



global worker

SPECIAL REPORT

Shipbreaking, the world's most dangerous job

REPORT

Turning ideas into action - IndustriALL youth projects

PROFILE

Superheroes to the rescue



Welcome to Global Worker

In this issue of Global Worker, you will see how our affiliates are fighting to make the shipbreaking industry sustainable in South Asia, while our South African union is adapting to the new reality of the global garment sector. All of this is part of our joint worldwide struggle for a better life for our workers.

I think most of us have enjoyed a voyage onboard a ship. But have you ever wondered what happens to these shiny vessels at the end of their journeys?

In this issue of Global Worker, we expose shipbreaking as the world's most dangerous industry.

Working for poverty wages, 130,000 workers toil in hot weather conditions to tear apart luxury cruises amidst toxic chemicals, oil and asbestos.

The good news is that IndustriALL affiliates in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan are organizing workers and fighting for living wages and proper health and safety conditions.

IndustriALL will continue to campaign for the ratification of the Hong Kong Convention and for making shipbreaking jobs safe and sustainable.

In the electronics sector, I am impatient to see our Malaysian affiliates tap into the potential of organizing many more of the 350,000 people working without representation or with a tame in-house union.

Change is an omnipresent, dynamic element in our industries. Production methods develop and industries move from one country to another, in the search of new markets and higher profit margins.

Check out how the South African Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU) has coped with the challenge of cheap imports, turning the tide from job losses into the creation of new employment, while maintaining strong industry level collective bargaining.

No wonder that IndustriALL's black t-shirts like mine in the photo are proudly made by SACTWU members in factories that pay a living wage.

But another industrial change is underway, the fourth industrial revolution coined as Industry 4.0. It talks about smart production, robots carrying out complex tasks without the need for human involvement. There will be need for more high-skilled workers, but low-skilled may lose out.

It is clearly time for reflection, research and action. We want to be ready for another form of just transition.

For that, we need a new generation of union leaders. Have a look at IndustriALL's wonderful youth project in Latin America, which helps to grow labour leaders of the future, many of them women.

We have seen that young workers of today understand the challenges of a globalized world, and suggest innovative ways of organizing and mobilizing workers.

So let us combine the strengths of experienced trade unionists with the enthusiasm of young workers to create stronger and more dynamic unions.

Otherwise, the youth may just throw us old guys out, and perhaps rightly so.

Jyrki Raina
General Secretary



No wonder that IndustriALL's black t-shirts like mine in the photo are proudly made by SACTWU members in factories that pay a living wage.

Jyrki Raina
General Secretary

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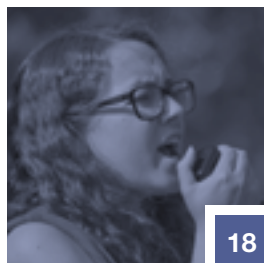
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IndustriALL Global Union

Representing 50 million workers across supply chains in the mining, energy and manufacturing sectors at the global level.

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WOMEN WORLD CONFERENCE 2015

300 women trade unionists from around the world met in Vienna in September for IndustriALL's first Women World Conference. Hosted by Austrian affiliate PRO-GE, participants unanimously voted for a resolution calling for a 40 per cent quota of women in IndustriALL's leadership structures.





1

Labour leaders of tomorrow

IndustriALL youth projects in Latin America

report

Text: Kimber Meyer

Translation: Chris Whitehouse

Promoting greater participation by women and young people in the labour market is a priority for IndustriALL Global Union. It has two projects specifically designed for Latin America, SASK Youth and FES Youth, which include an exchange programme and education for young members in affiliated unions.

1 IndustriALL Global Union youth at the international union exchange 2015 in Brazil. *IndustriALL*

One of IndustriALL's main objectives is to build union power. To achieve that goal, IndustriALL strives to increase participation of young workers in the affiliated unions and strengthen the national and international organizations to which they belong. **IndustriALL's youth projects in Latin America encourage young workers to reflect on their values, develop their ideas, and promote inter-generational equity.**

Marino Vani, assistant regional secretary at the IndustriALL Latin America and Caribbean Office and IndustriALL youth projects coordinator, says training young trade unionists benefits the union movement as whole:

“



2

By participating in the projects, young workers of today understand the globalized world and recognize the major challenges facing unions and workers. They contribute new ideas and suggest innovative ways of organizing and mobilizing workers. By combining the strengths of experienced trade unionists with the enthusiasm of young workers we create stronger unions.

