

GHANA TRADES UNION CONGRESS



9TH QUADRENNIAL DELEGATES CONGRESS

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Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)

Kumasi

Theme Document

*Organising for Empowerment, Employment Security and
Increased Productivity*

FOREWORD

Organising has been the main strategy that has sustained the trade union movement all these years. The effectiveness of collective bargaining, which is the heart of the trade union work, depends on the ability of the unions to organise. Similarly, the effectiveness of collective action or strikes depends on the unions' ability to mobilize workers for such actions.

However, recent trends in the labour market are undermining unions' ability to organize. The growing informal economy and the introduction of new forms of employment are making it more difficult for unions to sustain the interest of existing members and to recruit new members. This is the greatest challenge facing unions today.

The theme for this Congress “**Organising for Empowerment, Employment Security and Increased Productivity**” was, therefore, chosen to highlight this challenge and to call upon unions to rise up to the challenge.

This **Theme Document** has been prepared to serve as reference document to guide discussions and debates during and after the Congress. It has been written in a very simple language which makes it very easy to read. I urge all delegates to find the time to read it.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Organising is the key to the survival and growth of the trade union movement. In fact, organizing is the essence of unionism. The cliché that unions must either organize or die is even more relevant now. The oversized informal economy, the changing forms of employment in the formal sector, and the challenges workers face in their effort to exercise their right to associate freely, impact negatively on the ability of unions to organize. The low and declining union membership in Ghana is the result of these and other factors including the lack of financial and material resources for mass organization.

One important feature of strong trade unions is their ability to first, sustain the interest of the existing members in the movement and, second, to recruit new members. High unionization rate/union density strengthen unions not only in collective bargaining but also it enhances their ability to use collective action/strikes effectively as a strategy towards the achievement of their goals (i.e., to protect the interest of their members). Unions can only claim the legitimacy to represent workers only if the majority of the workforce across the major sectors of the economy is unionized and covered by collective agreements. Unions which represent a large proportion of the workforce also gain the respect and credibility in the eyes of employers and the government. And, of course, unions can only improve their finances if they increase their membership dues which remain the most important source of funds for unions.

The theme for this Quadrennial Delegates Congress was, therefore, chosen to highlight the need for all unions to make organizing their number one priority in the coming quadrennial by sustaining the interests of the existing members and organizing new members into their fold. In addition to the advantages of

organizing mentioned above, there are clear links between organizing on the one hand and empowerment, employment security and increased productivity on the other hand.

First, let's examine the relationship between organizing and empowerment. To be empowered means to have more influence. Empowerment also means strength, vigour, and might. The labour movement can influence national policies and decisions at the workplace only if it is strong. Since unions derive their strength from their membership, it goes without saying that unions can be empowered only through organizing. Across the globe unions that are powerful are the ones which have large membership across all sectors of the economy, across occupations, across gender and across all age cohorts.

The relationship between organizing and employment security is even more straightforward. Employment security means workers are able to keep their jobs for as long as they wish without the threat of being fired. In this era of globalization and precarious work, it is only strong unions that can guarantee employment security for their members. Flowing from the positive relationship between organizing and empowerment, it is logical to conclude that only empowered unions can protect the jobs and incomes of their members. In fact, one of the characteristics of a weak union is that its members can lose their jobs without any resistance whatsoever from the union.

What is productivity? And, what is the relationship between organizing and increased productivity?

Productivity is often misconceived to mean *labour productivity*. Labour is very important but it is only one of the several factors that go into the production of

goods and services. Capital, energy, raw materials and other inputs are equally important in production. It is, therefore, more appropriate to conceptualize productivity as the effective and efficient use of all inputs including labour, capital, land, materials, energy, information and time, among other factors. Some even misconceive productivity to mean high output without making any reference to the inputs required in the production process. But productivity is not only about high output. It is also about the use of inputs in the production process. Productivity is, therefore, appropriately defined as the relationship between the quantity and quality of what is produced (output) and the amount of resources, human or material (inputs) used in the production process (Prokopenko, 1987). Put differently, productivity is a measure of output from a production process or service system per unit of input.

Generally speaking productivity improvement means doing the right things more efficiently and more effectively. As Prokopenko (*op. cit.*) put it, “productivity improvement entails not just doing things better but, more importantly, doing the right things better.” Improvement in productivity does not necessarily mean using more resources but it may mean using existing resources in a more creative way to increase output levels.

