



# UMOJA

## AUKW MAKES GAINS FOR WORKERS AT GENERAL MOTORS



A Kenyan worker at an AUKW organised workplace.

The reason given by General Motors for the withdrawal was that, as an international company, they had policy that required them to establish higher standards in working conditions than could be achieved through the association, as some of the other companies are unable to make the same offer.

“Initially we thought that the withdrawal of General Motors from the employers association would mean that workers were going to be forced to accept inferior working conditions compared to others in the sector.” said Maero Tindi, General Secretary of AUKW, “This has not been the case, we have enhanced the conditions of work and achieved a lot in a very short time for this workplace.”

Tindi acknowledges that the gains made are attributed to the company policy internationally. Kenyan workers are benefitting from worker struggles in the company’s operations in other parts of the world.

In recent collective bargaining negotiations with General Motors, United Auto Workers of America (UAW) was able to reach an agreement in September this year which raises the bar for the US auto sector, benefitting tens of thousands of workers. UAW kept the demand for an International Framework Agreement (IFA) and a World Works Council for the US auto makers on the table during the talks.

There is a clear need for an IFA, through which organised labour will be able to ensure acceptable working conditions are maintained at all General Motors plants worldwide.

Earlier this year, workers in Gujarat India went on a two month wildcat strike resulting in a lockout after the company, located in a remote area, abruptly stopped providing meals for workers. Workers added excessive working hours and health concerns to their grievances and lodged a complaint with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

KENYA: Amalgamated Union of Kenyan Workers (AUKW) has successfully concluded negotiations with General Motors, signing an agreement with the company on 21st November 2011.

AUKW has been organising at General Motors since the company began operating in Kenya in 1976 and the company is fully unionised.

The union has achieved 31% wage increase over two years, a housing allowance, and transport to and from work for workers. AUKW successfully negotiated with General Motors to eliminate contract work. Under the agreement, workers will be come permanent after a 90 day period. Gains were also made in securing food for workers, medical treatment and a pension scheme.

The significance of these negotiations is that it is the first time the union has negotiated a company level agreement with General Motors.

General Motors recently pulled out of the Kenya Association of Vehicle Assemblers, a move that concerned AUKW; the union was worried that this would undermine long established centralised bargaining in the sector.

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# AFRICA NEEDS MANUFACTURING

IMF's July Africa regional conference in Johannesburg identified the need for pro-working class economic policies in Africa to build a solid industrial base and good quality jobs. Creating societies built on social justice and promoting industrial development are some of the leading ideas behind the creation of a new unified global union organisation in 2012.

I am writing this just ahead of what will probably be IMF's last Central Committee meeting to be held in December 2011 in Jakarta, Indonesia. If the Committee gives the go ahead, an extraordinary congress will be convened to meet on 18-20 June 2012 in Copenhagen, together with our sister Internationals ICEM and ITGLWF. This congress will be the birth of a new global union for the world's industrial, mining and energy workers.

IMF's Africa regional conference in July debated at length the global unification process and agreed that we have to strengthen the voice of workers to tackle challenges brought about by globalisation. Fighting against the growth of precarious work and the informal economy remains one of our absolute priorities. Only then can we guarantee decent working conditions and social protection for workers.

To achieve this we must build the strength and influence of our trade unions. Building stronger industrial unions to effectively defend the rights of workers is one of our priorities in Africa. The united global union will enable us to more effectively come together in solidarity at national, regional and international level, united in our struggle.

Participants at the July regional conference agreed that it was vital to develop priorities for the region within the new global union. This is a process in which all affiliates in the Africa region will have a chance to participate. In addition to defining what needs to be done to strengthen our unions to tackle challenges faced by workers, we must consider joint actions that can be taken

to push forward pro democracy struggles in countries where union rights are under attack, for example, in Swaziland and Zimbabwe. We also need to establish how we can work together on broader developmental issues affecting the continent.

There have been recent changes at IMF's Africa Regional Office in Johannesburg. IMF's Regional Representative, Stephen Nhlapo and Education Officer, Kapita Tuzwana left the office in September. We thank Steve and Kapita for their dedicated work and wish them the best success in their future endeavours.