IndustriALL - FES youth project

The three-year project aims to empower young people and increase their participation in trade union activities, strengthen leadership and enhance present and future trade union actions and organizations, both nationally and internationally. Ten affiliated unions from seven countries in Latin America participate in the project funded by IG Metall, FES and by unions from Brazil and Argentina.

IndustriALL's main goal is to promote an exchange of experiences through interactive activities, enabling young participants to express their ideas and share the experiences gained at their respective unions. Moreover, it aims to turn these experiences into examples for them to perform actions of their own.

“The intention is to allow young people to bring a new way of thinking and acting into their workplaces with a sense of identity, both locally and globally,” says Marino Vani.

Participants meet once a year – in Brazil in 2015, Argentina in 2016 and Germany in 2017. During the meetings they learn about union structures, collective bargaining and negotiation, political organization of the young, as well as gender, education and communication.

IndustriALL - SASK youth project

The trade union project for young workers involves members of IndustriALL affiliated trade unions in five Latin American countries: Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua and Uruguay. The aim is to empower young people for a more active participation in unions and to strengthen youth and gender policies.

“With the project we want to change trade union structures so they take into account what younger generations have to say,” says Marino Vani. “We want to encourage affiliates that don't yet have inclusive structures for young workers to develop youth policies.”

The project includes a regional strategy with activities, proposals, training content and materials for each participating country, formulated by the contributing unions.



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2 Marino Vani, assistant regional secretary at the IndustriALL Latin America and Caribbean office and IndustriALL youth projects coordinator, speaking at the international union exchange 2015 in Brazil. *IndustriALL*

3 Dandara Tonantzin, from the youth national collective ENNEGRECER, speaks at the international union exchange 2015 in Brazil. *IndustriALL*

4 Participants in the FES youth project visiting the Workers' Television (TVT) station in São Bernardo do Campo. *IndustriALL*

5 Mercy Sigrid Castillo Huaman from the National Federation of Textile Workers in Peru and a member of the FES project during the international union exchange 2015 in Brazil. *IndustriALL*

6 IndustriALL Global Union youth at the international union exchange 2015 in Brazil. *IndustriALL*

**YOUTH
IN ACTION!**





4

Learning from each other

For seven days in October, 34 young workers from Germany, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay met in São Paulo, Brazil. This was the first activity in the second cycle of IndustriALL FES youth project 2015 – 2017.

The young workers visited factories, trade union offices, a workers’ TV channel and attended a series of workshops to discuss how young workers organize and participate in trade unions.

Mercy Sigrid Castillo Huaman from the National Federation of Textile Workers in Peru (F.N.T.T.P.) participates in the FES project:

“What attracted me to take part is that it provides me with an opportunity to learn about the situation in several countries in Latin America and Germany. I have never travelled abroad before because I can’t afford it. But the project has given me the opportunity to do so and to find out how other people live.



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“I saw that the situation in other countries is better than in my country, Peru. For example, when I went to Brazil, some things had a big impact on me because they were so different. I decided to discuss them on my return home to try to change the labour situation in my country.”

As well as attending formal education sessions, the young workers learned about trade union organization and the role of young workers by visiting workplaces and union offices, including those of IndustriALL Brazilian affiliates Central of workers (CUT) and the Federation of Workers in Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industries from São Paulo (FEQUIMFAR).

At FEQUIMFAR, participants learned how the union is organized and how its youth policy operates. They also heard about the problems facing Brazilian workers, such as employers’ powers to dismiss workers when they please, causing job insecurity. Unions have not yet been able to win all the rights enshrined in ILO conventions.

