL WORKERS ARE ALREADY ORGANISED?

Have we explored what organisations are already in place, whether formally constituted associations, savings cooperatives, self-help groups, or gangs? Are they controlled by the workers themselves? Are they corrupt? Are they democratic? Are they interested in working with a union? Can we work with them?

### DO OUR LEADERS AND MEMBERS FROM THE FORMAL TRANSPORT SECTOR AGREE WITH THE NEED TO ORGANISE INFORMAL WORKERS?

Has there been thorough discussion within the union about a policy of working with or organising informal workers? What would be the implications for union members in the formal economy? Do union leaders and activists need education programmes to inform and structure such a discussion?

### DO WE HAVE A CLEAR AND AGREED ORGANISING STRATEGY?

Do we know who we are trying to organise? Are we attempting to recruit individual informal workers, or bring existing associations into the union as a whole? Do we attempt to organise informal workers within our union, or assist them in forming a new union of their own?

### WHAT ARE THE KEY ISSUES AND DEMANDS OF INFORMAL WORKERS?

Do we know, what are the key issues facing the informal workers? Have we asked them? Is the union capable of winning tangible improvements? Are we sure that we are not raising false expectations? Can we identify issues where gains are quickly possible to build workers' confidence, even if they may not be the most important in the long term?

Entebbe freight carriers





## **WHAT IS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING? AND WHO ARE THE BARGAINING COUNTERPARTS?**

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Do we have an agreed understanding of the role of collective bargaining in the informal economy? Can we identify the bargaining counterparts who have the power to effect change on the key issues facing the workers?

## **ARE THERE CONSTITUTIONAL OR LEGAL BARRIERS TO THE UNION ORGANISATION OF INFORMAL WORKERS?**

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Have we checked that our union constitution allows membership of informal or self-employed workers? Does the constitution need amending? Does the constitution allow for the full integration of informal workers, with equal democratic rights to those in the formal economy? Are there legal obstacles – do the labour laws recognise the right of informal workers to join unions?

## **WHAT IS THE UNION OFFERING TO INFORMAL WORKERS, AND WHAT CAN IT DO THAT NON-UNION ORGANISATIONS CANNOT?**

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Informal workers, and especially their own associations or other informal organisations, will rightly want to know what the advantages of union membership would be. Does the union have agreed bargaining and consultation procedures with the government or other bargaining counterparts that are not available to informal associations? Are there opportunities for solidarity from (or to) formal workers already in the union? Does the union have access to legal support, education programmes or other forms of technical assistance of value to informal workers?

## **WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR UNION IN HAVING A NEW MASS MEMBERSHIP OF INFORMAL WORKERS?**

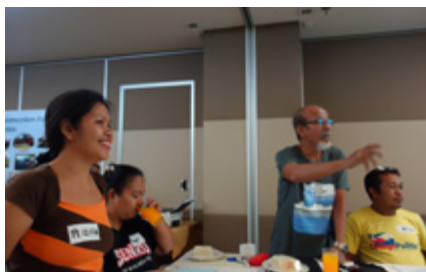
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Do we have the capacity to provide meaningful services to large numbers of informal workers, while maintaining support for our existing membership? Have we considered what changes will be needed to the union's structure, staff organisation, internal procedures etc? Are our leaders comfortable with the possibility of informal workers' leaders standing for elected positions?

## **IS A UNION OF INFORMAL WORKERS FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE?**

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How will the union collect dues from informal workers? How much will they realistically be able to pay on a regular basis? Will it be necessary to introduce a two-tier dues structure with formal workers paying more than informal? If informal workers are being organised into the union through the affiliation of existing associations, do they already have effective dues-collection systems in place? Is the membership records system capable of managing large numbers of informal workers, or is it largely based on dues collected through check-off agreements with employers?



Cebu - new women members at NCTU-IDEA meeting







## EXCHANGE VISITS WITH UNIONS WITH INFORMAL ECONOMY ORGANISING EXPERIENCE

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Identify a union in your country or region that already has experience in organising among informal transport workers, or ask the ITF to advise.

Arrange a three or four-day visit by a small team of your union activists or representatives to learn from their experience of organising processes and challenges in more detail. Ideally, the team should include both senior elected leaders to consider policy issues and union strategy, and experienced organisers with responsibility for practical organising on the ground. Obviously, it is important to ensure both women and men are included.

In advance of the visit, prepare a programme with the host union. If possible, this should include:

- visits to informal workplaces to learn about the local industrial dynamics and employment relationships
- meetings with informal union members and workplace leaders to understand their motivation and experience of joining the union, their impressions of trade unions before joining, the impact of union membership on livelihoods, conditions and rights, and challenges and issues yet to be resolved

- discussions with the executive committee (or equivalent) to learn about the process of policy discussions that led to the organisation of informal workers, the major issues that needed to be addressed, the internal challenges to be overcome etc., and the subsequent changes needed

- discussions with local union activists and/or staff responsible for day-to-day organising with informal workers on the detail of organising strategy and methodology

- meetings with elected union representatives from formal workplaces with long-standing union agreements, to discuss the impact of the informal economy organising strategy on the formal workforce and the union as a whole

- if possible and where appropriate, meetings with key bargaining counterparts, such as bus terminal managers, local government officials or police, to assess the impact of union organisation from their perspective

At the end of the visit, the team then presents their impressions, conclusions and outstanding questions in a short seminar with union leaders and organisers

On return home, the team should then make



presentations to the leadership and to organising activists on the lessons learned from the visit, including recommendations on organising policy and strategy.

This should be closely followed by a reciprocal visit from the 'mentor union' to spend time in informal workplaces and meet informal associations, union representatives and organisers, to gain an understanding of the local informal transport economy, the union, and assess the opportunities and options for organising. At the end of the visit, the mentor union team should hold a meeting or seminar with leaders and organisers to present their ideas, comments and recommendations for union policy and strategy.

Finally, the experience and outcomes of the exchange visits and consequent recommendations should be documented in a report or discussion paper for distribution through the union and for consideration by the executive committee.

## EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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Consider organising a programme of day-schools, weekend courses or study circles for union representatives and/or leaders to develop an understanding of the informal transport economy, consider organising policy and strategy, and/or provide practical organising skills for staff and activists.

In addition to this booklet and the accompanying video, there are reports, case studies, more in-depth video interviews and other documents produced from the ITF's Informal Transport Workers Project that provide a wealth of material suitable for use in education. These are all available on the project web site –

[www.informalworkersblog.org](http://www.informalworkersblog.org).

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NCTU-IDEA exchange visit





*International Transport  
Workers' Federation (ITF)  
49-60 Borough Road  
London SE1 1DR, UK  
+44 (0)20 7403 2733*



*itfglobal.org*



*/ITFglobal*



*@ITFglobalunion*