Herman Ntlatleng will start in January 2012 as IMF's Regional Officer. Herman has been a sector coordinator for NUMSA including iron, steel and energy companies. Prior to this he was the NUMSA sector coordinator for the automotive and tyre sectors. He has come up through the union as an organiser, starting out Ford Motor Company where he worked as a spray painter.

Herman's task will be to assist affiliates in building stronger, independent and self-reliant trade unions in metal and other industries in Africa. He will help unions to develop organizing, collective bargaining, networking and joint actions. Should the new global union be formed next year, Herman will be joined by regional personnel from ICEM and ITGLWF, increasing the pool of knowledge and experience from which affiliates will be able to draw from as we move forward.

*Jyrki Raina, IMF General Secretary*



**Jyrki Raina, IMF General Secretary**



**Herman Ntlatleng, new IMF Africa Regional Officer**

## NEWU GENERAL SECRETARY ELECTED AS HEAD OF ZCTU

ZIMBABWE: The General Secretary of the National Engineering Workers Union (NEWU) was elected as the Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) at its Congress in August.

Japhet Moyo had been ZCTU's First Deputy General Secretary since its 2006 Congress. He has worked closely with the former ZCTU Secretary General Wellington Chibebe, acting on his behalf in his absence. Chibebe has left the ZCTU for the International Confederation of Trade Unions (ITUC) headquartered in Brussels, having been elected as their First Deputy Secretary General.

NEWU believes that Moyo will be a great asset to the labour movement in Zimbabwe. Lovemore

Mazenge will take over as Acting General Secretary. IMF is confident that Mazenge will keep up the good work of the union in representing metal and engineering workers in Zimbabwe and looks forward to working closely with him in the future.

IMF wishes Moyo well in his new position. Moyo has been a great asset to the region, displaying sound values, steering NEWU on the principles of worker democracy and committed to worker solidarity in the region and abroad. There is no doubt that his leadership of ZCTU will be beneficial to the workers of Zimbabwe

*Based on an article contributed by Miriam Chipunza, NEWU*



**Japhet Moyo, new ZCTU General Secretary**

# WORKERS DEMAND UNFAIR WAGE DIFFERENTIALS BE ADDRESSED AT XSTRATA ALLOYS

The month long strike by members of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) at Xstrata smelters in Rustenburg ended on November 25th. An agreement was reached that a joint task team would investigate wage disparities and address these with immediate effect once their investigation is complete.



NUMSA members protest outside Xstrata offices in Johannesburg.

SOUTH AFRICA: The strike commenced on October 24, 2011 after negotiations, which began in September 2011, deadlocked. Workers demands included a 10% wage increase across the board with the intention to close the existing wage disparities between Rustenburg plants and Lion Tubatse plant, a housing allowance of R3500 and a reduction of the number of grades from 8 to 5.

Whilst the matter was referred to the CCMA for conciliation, it was unable to broker a settlement, leaving the union with no option but to exercise its right to strike. Irvin Jim, NUMSA General Secretary argues, "We strongly believe that these demands by workers can be achieved by Xstrata, given the fact that Xstrata has bloated millions in rewarding its executives. These demands are consistent with the Freedom Charter, the over-arching policy document of our revolutionary ANC which called for work and security for all."

NUMSA says that the strike was prolonged because Xstrata management has applied delaying tactics, straining industrial relations and deepening antagonism between management and the union. On November 15th, 2011 NUMSA members applied further pressure on the company, marching to Xstrata offices in Johannesburg

and handing over a memorandum of demands from workers.

NUMSA negotiated favourably on the wage and housing allowance demands and made other gains such as securing a fulltime health and safety representative.

However the matter of wage disparities still needed to be resolved. "The main contention or dispute that separates us and Xstrata is a core demand from our members. Our members are demanding equalized rates of pay within its two sister companies," explains Jim. "The principle of equal pay for equal work is

not applicable in Xstrata since workers doing a similar job in Xstrata Lion plant, Mpumalanga, are getting better wages than their counterparts in Rustenburg."