The group visited Volkswagen’s factory in São Bernardo do Campo and discussed the union’s training principles and policies; how workers organize; how negotiations are conducted at the local and municipal level; and how union organization is structured at the workplace, through local unions and up to national trade union centres.

The ABC Metalworkers’ Union funds a TV station, the Workers’ Television (TVT) station in São Bernardo do Campo. The TV station has an audience of 20 million and complements a regional newspaper and a daily union newsheet. Participants in the project visited the TV studios and learned about workers’ education and communications policies.

IndustriALL encourages gender and inter-generational equity in trade unions. One day was therefore dedicated to discussing trade union policies on gender and youth. Participants visited Força Sindical (FS) to learn about the steps it has taken to increase youth participation.

FS has a minimum youth participation quota of 10 per cent in affiliated unions and its gender policy establishes a minimum participation of 30 per cent women.

However, in other countries, not all unions have quotas like these.

“In Peru, there aren’t many young workers or women in leadership positions in the unions. We now have five women at the textile federation and two of us are young. There is a lot of sexism in the country, so I was surprised by some of the things that women in Brazil told me and how hard they have campaigned and how much they have achieved,” says Mercy Sigrid Castillo Huaman.

“I asked them how they won some of their victories. For example, one of the things that had an impact on me was the six months they are allowed facilities for breastfeeding. In Peru, women are only allowed three months, which I think is inhuman. So when I arrived home, I told my colleagues who are now supporting me in proposing an improvement in our legislation. But as I am young, I know that I need to learn from the experience of older colleagues, who can show me how to go about things.”



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7

Turning ideas into action

During the past three years, 750 young workers have taken part in national seminars as part of the youth project run by SASK, the trade union solidarity centre of Finland.

Mariela Sánchez Casas, 27, from the National Union of Mineworkers in Mexico (SNTMMSRM) explains why she decided to participate in the SASK project:

“I realized that not all young people know how to organize workers, which means that youth practically has no opportunity to participate in unions. So when I was invited to take part in the project, I saw it as a chance to grow and help other young workers to contribute to trade union life.

“We want to work with older generations. We want to gradually get to know them and get them to be more open towards us. It is good to work together because we can learn from their experience and what they have learned over the years.

And they, in turn, can learn from us, about new things, and what is going on right now. We can help them to use the internet and

social networks so they can communicate more easily. In the past, union affairs were conducted verbally. Now it is easier to organize because there are more tools available.”

More than 70 participants from both projects met to discuss ways to better organize young workers and tackle challenges they face. They listened to speakers from, among others, the student movement, the movement of homeless workers, and the youth section of the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas.

“We have been making great progress in helping young workers to organize and in developing policies to further young people in trade unions. We are grateful for the support from our affiliates in helping us to carry out IndustriALL’s strategy to promote youth,” says Marino Vani.

Youth representatives have developed proposals to take to IndustriALL’s congress in Rio in 2016 for inclusion in IndustriALL’s action plan. Young workers must participate in defining strategies and be included at the negotiating table if they are going to make improvements.

“IndustriALL has helped me right from the start. I have had opportunities to participate, connect with workers abroad and attend ILO meetings. I have learned a lot more about trade unionism in my country and it has changed my perspectives on life. Before, I wanted to work and earn a lot of money. Now, I am going to use my career and knowledge to also help the working class,” says Mariela Sanchez Casas.



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7 Angel Pacheco from the National Union of Mineworkers in Mexico (SNTMMSRM) speaks at the international union exchange 2015 in Brazil. *IndustriALL*

8 Mariela Sánchez Casas is from the National Union of Mineworkers in Mexico (SNTMMSRM) and member of the SASK project. *IndustriALL*

9 From left to right: Moara Correa Saboia, vice president of the Students National Union of Brazil (UNE); Dandara Tonantzin from the Youth National Collective ENNEGRECER; Jessy Dayane Silva Santos from the LEVANTE movement; Janaina Cristinadirigente from the del Front of Struggle for Housing (FLM). *IndustriALL*