Trade unions are interested in increased productivity or productivity improvement because it is an effective way by which they can achieve their ultimate goal of enhancing the living standards of their members and their families. High productivity brings high output and net wealth creation. Studies by the World Bank, based on manufacturing data from Ghana and Zimbabwe, have shown higher productivity in unionized firms compared to non-unionised firms when other basic firm characteristics such as size of workforce, sector/industry in which

the firms operate, their location and locality, as well as capital/labour ratio are controlled for. The reason for higher productivity in unionized firms, compared to non-unionised firms, can be attributed to the positive union effects on salaries, benefits, employment and income security as well as their ability to enforce international labour standards in unionized enterprises or organisations. Workers in unionized firms are, therefore, more likely to feel motivated compared to those in non-unionised enterprises or organisations. Additionally, studies have found that workers in unionized firms are more likely to receive training more regularly compared to workers in non-unionised workplaces. A trained and motivated workforce is more likely to achieve higher productivity and higher growth. Since organized or unionized workers are more likely to receive training and feel motivated it is logical to conclude that organized or unionized workers are likely to achieve higher productivity.

It is important to note that productivity improvement and the net wealth creation associated with it do not automatically lead to improved living standards for workers and their families. In many of the countries where improved productivity has led to high economic growth and increased net wealth creation, there has been rising income inequality. In other words, the gains from improved productivity are often not equitably shared among those who generated the gains. For increased productivity to benefit workers the gains from productivity have to be fairly distributed. In a situation where a few people at the top are awarded a disproportionately large share of the net wealth while workers are allocated small fraction of the gains, improved productivity will not translate into improved living standard for workers and their families.

This is where the empowerment of unions is needed. We have already established the positive relationship between organising and empowerment. We can infer from the foregoing that it is only through organising that unions can be empowered because that is the only means by which they can reverse the decline in union membership and reclaim the union movement's legitimacy to represent workers. Once unions are empowered they can achieve employment and income security as well as improved working conditions for their members. Job security, higher wages, and access to benefits as well as better conditions of service are important motivating factors which can lead to increased productivity.

The theme for the Congress: *Organising for Empowerment, Employment Security and Increased Productivity* cannot be more appropriate.

2.0 THE STATE OF THE UNION MOVEMENT IN GHANA

Like many other countries around the globe, union membership has been declining. In 1999, the union density (as measured by the proportion of formal sector workers who were employed in the unionised sector) was estimated at 50 percent, as shown by the fourth Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS IV, 1998/99). By 2006, the union density had declined to 37 percent, according to the fifth Ghana Living Standard Survey data.

The membership of the unions that constitute the Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC) has declined consistently since the 1980s due mainly to the mass redundancies that were implemented as part of the IMF/World Bank-sponsored Structural Adjustment policies. The membership of the affiliate unions of the TUC is estimated to have declined from over 600,000 in the mid-1980s to about half a

million presently (including members in the informal economy). This is a significant loss by any standard. The membership of other labour organisations outside the TUC family is currently estimated at around 300,000. This means out of an estimated formal sector workforce of 1.2 million about to-third is unionised. This represents just about seven percent of the total labour force in Ghana which is estimated at 12 million.

As noted above, the large size of the workforce trapped in informal employment makes it extremely difficult for the unions to expand their membership especially when the formal segment of the economy keeps shrinking. Attempts at organising in the informal economy began effectively in the early 1990s with the adoption of a policy on the informal economy at the 1992 TUC Congress. As part of the efforts to achieve the objectives of the policy, the TUC established a desk that is responsible for supporting national unions in their efforts to organise workers in the informal economy. Since then nine informal economy groups have been granted associate member status by the TUC. This is quite significant but the membership of these nine associations constitute less than one percent of the over 10 million informal economy workers in Ghana.

The declining membership has had negative effects on the finances of the unions. As union density declines and unions become financially weaker, labour right abuses surge. The rampant abuse of labour rights has serious implication for the relevance, legitimacy and credibility of the entire union movement. The large decent work deficits we are witnessing in Ghana can be cured by organising workers in both the formal and informal sectors.