Xstrata explanations to NUMSA of the wage disparities are that the Lion plant in Mpumalanga is more productive than the Rustenburg plants and Lion is located in a remote area, requiring higher wages to be paid in some grades to attract skilled workers. Addressing workers gathered at the march in Johannesburg, NUMSA President, Cedric Gina said, "It is not our problem that workers in Mpumalanga are paid more because the Rustenburg plants are using advanced technology to produce ferrochrome. We want workers to be paid equally for the same quality work they do."

However, Xstrata added to their argument that by making wages par with those paid at Lion, there may be some instances where workers are paid more in Rustenburg.

In order to resolve the impasse, both parties agreed to an immediate investigation into the matter by a joint management and union team with the intention of ultimately establishing wage harmonisation in all plants. Workers have accepted this as the way forward and the strike has been called off.



# COMING TOGETHER IN SOLIDARITY FOR FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In a global world connected as it is by internet and the media, campaigning has become a more widespread phenomenon. Trade unions at a workplace, national and international level are making increasing use of different campaign strategies to drive home a message or to protect workers and society at large from human and other rights abuses.

There are two types of campaigns used by the labour movement. The first type is delivering a targeted message to a group or groups of people with the intention of changing their attitudes or behaviour, such as an awareness raising campaign on HIV and AIDS. The second type is getting people with power to make decisions you want. In this article we focus on examples of the second type of campaigning.

Campaigning is an integral part of a functioning democratic society. It gives an individual the right to make his or her voice heard and to take action to demonstrate support for a campaign. This voice is added to many other voices, strengthening and building the campaign through collective actions, like a petition or demonstration. Organised labour works in the interest of the collective so is well positioned to take up campaigns. The success of a campaign requires collective voices and actions to ensure that decision makers are sufficiently influenced to concede to the campaign demands.

Campaigning requires specific demands and the ability to articulate why we are making these demands. Campaigns need to be directed at a target or targets, like government to change a law or a multinational company for better working conditions in its plants.

One way of getting more voices behind a campaign is to collaborate with other like

minded organisations. A good example of this is campaigning on the concept of decent work. There is an international call for decent work from the International Labour Organisation and many unions, national centres and international federations have taken up this concept as a campaign. At the IMF, decent work is echoed in a number of campaigns and press commentary. Several of our affiliates have centralised the call for decent work in national activities aimed at preventing working conditions being undermined or to pressure government policy in order to create sustainable jobs.

Global solidarity campaigns are an important part of the work of the IMF where communication and direct action form the basis of linking worker's struggles across borders. An example of a solidarity campaign is the support received by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) during the two month lockout at Bridgestone earlier this year. NUMSA sought solidarity support from its members as well as other unions in South Africa and abroad. IMF African affiliates responded to the call and most sent letters of solidarity to NUMSA, calling on Bridgestone to respect the central bargaining process. Several other unions outside of the region, notably some of those that organise Bridgestone workers in other countries, also sent letters to Bridgestone SA warning that they were ready to back NUMSA with actions at the company's plants that they organise.

As IMF affiliates it is critical to give support to fellow affiliate actions, often through staging an action outside a consulate or embassy, or by supporting electronic campaigns by sending emails or faxing letters. We must remember that a time may come that our union will need international support on an issue and the response is far more likely to be positive where we have given support in the past.

Most of the solidarity support is expressed from union leadership. However, solidarity efforts need to build real worker solidarity by penetrating through to the workplace. In order to achieve this, workers must understand they are part of broader struggles that extend beyond their workplaces or even national borders.



NUMSA members take their demands to Bridgestone in April.

Increasingly in Africa, trade unions form links with broader civil society to take up national issues with government. The IMF has given support to a number of civil society campaigns in Southern Africa directed at bringing about social change and responding to oppressive regimes.

On 20 July, the Malawi government violently suppressed civil protests leaving 19 people dead. There is growing dissatisfaction in Malawi with President Bingu wa Mutharika's regime. Civil society is critical of laws that have been passed to limit the freedom of the press, restrict lawsuits against government and limit civil liberties. Popular discontent has been mounting over worsening economic conditions with crippling shortages of fuel and foreign currency. The situation in Malawi worsened after the government expelled the British high commissioner in April and in response Britain expelled the Malawi Consular General. Britain suspended aid to Malawi, together with several donor other donor countries.