FES – Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

FES is a German political foundation promoting democracy, a policy of peaceful cooperation, social justice, human rights and free trade unions. The FES funds the IndustriALL international exchange and training for Latin American, Caribbean and German youth project in Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay.



www.fes.de

SASK

The trade union solidarity centre of Finland, SASK, funded IndustriALL’s regional youth project for education and union strengthening in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua and Uruguay, along with other unions in Finland until the end of 2015. This support will now continue from IndustriALL and its affiliates in the region.



www.sask.fi



9

SUPER HEROES TO THE RESCUE

With membership levels dwindling, Swedish trade union and IndustriALL affiliate Unionen was faced with a challenge – organize or die.



profile

Union: **Unionen**

Country: **Sweden**

Text: **Petra Brännmark**

As a member of Unionen you will get extraordinary powers at work:



1

The Swedish model, where employers and unions work most of the time in consensus, has reigned supreme since the 1940s. But even with a strong union tradition, the last decades have seen a steady decline in union membership.



2

Unionen was losing members and estimates for the future indicated a continuing trend. In 2010, Unionen's executive committee made a clear and concise decision – by 2015 membership must increase by 100,000 to a total of 600,000.

"We couldn't continue the way we had and the argument was turned around. There was no more talk about how we could adapt the organization to a decreasing membership; instead we needed to organize and grow," says Martin Linder, president of Unionen.

The organization focused on asking the question "do you want to become a member of Unionen?" Martin Linder says that often the question was not even asked in the workplace.

"We needed to involve the entire organization in creating a culture where this became the most important question to ask. Unionen can offer the best membership in

the world, but if no one knows about it we won't survive."

For a large part of the workforce in Sweden, work is not associated with major problems. Unionen wanted to move the union's image from problem solving to improvement provider. By showing the benefits of a union membership, such as reduced fees, career coaching, and additional unemployment benefits for members only, Unionen has focused its message on social media. The top hit when googling "labour market" in Swedish (arbetsmarknad) is Unionen.

Unionen has also received a lot of attention for its more traditional marketing – commercials featuring superheroes.

Describing what Unionen has done to increase their membership is a challenge in a global perspective.

"We make commercials with superheroes and in other countries trade union leaders are jailed for their struggle," says Martin Linder.

"Even though we resorted to somewhat unconventional measures in the trade union world like commercials featuring superheroes, I think that many unions around the world can relate to the challenge we were facing – organize or die."

The organizing drive has created a lot of discussion, both internally in Unionen and among other Swedish unions.

"The most important lesson in this is that you have to do it your way. What works in Sweden, a stable democracy with nine million residents, may not work elsewhere."

Unionen plans to continue to grow. There are 1.3 million non-manual workers in

Sweden – one third are members of Unionen, one third are members of another union, and one third are not unionized.

"We have learned a lot these last five years and we definitely haven't finished! Our vision is that all non-manual workers should be members of the same union," says Martin Linder.

As in the rest of the world, precarious work is increasing in Sweden. Unionen is discussing ways to organize workers without permanent employment and to conclude collective agreements that provide security for this group.

"We can't just ignore that part of the labour market; if we don't organize contract workers we will lose legitimacy and credibility.

"The form of employment is less important, we want them to be members of Unionen," concludes Martin Linder.

- 1 One of Unionen's superheroes. *Unionen*
- 2 Unionen president Martin Linder. *Unionen*

Unionen

Unionen is Sweden's largest private sector union with 600,000 members, represented in 65,000 work places.



www.unionen.se



www.facebook.com/unionensverige



[@unionen.se](https://twitter.com/unionen.se)



[@unionenstudent](https://www.instagram.com/unionenstudent)

interview

Union: **General Union of Electricity Workers and Technicians in Basra (GUEWT)**

Country: **Iraq**

Text: **Léonie Guguen**

Hashmeya Alsaadawe

1



2

Hashmeya Alsaadawe is president of IndustriALL Global Union affiliate, the General Union of Electricity Workers and Technicians in Basra (GUEWT), and a member of IndustriALL's Executive Committee representing workers in the Middle East and North Africa.