The declining share of the public sector in total employment explains the decreasing membership of unions to a very large extent since the public sector has

always been the source of a large proportion of the union membership. The large scale public sector retrenchment that took place in the 1980s and 90s has been a major cause of membership loss in the unions. The implementation of the policy of net hiring freeze in the public sector in recent times has effectively ended its role as the lead source of new trade union members. Besides, a significant proportion of the public sector workforce has been barred by law from forming or joining unions. These include the Police Service, the Immigration Service, the Fire Service, the Prison Service and the Army. This class of workers work under very difficult conditions. They have very little say about their conditions of work. Yet, there is nothing inherent in their work that should keep them outside the trade union movement. Organising these classes of workers will help to address the challenges they face with respect to their salaries and conditions of service.

As we can deduce from the foregoing, the only reliable source of membership for the unions is the informal economy. This is the reality and unions must rise up to the challenge if they want to survive and grow.

3.0 TRADE UNION STRATEGIES

The core mandate of trade unions is to promote and protect the rights and socio-economic interests of workers. Unions have sought to achieve these objectives using four main strategies namely (1) organising, (2) collective bargaining, (3) collective action, and (4) alliance building with other social actors.

3.1 Organising

Organising or mass mobilisation of workers is the fulcrum around which all union activities revolve. Workers' struggles for a just and fair society have, at all times, been pursued through organising. Unions fully recognise that challenges that

confront workers cannot be dealt with individually. Expanding trade union membership to all the sectors and building and maintaining a united labour front are the major challenges facing the union movement today.

3.2 Collective Bargaining

Collective bargaining is at the heart of trade unionism and industrial relations, generally. Collective bargaining rests on four fundamental principles. First is the principle of *collectivism* as opposed to *individualism* - that together we can achieve what we cannot achieve as individuals. It is based on the adage that “Together we stand, divided we fall”. The second principle is *cooperation* as opposed to *competition*. The third is *solidarity* as opposed to ‘*survival of the fittest*’. The fourth principle underlying collective bargaining is *economic and social justice* and *fairness or equity*.

Collective bargaining remains the most important service that unions provide for their members in the formal sector. Unions have used the collective bargaining process to negotiate standards that govern employment and labour relations for their members. Collective bargaining is one of the three main pillars of industrial relations and it remains at the centre of industrial relations. The other pillars are conflict prevention and conflict resolution both of which are addressed within the collective bargaining framework. Collective bargaining becomes necessary when individual action fails or is likely to fail in fulfilling the expectations of workers. As noted earlier the effectiveness of collective bargaining depends on the ability of unions to organize.

3.3 Collective Action/Industrial Action

Collective bargaining has become the main tool by which unions deal with employers and attempt to address the concerns of their members. Nevertheless, unions have occasionally resorted to collective or industrial action to back their demands when collective bargaining fails to yield the desired results. Such actions often take the form of demonstrations and strikes. Every bargaining round faces the threat of a strike reflecting the ability of workers and their organisations to impose cost on employers through the withdrawal of their services. It is one of the most important and enduring tools available to trade unions.

Again collective action, by nature, is effective not only when the majority of the workforce is organized but also when they are organized under one umbrella. The industrial relations laws in Ghana, as in many other countries, have sought to limit the space for the use of strikes by unions. Many services have been declared “essential service” by law. This notwithstanding, if all workers are under one strong, independent trade union centre, they can always use strikes or the threat of strikes to achieve a lot for their members.

3.4 Alliance Building

Unions have always found it necessary to intervene in national policies and decisions. Such interventions are aimed at influencing and changing government policies and making sure they are in favour of workers and their families. There are other like-minded institutions and organisations in civil society with which the trade union movement can form alliance as a strategy for achieving its ultimate goal of protecting the interests of workers. There have been situations where unions have successfully formed strong alliance even with political parties and governments. A case in point is the Siamese twin relationship between TUC and

Kwame Nkrumah's Convention Peoples Party (CPP) in the 1960s. TUC gained a lot from this strong alliance with Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah and his party. But, at the same time, TUC lost its independence as a trade union movement. It is for this and other reasons that the TUC introduced a non-partisan clause in its Constitution. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has formed a very strong alliance with the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). COSATU is a very strong member of this tripartite alliance. This relationship enables COSATU to influence social, economic and labour market policies in South Africa.