The Malawi Confederation of Trade Unions (MCTU) was a key organiser of the campaign. Workers in Malawi have been hard hit by the economic crisis. Shortage of foreign currency means that companies cannot bring in raw materials and parts which has resulted in job losses. Fuel shortages and the high prices for fuel and foreign currency on the black market mean that the cost of transport has become prohibitively expensive and basic goods have become unaffordable.

IMF supported the International Trade Union Confederation's (ITUC) international labour campaign in support of organised labour and civil society in Malawi. An electronic campaign for Malawi was launched on the Labour Start website



MCTU General Secretary Robert Mkwezalamba is harassed by armed forces during civil protests in August.

which had over 4700 supporters at its peak. The campaign was publicised by the Malawian media and on various websites of supportive unions. A number of letters were sent to the Malawi government by ITUC affiliates, including IMF. Together, these efforts contributed to securing social dialogue on necessary reforms needed in Malawi between government and civil society.

The IMF also supports the pro democracy campaign in Swaziland. In 2010 South African unionists in Swaziland were arrested and deported whilst on a solidarity visit to give their support for the calls for democracy. Amongst them was Christine Olivier, IMF executive committee member and second deputy president of NUMSA. During a peaceful pro-democracy march in the Swaziland capital, Mbabane, the police forces disrupted the march and raided the labour federation offices. A number of political and labour activists were arrested. The IMF immediately wrote to the Swaziland Prime Minister to

condemn these actions and received a comprehensive response. This provided the activists with a platform to refute government's account and justification of its action. In 2011, South African unionists returned to Swaziland to participate in a coordinated global week of action for democracy and rights in Swaziland.

During the September Swaziland Democracy global week of action, IMF encouraged affiliates to express solidarity and participate in actions held in several countries organised by labour and civil society. Their actions raised awareness of the plight of Swazi people who have suffered under years of political oppression and loss of curbed rights, exacerbated by the increasingly desperate economic situation in the country. The IMF continues to be vocal on issues of Swaziland. It has amongst other things, raised concerns on the bailout offered by South Africa and other planned loans with neoliberal conditionalities that will enslave the Swazi people to debt repayments and block the pursuit of a fair and equitable developmental agenda in the future.

IMF has actively supported broader civil campaigns, premised on the belief that the exercise of freedom of association, a fundamental worker right, is dependent on the maintenance of fundamental civil liberties. In order to have an environment where freedom of association can be achieved, civil and political liberties must also exist. These liberties include freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of assembly, the right to due process and the right to security of person, or freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention. Therefore the pursuit of freedom of association must be in the realm of human rights.



Police forces disrupt civil protest in Swaziland in 2010.

## IMF AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE IDENTIFIES KEY REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Affiliates from 16 African countries met in Johannesburg, South Africa on 6th and 7th July 2011 to discuss progress of the women's programme, the implementation of the IMF action programme and the creation of the new global union federation.

Also present at the conference were IMF General Secretary Jyrki Raina, COSATU President Sdumo Dlamini, International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) President Senzeni Zokwana, who is also President of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in South Africa, ICEM coordinator Fabian Nkomo, the International Textile Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF) Regional Secretary Thabo Tshabalala as well as trade unionists from South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU).

At a women's workshop preceding the conference, delegates took stock of what had been done so far in the region to promote 'equal pay, equal opportunities'. Much of the discussion focussed on an internal reflection of women's participation and representation in the trade unions, with many delegates giving voice to the need for unions to create space for women. Also discussed was the gender representation in the structures working towards the new global union federation as well as in the new global union federation once it is formed.

In the regional conference IMF General Secretary, Jyrki Raina presented to delegates the rationale for the creation of the new global federation, which is to increase the strength of worker voices internationally to tackle challenges brought about by globalisation.

He explained to delegates the work that is being done to set up the new global union federation and what structure it is expected to have. Delegates discussed representation in these structures as well as the practicalities of the regional presence. Also discussed was the need to determine regional priorities that would feed into the priorities of the new international.