In 2003, she became the first woman in Iraq to be voted leader of a national union, and is believed to be the first woman to lead a union anywhere in the Arabic-speaking world.

What was it like to be able to join a union at the end of the Saddam Hussein era?

At the outset of his regime in 1987, Saddam Hussein passed Resolution 150 preventing trade union work in the public sector, which affects all employees in the state-owned power industry. Right after the fall of the regime in 2003, I saw a chance to defend the rights of workers. So I rushed to form a trade union for the electricity workers in Basra, with the help of a number of young people.

What challenges did you face in being elected union president as a woman?

In the beginning, I did not encounter any difficulties except from a small number of trade unionists who weren't used to the idea of a woman leading a union. There were three people running for election as president; two men and myself. When I won the other candidates started to create some difficulties during my term in office. The union went on to make great achievements for workers and affiliated members, so, in the second period of elections, I won again and kept my position as president.



IndustriALL and global union solidarity was crucial for the adoption of a modern labour law corresponding to ILO conventions.



How has your union been organizing and defending workers since you were elected leader?

After organizing ourselves, we formed trade union committees in all the power sectors, such as production, transport and distribution of energy. We set out to meet the demands of workers and achieve sustainable energy production. Our approach was mainly through negotiation, but in case of difficulties we staged sit-ins at work sites and demonstrated in front of the local government building on public holidays. We also resorted to the media to express the demands of workers and our affiliates. We have achieved a great deal of success by all these mechanisms, including permanent employment for around 2,500 contract or temporary workers in the electricity sector.

What challenges have you faced as a union leader in Iraq?

The real difficulties I've faced have come from my involvement in fighting corruption in the power plants. I was threatened by militias, who were backed by corrupted officials in the power sector.

However, I was not only the one that received death threats. There have been many patriotic men and women who paid with their life for carrying out their work. After I was nominated for the Council of

Representatives (parliament), I received further threats from militias aligned to religious political parties in Iraq.

How have the death threats affected you and your family?

Certainly these threats have weighed heavily on my family and especially my son. We were forced to take my son out of school and to halt his studies for two months after threats against his life.

How is violence in Iraq affecting workers?

The terrorists targeted many production plants and power transmission lines, and bomb attacks lead to the deaths of workers. We have also had reports of workers on the power lines being killed and kidnapped.

You have been successful in a ten-year campaign for a new labour law, what difference will it make to workers in Iraq?

In August 2015, the Iraqi parliament passed a new labour law that covers workers in the private, mixed and cooperative sectors, but excludes workers covered by civil service law. In addition to prohibiting child labour, discrimination and sexual harassment, the new labour law includes improvements on health and safety and annual leave. Working women will also benefit from improvements in maternity and pregnancy leave.

IndustriALL and global union solidarity was crucial for the adoption of a modern labour law corresponding to ILO conventions.

However, the ban on unions in the public sector will continue until the enactment of the trade union law. We urge the Iraqi government to sign and ratify ILO Convention 87, which is now in the Iraqi parliament for ratification. This will in turn pave the way for the adoption of the trade union law.

What difficulties have trade unions faced in Iraq?

In an attempt to shake off pressure from trade unions, in 2009 government officials started to enforce Saddam Hussein's Resolution 150, saying that workers in the public sector have no right to organize.

The government even issued a formal written order directed to the police and security forces saying that any sort of trade union action in the public sector is punishable by Article 4 of the terrorism law.

They began attacking trade unions by closing trade unions' offices in both the

oil and power industry in sectors such as ports, rail and municipalities and so on.

So we urgently need a new law containing the rights and freedoms of association in the public sector. Once that is done, we will be free to form democratic trade unions for the defense of workers' rights.

You have long campaigned for electricity for all, how is that going?

Our union has worked hard to lobby for power security to the general public and has cooperated with national managers in the power sector. We held a number of meetings with officials from the Ministry of Electricity to try and guarantee a continuous power supply from the multinational companies, which are running the power plants in Iraq. Unfortunately widespread corruption prevailed. Some statistics indicate that, since 2003, around US\$40 billion meant to develop the electricity sector in Iraq has been in vain!