Unions must, however, assess their own strength before they enter into such alliances. TUC lost its independence in its alliance with CPP because the party was much stronger at the time. COSATU is a well respected member of the tripartite alliance because it is very strong in terms of membership and in terms of the spread of its members across the South African economy. Unions can gain such strength only from large numbers.

Clearly, it is very hard to overstate the importance of organising or mass mobilisation. Collective bargaining, which is the main tool for unions, cannot be effective without organising. Similarly, collective action or strike, which is used occasionally to back the demands for improved salaries and working conditions, cannot be successful if union coverage is low. Unions cannot enter into any serious alliance with strong partners if the unions are weak. If unions want to survive the capitalist onslaught and continue to grow they must organise.

4. STRATEGIES FOR ORGANISING

There are two broad strategies unions usually adopt in organising. First, they try to sustain the interest of the existing members through various activities and welfare schemes. This may be described as a '*Bird-in-Hand*' Strategy. Second, unions undertake membership recruitment drives to unionise workers (new members). This may be termed *Mobilisation Strategy*. The changing realities in the labour market in Ghana, especially the declining formal sector and rapid expansion of the informal economy, have very serious implications for the effectiveness of these strategies. Let's examine these strategies further.

4.1 Sustaining the Interests of Existing Members (The 'Bird-in-Hand' Strategy)

The world of work is changing in ways that require new strategies to sustain the interest of the existing union members in the movement. Trade union members in all the sectors are becoming more sophisticated in their expectations and demands. A new class of well-educated and highly skilled workers has entered the union movement. Members are persistently demanding value for their money. They are demanding accountability and transparency in the running of the affairs of the unions. They are calling for participation and inclusiveness. Union leaders can no longer dictate to the members and they cannot ignore their demands.

At the same time, the changing face of the labour market is threatening the job and income security of existing members. Employers are replacing permanent workers with casual and fixed-term workers, in some cases, with very little regard for the law. Obviously, these practices have negative implications for trade unions in terms of membership and influence on national and workplace issues.

Unions would have to adopt new strategies to fight these changing forms of employment and to preserve the security of tenure of their members. Unions need to be innovative in their approach in order to retain the interest of existing members. These challenges have been worsened by the introduction of trade union pluralism which has resulted in the emergence of multiple unions particularly at the enterprise level.

The unity of purpose and the strength derived from large membership and solidarity that have been the guiding principles of working class struggles over the years seem to be waning. Instead of relying on their traditional source of strength (unity and solidarity) unions are brutally competing for membership with one another in the ever-shrinking formal sector.

To remain true to the mandate of protecting and defending the interests of members and the working class, it is important that unions and unionists resurrect the principles that have historically underpinned union work. The class divisions and the systematic impoverishment of the working class and the masses that gave birth to trade unions remain with us and have become even more pronounced. And just as in the past, we require collective organization and collective action to confront these challenges. We should do this because we know that individually we are incapable of defending our interests. Splintering divides the union front and undermines the struggle for social and distributive justice.

Sustaining the interests of members will also require delivering to them the traditional service of collective bargaining in a more effective manner. It also requires broadening the scope and the conception of collective bargaining by introducing issues and clauses in collective agreements that are of great interests to workers.

There is also the need to look at what has been achieved over the years through collective bargaining. This will help the unions to tell their story as they market themselves to the working public. Unions should undertake regular membership surveys to determine the true state of the unions. The surveys will also bring out the views of existing members about the union movement.

Informal workers also need some form of collective bargaining. They need to negotiate/bargain with government and city authorities over taxes and space, among others. The bargaining process must specially cater for the interests of identifiable vulnerable groups within the labour market such as young workers, women, senior and managerial staff and those with disability.

4.1.1 Sustaining the Interest of the Union Members through Welfare Schemes

Beyond collective bargaining unions can do a lot to make life decent for workers and their families. It is important that member unions of the Ghana TUC explore new areas where they can be of service to their membership. This has become necessary for two reasons. First, members of the unions are increasingly raising questions about how their dues are being used by unions. Second, as we work to strengthen unions and collective bargaining we will also be approaching the limit of collective bargaining. In fact, unions are now losing clauses in collective agreements at a faster rate than they are able to add to them. New union members take the previous gains for granted. This shows that we are fast approaching the limit.

