

# **EDUCATION**



**A TOOL FOR BUILDING UNIONS**

## I. EDUCATION OR UNION-BUILDING?

IMF policy paper from 1991 talks of "workers' education", whereas IMF survey from 1993 focused generally on trade union activities. Other ITS's speak of trade union education (ITF, IFBWW), trade union education and development (FIET), trade union development (IUF), development co-operation (EI) or union-building (ICEM).

The term "union-building" is perhaps more accurate, as it encompasses the essential of the activities and is broader than mere education.

Union-building projects could be defined as activities limited in time and scope run by the appropriate IMF bodies, for and with one or several affiliates (and would-be affiliates) and with funds (for the major part) external to the affiliates (and would-be affiliates).

IMF affiliates both in industrialised and developing countries run a multitude of union-building activities with their own resources. It should be discussed how IMF could contribute to these activities to ensure that issues of solidarity and globalisation are taken into account.

## II. THE IMF ACTION PROGRAMME ON EDUCATION AND UNION-BUILDING

"Secondly, the ability and willingness of national unions to contribute to Labour's global struggle is a key factor in determining outcomes. Weakness or declines anywhere will weaken us collectively. Weak unions in the developing world would handicap our strategy of upwardly harmonising terms of employment. And in the developed world, it has always been the achievements of the strongest which have served as models and standards that later diffused throughout economies and regions. This reasoning implies that:

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- the strengthening of union movements, particularly in the developing countries most involved in economic globalisation, must become a top priority for the IMF and its affiliates;
  - the unions in the developed world will have to furnish the bulk of material support for this effort, and consequently;
  - the unions in the developed world will need global solidarity to defend social achievements which are now under attack by the market forces unleashed by deregulation;
  - existing labour movements everywhere will have to re-examine their structures and policies to see if they are up to the challenges posed by a global economy.
  - In connection with this last point, it is worth emphasising that dividing lines -- regardless of whether they are due to a multiplicity of national centres, enterprise boundaries, or inter-plant rivalry -- are fault lines that weaken us, and that must be overcome. Moreover, structures and practices that give a low priority to reaching out to communities or civil organisations and to unorganised or new workers -- regardless of whether in new knowledge industries or newly arrived from agricultural life -- are a weakness that we cannot afford." (p.10-11)

" The IMF will develop educational and publicity materials about economic globalisation and make them available to its affiliates. It is essential that the IMF's activities and publications be concrete, readily comprehensible, and visible to its affiliates and their members." (p.32)

" The IMF will urge its affiliates to promote membership-oriented activities which draw local/regional union organisations and individual members into international solidarity activities. The IMF will assist its affiliates in this task and provide a co-ordinating framework. Examples of suitable activities include financial or in-kind donations, sponsoring seminars, providing instructors, etc." (p.32)

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" Organising the unorganised remains a fundamental task of all IMF affiliates. Although organising campaigns can only be carried out by unions themselves, the IMF can do much on the international level to support the organising activities of its affiliates. (...)

- Provide for regional seminars and meetings that focus on organising campaigns. (...)
- Orient educational programmes in developing countries more specifically towards organising skills." (p.32)

" Focus especially on organising women workers by: (...)

- Promoting education programmes for women on mainstream union issues. (p.33)

" The IMF should take a number of initiatives, including(...):

- promoting education as the most important tool to strengthen the trade union movement and to enlighten the general membership. The IMF shall further strengthen its education programmes to address the issue of solidarity in all relevant aspects of trade union work. To achieve these objectives an IMF Working Party should be established to assist the Secretariat in co-ordinating programmes, monitoring and evaluating their implementation and in assessing the achievements.
- reinforcing traditional forms of solidarity, such as support from stronger to weaker unions by a continuous process of co-operation and exchange, and supplementing this by mutual support and co-operation with social groups that share union goals." (p.33)

" The IMF will: launch an educational programme for IMF affiliates to promote the inclusion of internationally recognised human and worker rights and labour standards in all international trade, co-operation, and investment agreements," (p.38)

### III. IMF PRIORITIES

Priorities for the IMF stem from the IMF Action Programme and other policy documents approved by the IMF statutory bodies.