What are your hopes for the future?

I hope to have a law for trade union rights and freedoms passed. I also wish to build and strengthen GUEWT before I retire. I hope security comes back to Iraq and that the nightmare of terrorism and ISIS ends as they are causing real fears for me and my people.

How can other unions show their support and solidarity for workers in Iraq?

Over the years I have had support and solidarity from unions and international organizations. These organizations directed messages to Iraqi officials while visiting Iraqi embassies in many countries as well as staging sit-ins. They supported trade unionists that had been transferred from their work sites to distant places and have shown solidarity with trade unionists who were attacked by the courts. Here I must point out the pivotal role of the IndustriALL delegation that visited Iraq in 2013, in difficult circumstances, to meet with the labour minister, the Speaker and MPs. We hope this support continues so that we can pave the way for a law that enforces trade union rights and freedoms, as well as a social security law for workers.

- 1 Hashmeya speaks at an IndustriALL Executive Committee meeting in Geneva, 2013. *IndustriALL*
- 2 Hashmeya joins Iraqi unions in protesting against government interference. June 2012. *IndustriALL*
- 3 Protesting on the streets of Basra, despite threats against her life. *IndustriALL*



CLEANING UP

SHIP BREAKING

THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS JOB

Workers in this industry face dangerous and precarious working conditions, with very little training, safety equipment and medical services, and they receive poverty wages. IndustriALL Global Union is campaigning to support organizing at the South Asia yards and is pushing governments in countries with major shipping industries to take responsibility for workers' safety.



In an environment where there are often toxic chemicals, asbestos, and oil, workers use gas blowtorches and sledgehammers to dismantle the ship in a process that takes six to eight months, and up to a year for big tankers. Moving cranes, falling steel plates, gas explosions and metal coils snapping are all constant risks at the yards. Twelve-hour days are the norm and wages are as low as US\$2 a day.

While official figures are unknown, unions in the region expect that hundreds are killed or seriously injured every year at work in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. In Bangladesh, the real figure could be 20 times higher than what is reported, according to the unions and NGOs.

The world's ships are built at sophisticated yards in the developed world. After an average of 25-30 years, maintenance becomes expensive and they are sold for scrap. Sold either directly to the ship recycling companies or via a broker in Singapore or Dubai, more than 70 per cent of the ships make their final journey to beaches in India, Bangladesh or Pakistan.

At the ship graveyards in those three countries, workers first strip the vessels of all reusable parts, feeding a downstream industry that sells components such as engines, fridges, ladders and gas canisters through the region.

Then the process of dissecting the enormous ocean liners begins. Around 80 per cent of shipbreaking profit is made from selling steel, which is cut by hand in a labour intensive process.

Around 1,000 ships over 100 gross tonnage are broken each year

WHERE SHIPS WERE BROKEN/RECYCLED IN 2014:

- > India 29.8%
- > Bangladesh 24.2%
- > China 21.9%
- > Pakistan 18%



The dangerous job is done by migrant workers, young men from poor rural areas of Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. Most shipbreaking workers have never seen the sea before they are hired by labour brokers who transport them from their villages to the shipyards. Living in very basic accommodation next to the yards, normally without clean drinking water or proper sanitation, the workers will often never visit the local city.

Bangladeshi shipbreaking union leader Nazim Uddin says:



Without a voice in the workplace, daily abuses go unchallenged. Shipbreaking workers have miserable conditions. Workers are paid daily; no work, no pay. They receive no paid leave at all, no bonus, no gratuity, and have no job guarantee.

Eight workers have been killed here in the last two months. Employers pay no compensation to the killed workers' families. The High Court rules that each killed worker's family should be compensated 500,000 Taka (US\$6,400), but employers do not respect this.

special report

Countries: **Bangladesh, India and Pakistan**

Text: **Tom Grinter**

1

1 Chittagong shipyard. *IndustriALL*



2

Organizing is key

Trade union organizing in these conditions is tough but vital. With IndustriALL support, Indian affiliate SMEFI has organized the largest shipbreaking yard in the world, Alang. While IndustriALL affiliates are present in the Bangladesh and Pakistan yards, union density there is very low.