Unions must, therefore, find new ways of servicing their members in order to justify their relevance and usefulness. The socio-economic situation in Ghana

poses serious challenges for the working class. Workers have only their unions to turn to for assistance in time of need and in circumstances such as natural disasters, layoffs, prolonged illness or disability. The onus lies on unions to justify why their members should continue to stay in the unions.

Non-bargaining benefits must be tailored to the needs and interests of the members. The ‘Union Plus’ Services of the AFL-CIO of the United States is a shining example of how unions can service their members beyond collective bargaining. The ‘Union Plus’ Service is designed by the AFL-CIO to provide consumer benefits and discounts to members and retirees of participating labour unions.

Already, some of the member unions of the Ghana TUC have made significant inroads in this direction. The Development and Social Services Fund (DSSF) of the Public Service Workers’ Union, the Bisa-MacCarthy Education Fund and the Workers’ Support Scheme of the Ghana Mineworkers Union, TEWU Welfare Fund, PUWU Mutual Fund and others are good examples of local initiatives. These schemes have to be supported and replicated in the other unions.

The following are some of the services unions can provide for their members:

Mortgage

It is extremely difficult for ordinary workers to own houses in Ghana. Unions can liaise with the various real estate developers to put up affordable housing units for their members with flexible terms of payments. Unions must acquire lands for such purposes and arrange for special Mortgage Assistance.

Counseling

Unions can offer free counseling on pension and taxation for their members.

Mutual Health Insurance

Unions can have their own mutual health schemes under the NHIS to ensure good health care for union members and their families.

Legal Services

Unions can engage legal experts to secure improvements to the law in addition to providing legal support services to individual union members and their families. These services will be particularly useful for young workers and women who suffer exploitation in the labour market.

Transport Services

Unions can consider the provision of transport services to their members at a discount especially those in the cities and in large towns.

Recreational Activities

Unions can organize recreational activities on a regular basis for their members. In addition to sustaining their interest in the union, such activities have added advantage of promoting healthy life styles among union members.

4.1.2 Sustaining the interest Young Workers

The labour market in Ghana has a higher proportion of young workers. About two-thirds of the working-age population is between the ages of 15 and 35 years, according to the latest Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS V, 2006). Many of these young workers start working too early in their life with low level of skill

and very limited human capital. Consequently, many of them find their way into the informal economy. Those who manage to enter the formal sector, where unions normally operate, are often better educated. They tend to have completely differently outlook and attitudes. They crave for participation and involvement. Whether they are in the formal or informal economy, these young workers represent an important part of the future of trade unions. The labour movement will not have any great future if it fails to tap into this pool of young workers. The benefits from the energy of young workers and their ideas are worth tapping into.

These young and skilled workers have to be recruited and absorbed into union structures and activities. Unions are expected to adjust their agenda and their constitutions to reflect the aspirations, the needs and passions of young workers.

Currently, young people form just a tiny fraction of the trade union membership. Their voice is barely heard and their concerns are often the least important on the agenda of the unions because they are underrepresented in decision-making structures. Young workers need the collective strength of unions. But they need unions that are adaptable to the ever-changing global environment. Young people tend to be apathetic towards institutions and organizations that do not embrace their potentials and passions.

Young people certainly need trade unions. Due to high youth unemployment in the country, they are the ones most often exploited and forced to take insecure employment. They must have confidence that trade unions are there to ensure their employability, their rights at work and other benefits. There will be the need to have special campaigns that will seek to address the exploitation of young workers in the labour market, particularly regarding their trade union rights.

In the coming quadrennial there will be the need to identify and groom some young workers through deliberate trade union education such as the Global Labour University Programmes (GLU), Labour Policy Studies, Diploma in Labour Studies and Certificate in Labour Studies. Let's develop these programmes as avenues for trade union leadership training.

4.1.3 Sustaining the interest of Women in the trade union movement

Women's participation in the labour market is growing in Ghana. This has been made possible by the rising numbers of women with higher level education. As unions struggle to increase membership, women workers cannot be ignored. They become central to the process of union membership renewal and the re-building of unions. However, studies have shown that unions are only partially meeting women's demand for union representation and participation. Unions, particularly those in Africa, continue to reflect and perpetuate the patriarchy that pervades African societies. Women, like the youth, continue to face discrimination and marginalization not only in the larger labour market but also in the unions.