Steve Nhlapo, IMF Africa Regional Representative, reported on the activities of the IMF in the region. Much attention has been focussed on building unity through greater collaboration of unions in countries and work towards mergers. Another core area has been union building activities, looking to strengthen affiliates in the region. Delegates then looked at aspects of the current action programme including MNCs, sustainable trade and development and trade union rights. Reports were given by delegates from Swaziland and Zimbabwe to inform continued work on these two political campaigns. The needs for moving forward on a climate change position and building capacity in this area were identified. Participants were also made aware of the efforts to improve communications in the region and internationally and the role that they play in this.

Participants agreed that it was vital to develop priorities for the region and that these must be taken into the new global union federation. A framework was put together identifying these priorities, outlining the structure and content of a paper. The paper is to be developed by the IMF Africa region in consultation with regional representatives of ICEM and ITGLWF and circulated to affiliates for their comment.

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## ORGANISING INFORMAL WORKERS IN TANZANIA

TANZANIA: As the unemployment rate in Tanzania continues to grow with limited opportunities in formal employment, many unemployed workers are absorbed into the informal sector. At the same time, retrenchment, outsourcing and the negative impacts of globalization also swell the numbers in the informal sector. As a result, the informal economy is growing very fast but there are insufficient plans in place to accommodate the needs of informal workers.

TUICO has taken up the challenge to organise workers in the informal sector. They are mainly characterised as vulnerable workers, engaged in precarious work. Most are small scale traders, hawkers and street vendors who earn very little, living from hand to mouth and facing enormous difficulties to sustain their basic needs, with no access to social protection.

TUICO recognises that poor working conditions and low income does not constitute decent work and that these workers need to be organised and require representation. Thus far TUICO has organised more than 1000 workers in five marketplaces, in spite of the challenges this presents. As informal sector workers, they move from one place to another which hinders organising efforts. Also their needs are very different

from the traditional services provided to formal workers by the union. For example, Access to finance and basic business skills are desperately needed.

TUICO has organised these workers into a structure in each of the five marketplaces making it easier to service their needs. The union then successfully linked these groups to loan agencies and has managed to train 250 members on bookkeeping and business management skills. Such activities show the value of union membership to informal workers and have encouraged more workers to join the union.

The potential for recruitment in the informal sector is huge but organising requires intensive work, as the union learns how to build representative structures and service these workers. TUICO efforts are commendable not only for the gains they are making for informal workers but also for building solidarity amongst all workers. These efforts potentially hold valuable lessons that the union can share and TUICO should be supported through collaborative efforts with the global labour movement to ensure that this good work continues to grow.

*Article by Margaret Ndagile of TUICO*

## NEWU ZMEAWU MAKING PROGRESS TOWARDS A MERGER

ZIMBABWE: National Executive Members of the National Engineering Workers Union (NEWU) and the Zimbabwe Metal Energy and Allied Workers Union (ZMEAWU) met in November 2011 to evaluate progress towards a merger and the level of cooperation that they have achieved.

NEWU and ZMEAWU signed a memorandum of understanding to work towards a merger in 2009, soon after the formation of ZMEAWU, which was born out of the merger of a number of unions. The memorandum of understanding provided for a number of areas of cooperation such as in education and training, skills development, promotion of occupational health and safety, organizing and recruitment as well as industrial research and the development of HIV/AIDS programmes.

The unions have worked together on the development of resource material, held joint educational activities and recruitment drives, and have assisted one another on sector level dispute resolution. In October 2011, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) facilitated a workshop for staff of the two unions to devise practical approaches that can be taken at an organisational level to ensure that the merger is a success.

The unions recognise that merging will make them stronger to address worker concerns with one voice. They also acknowledge the 2006 ZCTU resolution on mergers, which calls on unions with similarities in industrial operations, collective bargaining, administration and socio-economic challenges to merge for the creation of fewer but larger and hence stronger and more viable union.