V. V. Rane, Vice-Chair of the sector and leader of the world’s biggest shipbreaking union in Mumbai and Alang, India, says:

“The Chittagong shipbreaking yards look like Alang did before we organized the workers there. We stand with the shipbreaking workers in Bangladesh.”

The successful unionization of Indian ship breakers was first made possible in 2003 when Mumbai’s strong dockworkers’ union targeted the neighbouring shipbreaking yard for organizing. Before recruiting members, the union provided drinking water and first aid to ship breakers. Despite the 12-hour days this was not provided by the employers.

Mumbai ship breakers now report the most important changes brought by the union to be getting a voice at the workplace, awareness of health and safety, awareness of labour laws, getting basic needs provided and getting the employer to provide protective equipment.

	India	Bangladesh	Pakistan
Gas cutter earns (most workers are in this category)	350 rupees per day (US\$5)	BDT300 per day (US\$3.8)	PKR500-600 per day (US\$4.5-5.5)
Ship stripper, removing valuable parts, earns	300 rupees per day (US\$4.5)	BDT160 per day (US\$2)	PKR400 per day (US\$3.8)
Unskilled labourer, loader, transporter earns	275 rupees per day (US\$4)		
Each worker’s union dues	100 rupees per year (US\$1.5)	BDT20 (US\$0.25) per month	PKR20 (US\$0.2) per 15 days

From 2004 the union turned its organizing attention to Alang, aiming to replicate its successful organizing in Mumbai at the much larger site 680km north, up the western coast of India.

The union spent a year mapping and providing basic needs to workers before starting to recruit members. Drinking water, an ambulance, basic health and safety and first aid training were provided, and the union held regular gate meetings with workers.

Shipbreaking in Alang began in 1982.

Between 40,000 and 60,000 ship breakers work in 182 large yards along nine kilometres of shoreline. And the industry in Alang creates an estimated 200,000 downstream jobs.

No union at all prior to 2004.

Before the union came to Alang, killed workers’ bodies were thrown into the sea.

With workers afraid of losing their job, the union had difficulty at first in identifying dedicated activists at the Alang yards. Now that the union is 15,019 strong there is no fear of dismissal.

One important basic provision from the union at the yards is to conduct blood tests for new members so that their union membership card includes their blood group. Workers know that this is often vital information after an accident. The union membership card is usually also the only form of ID that the workers have.



3

Another important addition the union has brought to both Mumbai and Alang yards is basic health and safety training for every new worker.

Many of the employers in Mumbai were also present in Alang, and in both locations a majority of the land is owned by the authorities and leased to shipbreaking contractors, meaning greater oversight from the government. In Bangladesh and Pakistan many of the shipyards are privately owned.

INDUSTRY FORECAST

Following a boom in the 2000s, shipbreaking is currently experiencing a downturn which is expected to last five years. Slow economic growth has led China to dump massive amounts of cheap Chinese steel on the market.

However, with more ships on the sea than ever before the volume of shipbreaking is forecast to triple over the next 25 years.



- 2 Chittagong shipyard. *IndustriALL*
- 3 Worker in Mumbai shows his union card that includes his blood group. *IndustriALL*
- 4 Chittagong shipyard. *IndustriALL*
- 5 Medical facilities at the Gadani yard, Pakistan. *IndustriALL*

4

Watch videos, find background and follow updates on the campaign webpage:



Environmental damage

Shipbreaking on a dry dock allows for all pollutants from the ship to be safely drained and disposed of, however, dry dock facilities require major investment to build. Smaller ships are broken in Turkey under these conditions.

In Alang, ships are broken on the beach, after being hauled onto the sand with the tide. This is less damaging to the environment than the process in Chittagong, Bangladesh, where ships are broken directly in the sea just off the beach, so that oil and chemical toxins wash away into the Bay of Bengal.