Over the years, some progress has been made in Ghana and in the trade union movement towards gender equity particularly women's representation in leadership structures. This notwithstanding a lot more needs to be done to improve women's participation in the trade union movement. The women's structures need to be revamped and better integrated into the decision-making processes. Women need to be supported in a special way to climb up the leadership structures of the unions beyond the positions that have been reserved for women. There is need to

re-orient unions to view gender equality and women's empowerment as strategic investments for their relevance and survival.

Organising women workers in Ghana must be based on the understanding that women workers face greater degrees of insecurity at the work place compared to their male counterparts. Also, women have greater reproductive roles that can impede their participation in union activities. It is important that women are encouraged and supported to participate actively and effectively not only in trade union activities but more importantly to be adequately represented in the trade union leadership at all levels local, district, regional and national.

Unions are expected to commit more resources to gender-mainstreaming and equality at all levels including the regional and district women structures. Building a strong core of women activists including retirees as role models and mentors for other women, especially the young ones, must be encouraged. Unions must not only be encouraged to enhance the negotiation skills of women but more importantly they should be encouraged to include women negotiators on their negotiation teams at all levels.

4.2 Recruiting New Members

4.2.1 Organising Workers in the Informal Economy

The rapid informalisation of the labour market has forced the majority of the Ghanaian labour force into the informal economy. Nearly 90 percent of the Ghanaian workforce is working in the informal economy. This group of workers faces a number of challenges for which they need trade union interventions. Decent

work deficit is most pronounced in the sector. The sector is marked by low incomes. The majority of workers there are living below the poverty line. Workers in the sector work under very poor conditions and the coverage of social protection is very low.

In order to attract informal economy workers to the unions, unions have to prove to them that they are capable of addressing the many challenges facing them in that sector. Unions must campaign for laws, regulations and a national policy that ensure decent working conditions in the informal economy. Unions need to adopt policies and to review their constitutions to integrate the various categories of informal economy workers including the self-employed and the paid workers in the sector.

Unions have to develop recruitment plans with quarterly and annual targets and should be willing to commit human, time, material and financial resources to membership recruitment. This exercise must be subjected to rigorous monitoring and evaluation by the TUC. This means that the department responsible for organizing must be strengthened in terms of human, material and financial resources to support affiliates in their organizing efforts.

4.2.2 Organising workers in new forms of employment in the formal sector

As has been noted earlier, the world of work keeps changing. Jobs for life are no longer the norm. New forms of employment are emerging on daily basis. Contract and fixed-term employment are replacing permanent jobs. New entrants to the labour market are relatively young and some are highly skilled. Women's participation in the labour market is also increasing.

At the same time reforms of labour legislations have ended the ‘close-shop’ arrangements which allowed unions to recruit new members with much less difficulty. Now, unions have to recruit new members by convincing the young and relatively more skilled workers and the well-educated women entering the labour market about the need for them to join the trade union movement. This task has been complicated by globalisation with its underlying neo-liberal ideology underpinned by the free market principle. The implementation of the neo-liberal reforms has come with massive decline in the share of formal sector employment where unions have predominantly operated. Outsourcing, sub-contracting, part-time work, informalisation and casualisation of employment have become the norm. These developments have pushed the workforce into sectors where recruitment of new members has become more difficult.

Unions must pursue an aggressive membership recruitment drive. This is possible only if unions recruit, train and motivate recruitment officers/organizers to do the job. It is a struggle for the survival and relevance which deserves more attention from the unions. Unions and the services they provide must be attractive to all classes of workers – young workers, women, professional staff, and senior staff.

4.2.3 Organizing Workers in the Quasi Security Agencies

It is generally accepted that trade union rights are human rights. However, the labour laws in Ghana prevent certain groups of workers from forming or joining trade unions of their choice. These groups include personnel in the Police Service, Fire Service, Prison Service, Immigration Service and the Army including the

civilian staff who work in these agencies. This is against the basic human rights of this group of workers.

These workers perform their duties under very difficult conditions. They receive low salaries and live under poor conditions with their families. Yet the law does not allow them to have a say in the determination of their conditions of work. There is nothing special about their work that should make their membership of trade unions a taboo. In some countries these classes of workers are unionized. The unions in South Africa are currently making efforts towards the unionization of even the military. Organising these classes of workers will not only help to address the challenges they face but more importantly it will help shore up the membership of the unions, particularly unions that organize workers in the public sector.