IMF may support affiliates that

- are committed to activities leading to self-reliance,
- have established their own priorities and identified their needs,
- are prepared to work in accordance with the IMF union-building policy,
- are prepared to build union structures that respond to workers' needs locally and internationally,
- are able to organise activities or are prepared to closely co-operate with the appropriate IMF regional office to organise such activities and
- are ready to co-operate with other IMF unions at local, national and international level.

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## IV. IMF PRINCIPLES IN UNION-BUILDING PROJECTS

### Independence of the receiving organisation:

- Projects should build organisations that remain independent of employer control, political control etc.
- Whereas IMF fully appreciates its affiliates or donor agencies assisting in union-building projects these projects must not be imposed on the receiving union(s) by the assisting organisations.

### Democracy and accountability:

- Projects should enhance democracy within the organisation and activate members to take part in the activities of the organisation. Especially youth should be encouraged to fully participate in union activities.
- Projects should be decided upon according to the organisations rules; they should not be personal endeavours, but "owned" by the organisation, not an individual.
- Projects should be properly reported both to the IMF and to the organisations own membership. It is also important that projects should be followed up even after their completion.

### Autonomy and capacity-building:

- Projects should increase the capacity of the organisation to carry out its own core union activities, i.e. build self-reliance, particularly in the area of education.

### Equality and elimination of discrimination:

- Projects should specifically encourage and enable women to participate actively in union activities.
- Projects should contribute to eliminating political, racial etc. discrimination.

### Solidarity at national, regional and international level:

- Projects should strengthen solidarity inside the organisation, among unions in the country and/or region and inside the IMF.

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## V. POSSIBLE ELEMENTS OF UNION-BUILDING PROJECTS

Basic union training can consist of some or all of the following:

- organising,
- collective bargaining,
- occupational health and safety,
- administration,
- human and trade union rights,
- equality

More specialised training can be for example:

- trainers' training,
- leadership training,
- communication,
- economic and labour policy,
- new technology,
- globalisation.

A project can also involve the organisation in strategic planning, promote workers' exchange programmes or embark on specific organising activities.

## VI. WHERE DO UNION-BUILDING PROJECTS COME FROM?

A project has to respond to the need of the organisation(s) and members; therefore affiliate or country level projects should always be initiated at that level. Projects may also be implemented at regional or sub-regional level and these should preferably be initiated at the appropriate level. Projects may also be thematic and involve several regions: these could be initiated by the head office.

All affiliate or country-level projects have to be discussed by the IMF country council (where applicable) and submitted to the regional office in question, which then submits the final application to the head office. Sub-regional or regional projects must also be prepared by

the regional offices - together with the affiliates concerned -, which then submit the projects to the head office.

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## VII. PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

Administration has to be a clear and transparent process, which provides enough information for all the partners involved and maintains maximum accountability. It has to enable the partners to assess, whether the results justify the cost and effort.

Affiliates, regional offices and head office have their specific tasks:

### 1. IMF Geneva office

- has the overall responsibility of IMF union building activities,
- develops inter- and multi-regional projects,
- produces education material,
- acquires necessary external funding for the activities and
- maintains contacts with the donor organisations.

### 2. IMF Regional offices

- are responsible for union building activities in their respective region,
- produce education material,
- develop regional and country projects together with the affiliates,
- are responsible for getting project reports from the affiliates and forwarding them with comments to the Geneva office,
- are responsible for forwarding project funds and receiving accounts and/or financial reports
- incorporate union building activities into IMF sub-regional and regional activities.

projects could be discussed in sub-regional and regional meetings

### 3. Affiliates involved in the projects

- are responsible for the implementation of the agreed activities and for reporting as stated in the project document

The administration process is described in detail in a separate handbook on project administration.

## VIII. PRINCIPLES IN USING DONOR ASSISTANCE

Donor assistance has to be seen as complementing IMF's own activities and the priorities have to be set by IMF.

Donors deal primarily with the IMF head office but information concerning projects may flow directly between partner affiliates/regional offices and donors providing that the head office is kept informed.

Relations with the donor organisations are based on equality, mutual respect and partnership.

The IMF affiliate(s) in the donor country may be involved in discussions with the donor.

Donor assistance is used only for expenses occurring directly from the projects; this includes e.g. extra auditing costs but excludes so-called agency costs, which means that IMF does not include fixed percentages for administrative costs in the project budgets.

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