*Article by Lovemore Mazenge, General Secretary of NEWU*

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## NUBEGW PREPARES FOR CONGRESS

ZAMBIA: In November, IMF Project Officer Suzanna Miller joined NUBEGW for a number of activities organised to prepare the union for its congress next year. The main activity was a strategic planning workshop, where NUBEGW began preparing for the union's action plan to be proposed at the next congress.

Gabriel Phiri, General Secretary of NUBEGW opened the workshop with a presentation on the current state of the union, with updated membership figures and dues, recruitment targets and projections for the following years. The current leadership inherited a poor financial situation and has done a good job to clear some of the outstanding debts, whilst ensuring that the union is able to run as a financially viable entity. One of the major achievements is the relative stability in leadership with a highly motivated staff at the head office and in the regions. This has allowed the union to focus on making gains for NUBEGW members with steady growth in salaries and improved conditions.

During the workshop, regional and national leadership worked together with the union heads of department in six groups. They discussed organising, education, occupational health and safety, the National Executive Committee, women workers, administration and finance and research within the concept of building a sustainable union. Participants then came together to share and discuss the proposed objectives, priorities and actions in each area within an overall vision for the union. The union will hold another workshop ahead of the congress to consolidate the plan.

Women workers also met to coordinate and articulate their plan of action for inclusion in next years Congress. It was agreed that the union has made some progress on the inclusion of women in the union but that more can be done. Participants discussed the requirements for more representation and participation of women in NUBEGW. This included needs for recruitment and retention of women members and a proposal for the inclusion of women in collective bargaining processes at all levels.

During the week, an excellent awareness raising workshop on HIV/AIDS was conducted for the union by Edith Maziofa, regional coordinator for the Swedish Workplace HIV/AIDS Programme. The workshop agreed that HIV/AIDS workplace interventions by NUBEGW need to be strengthened, in order to be truly effective.



Capturing discussions during the strategic planning workshop.



# NEWU JOINS ZCTU IN COMMEMORATING WORLD DAY FOR DECENT WORK



The National Engineering Workers Union (NEWU) joined the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and the labour movement across the globe in commemorating the World Day for Decent Work on the 7th of October under the theme: 'Save Our Rights, Save Our Economy and Our Jobs.' This is the fourth time that Zimbabwean workers have held actions on this day, having first done so in 2008.

ZIMBABWE: Workers marched in the streets of Harare singing songs of solidarity and were addressed by the newly elected ZCTU leadership; Secretary General Japhet Moyo, 1st Deputy General Secretary Gideon Shoko and President George Nkiwane.

The ZCTU leadership assured workers that ZCTU is committed to the issues of decent work and will continue to work with its membership and affiliates to make sure decent work is achieved. They reminded workers that they are part of international working class struggles and said that calls for decent work in Zimbabwe are echoed all over the world.

In Zimbabwe, only a few workers can claim to have decent employment, the vast majority of workers earn far below the Poverty Datum Line (PDL). It is estimated that workers need to earn \$504US a month to support an average family at the PDL but many workers in some industries are earning as little as \$40US per month.

Too many workers have poor quality and unproductive jobs, unsafe work, insecure income and are denied worker rights. There is also high levels of unemployment, inadequate social protection and poor provision for pensioners and those that are disabled.



A worker sings songs of solidarity at the ZCTU march for decent work.

NEWU is also experiencing problems in the industry with employers in the Engineering Sector refusing to comply with an arbitration award that was handed down of a 20% wage increase for the industry. This has resulted in spontaneous strikes by workers and has caused unrest in the industry.

As worker representatives, Zimbabwe unions understand that promoting decent work is a shared responsibility and incorporates the needs and perspectives of the government, employers and

worker organizations.

Workers want to experience opportunities for work that is productive and delivers fair income, security at the workplace and social protection, freedom to express their concerns and to organise and participate in the decision making processes that affect their lives. They also want equality in opportunities and treatment for women and men.

*Article by Miriam Chipunza of NEWU*

International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) represents the collective interests of 25 million metalworkers from more than 200 unions in 100 countries. The IMF is a federation of national metalworkers' unions, a union of unions at the world level. The IMF head office is in Geneva, Switzerland, where worldwide activities are co-ordinated with a network of regional offices.

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