4.2.4 Building One Working Class Movement

It is worth mentioning once again that the trade union movement has been built on the core principles of unity and solidarity. Trade union pluralism has now become a threat to these core principles.

Currently, unionised workers in Ghana can be grouped into five: (1) Members of the Ghana Trades Union Congress (2) Members of the Ghana Federation of Labour (3) Non-affiliated Industrial/National Unions (i.e., national unions with no affiliation to any trade union centre) (4) Sector-based Unions, and (5) Enterprise-based unions.

The TUC has 18 affiliated national unions (Group 1). GFL has 9 affiliated unions (Group 2). There are six non-affiliated national/industrial unions (Group 3), 14 sector-based non-affiliated unions (Group 4), and 25 enterprise-based unions. That

means we have 55 unions operating in Ghana presently with a total membership of less than one million. (The list of unions in the five groups is shown in the Box below).

The onslaught against trade union unity and solidarity in Ghana intensified as the phenomenon of enterprise-based unions gained momentum. This trend will not abate naturally. Some employers are actively encouraging the formation of enterprise-based unions and using them as a tool to break the labour front. But, from what we have witnessed in the past few years in Ghana, it is clear that enterprise-based unions pose a grave danger to the rights of workers. Enterprise unionism is against the principles of unity and solidarity on which the trade union movement was built. All the working people of Ghana must belong to one working class movement.

BOX 1: UNIONS IN GHANA

Group 1: Members of the Ghana Trades Union Congress

1. *Public Services Workers' Union (PSWU)*
2. *Public Utility Workers' Union (PUWU)*
3. *Health Services Workers' Union (HSWU)*
4. *Communication Workers' Union (CWU)*
5. *Timber and Woodworkers' Union (TWU)*
6. *General Agricultural Workers' Union (GAWU)*
7. *General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union (GTPCWU)*
8. *Teachers and Educational Workers' Union (TEWU)*
9. *National Union of Seamen (NUS)*
10. *Maritime and Dockworkers' Union (MDU)*
11. *Ghana Mineworkers' Union (GMWU)*
12. *Local Government Workers' Union (LGWU)*
13. *Railway Workers' Union (RWU)*
14. *Railway Enginemen's Union (REU)*
15. *Union of Industry, Commerce and Finance Workers (UNICOF)*
16. *Construction and Building Material Workers' Union (CBMWU)*
17. *Federation of University Senior Staff Association of Ghana (FUSSAG)*
18. *Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU)*

Group 2: Members of Ghana Federation of Labour

1. *Textile, Garment and Leather Employees' Union. (TEGLEU)*
2. *Food And Allied Workers' Union (FAWU)*
3. *General Manufacturing And Metal Workers' Union (GEMM)*
4. *Union Of Private Security Personnel (UPSP)*
5. *National Union of Teamster And General Workers (NUTEG)*
6. *Finance And Business Services Union (FBSEU)*
7. *Private School Teachers and Educational Workers' Union of Ghana (PRISTEG)*
8. *Media Of Printing Industry Workers' Union (MEDIANET)*
9. *ICT and General Services Employees Union*

Group 3: Non- Affiliated National Unions

1. *Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU)*
2. *Construction and Allied Workers' Union (CAWU)*
3. *Union of Industrial Workers (UNI)*
4. *National Union of Harbour Employees (NUHEM)*
5. *Union of Private Security Employees, Ghana (UPSEG)*
6. *United Industrial and General Services Workers of Ghana (UNIGS)*

Group 4: Sector-Based Unions

A. Unions With Bargaining Certificate

1. *Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT)*
2. *Judicial Service Staff Association of Ghana (JUSAG)*
3. *Senior Staff Association of Ghana Post Company Ltd.*
4. *Ghana Registered Nurses Association (GRNA)*
5. *Central University Teachers Association*
6. *Association Of Environmental Health Assistants Ghana (ASHEHAG)*
7. *Inspection and Control Services Enterprise Based Union*
8. *Polytechnic Administrators Association of Ghana (PAAG)*
9. *Civil and Local Government Staff Association of Ghana (CLOSSAG)*

B. Unions without Bargaining Certificate

1. *Ghana Medical Association (GMA)*
2. *National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT)*
3. *Polytechnic Teachers Association of Ghana (POTAG)*
4. *Government and Hospitality Pharmacists Association*
5. *Coalition of Concerned Teachers, Ghana.*

Group 5: Enterprise Based Unions (With Collective Bargaining Certificate)

A. Unions with Bargaining Certificate

1. *Blue Skies Staff Association*
2. *Meridian Port Services Enterprise – Based Union*
3. *Carl Tiedman Stevedoring Enterprise- Based Union*
4. *Scancom Local Staff Association*
5. *Senior Staff Association of Ghana International School*
6. *Senior Management Staff of GBC*

7. *UT Financial Services Staff Association*

B. Enterprise-Based Unions without Collective Bargaining Certificate

1. *Bank Of Ghana Senior Staff Association (BOGSSA)*
2. *Liberty And Integrity Trade Union*
3. *Senior Staff Association of Ghana Telecom Company Ltd.*
4. *Bogoso Gold Enterprise- Based Union*
5. *Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice Staff Association. (CHRAJSA)*
6. *Mol Staff Association*
7. *Church World Service Local Staff Association*
8. *Senior Staff Association of Electricity Company of Ghana Ltd.*
9. *Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Senior Staff Association*
10. *Association of District Mutual Health Insurance Staff, Ghana*
11. *Pro-credit Workers Local Union*
12. *Senior National Organized Workers of Liebherr-Mining Ghana Ltd (SNOW)*
13. *General Organization of on-Going Development Workers(GOODWU)*
14. *GNPC Senior Staff Association*
15. *Sic Senior Staff Association*
16. *Shell Senior and Supervisory Staff Association.*
17. *Hydro – Electric Thermal And Allied Workers Union (Ghana)*
18. *Research Staff Association of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research*

Source: Labour Department, MESW.

Note: Labour Department puts Groups 4 and 5 and Enterprise-based Unions.

4.3 Promoting Internal Democracy as an Organising Strategy

The strength of every organisation lies in its members. The principles of unity, solidarity, democracy and independence are the bedrock of trade unionism. We cannot deny the fact that there is internal democracy deficit in the trade union movement. Unions pride themselves of their democratic credentials but the practices in some unions seriously undermine our collective claim to democracy.

Concerns are increasingly being raised by union members about transparency and accountability. These may be perceptions but, as is often the case, perceptions can be more powerful and even more damaging than the reality. Unions have to pay attention to these concerns.

In an era of trade union pluralism, undemocratic tendencies can have negative consequences for trade union unity. The rising tide of enterprise unions may be partly explained by the way unions are perceived by some workers. Retaining existing members and attracting new members will depend on the ability of unions not only to give voice and space to their members but also on their willingness to demonstrate accountability and transparency in the management of the unions' resources. That will be the surest way to make the unions attractive to both existing and new members.

Unions must be bold enough to evaluate their performance on a regular basis to ensure commitment to highest standards of service for union members. This can be achieved through regular membership satisfaction surveys. Information is critical for workers' empowerment. Union leaders must, therefore, improve their methods of information sharing with their members. These measures will surely strengthen the trade union movement.

5. CONCLUSION

The trade union movement was formed with one goal – to protect the interest of the working class. The main strategies unions have adopted to achieve their aim include organizing, collective bargaining, collective action, and alliance building with like-minded social actors. These strategies worked effectively in the past because unions were guided by the core principles of unity, solidarity and democracy. These core principles are, however, being undermined as unions brutally compete for members in the ever-shrinking formal sector.

In this paper, we have established a positive relationship between organizing on the one hand and empowerment, employment security and increased productivity on the other hand. Our conclusion is that unions can be empowered through organizing. Unions can achieve employment security for their members and enhance productivity if they are well organized. There is no other way.

Unions must, therefore, prioritize organizing. That means unions should adopt strategies to sustain the interest of the existing members in the movement and to attract and retain new members. This can be achieved through the introduction of welfare services targeting young workers, women and workers in the informal economy. Above all, unions in Ghana should work towards bringing all workers under one strong, independent and democratic working class movement to give meaning to the core principles of unity and solidarity that have been the guiding principles of trade unionism across the globe all these years.

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