Under pressure from environmental campaigners the Indian Ministry of Shipping is currently considering closing its Mumbai shipbreaking yard. However, the strong union insists that no closure can happen until all workers at the yard are secured employment elsewhere, with equal pay.

Along with trade unions, environment campaigners are helping to create pressure

on governments and shipping companies, pushing them to support the Hong Kong Convention. Compliance with the convention will dramatically improve workers' health and safety, as well as the environment.



5

Pakistan's dangerous yards

The Gadani yard in Pakistan is the world's third largest, employing an average of 10-15,000 workers. Workers normally work seven days a week, often at least 12 hours a day, with no paid holidays, no benefits, and salaries of PKR 12,000 (US\$113) per month, equal to half of a living wage.

Almost no safety equipment is provided in Gadani. There is no training, no clean drinking water, and no first aid. Workers who are cutting on the ship are not provided any climbing equipment or safety harness,

resulting in many accidents of workers falling from the ship's deck down to the beach. Asbestos and toxic chemicals are prevalent and not disposed of safely.

IndustriALL's affiliated NTUF reports up to 19 deaths at the Gadani yards per year, but the real figure is feared to be much higher. There is no functioning hospital for 50km. The union reports that workers know they will be dismissed if they join the union.

IndustriALL campaigns to make the Hong Kong Convention a reality

The Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships was adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) of the UN in 2009. IndustriALL campaigns for ratification of the comprehensive convention as its proper implementation will make the dangerous job of shipbreaking much safer.

Occupational health and safety provisions in the convention include control of hazardous materials on the ships, and control of risks at the shipbreaking sites, ensuring safety training and protective gear for workers.

Conditions to be met before the convention enters into force are that 15 countries must ratify, and ratifying countries must cover 40 per cent of the world's merchant ships.

Currently only Norway, Congo and France have ratified. While not yet fully ratifying, these countries have also signed the convention: Italy, St Kitts and Nevis, Turkey, and the Netherlands.

The first condition is more easily achieved than the second. Achieving ratification from countries representing 40 per cent of the world's fleet by gross tonnage will require the support of major shipping and shipbreaking states like Japan, Korea and China, plus one or more of the top five open registers, Panama, Liberia, Marshall Islands, Singapore, and the Bahamas. Ship owners use flags of convenience to register ships in one of these five countries to avoid regulations and tax.

Two of the ship recycling facilities in Alang were awarded compliance with the Hong Kong Convention in September 2015, namely Kalthia and Priya Blue.

Once the convention comes into force all countries that are members of the IMO will be required to have their ships recycled in yards complying with the convention.

Strong shipbuilding unions stand with shipbreaking workers out of solidarity and also because sustainable shipbreaking is needed for a sustainable shipbuilding industry.

IndustriALL affiliates are leading lobbying efforts towards ratification of the Hong Kong Convention by governments in Japan, Australia, Germany, Denmark, Norway and India.

At the IndustriALL World Conference on Shipbuilding-Shipbreaking, November 2014, unions from the sector in 19 countries resolved to campaign for ratification of the Hong Kong Convention.

This commitment was made in light of the fact that:

“Every year, hundreds of shipbreaking workers lose their lives facing serious occupational accidents in the shipbreaking yards of the South Asia region. The incidence of occupational diseases is largely unknown but believed to be extremely high. It is only a dream for most workers to live or survive until the age of 60.”

The campaign was fully launched at IndustriALL's Executive Committee meeting in May 2015. And the IndustriALL shipbuilding-shipbreaking Action Group meeting in Chittagong in November 2015 reaffirmed its commitment to worldwide action on the ratification of the Hong Kong Convention.



6

IndustriALL Director for the Shipbuilding and Shipbreaking Industries, Kan Matsuzaki coordinates the campaign to clean up the industry:



This industry as a whole has a responsibility to provide workers their right to safe, healthy, clean and sustainable jobs. We are determined to build strong unions at the yards, and combat the unacceptable working conditions.

IndustriALL Global Union demands that all member states of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) ratify the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships NOW!

Satoshi Kudoh, President of the Japanese Federation of Basic Industry Workers' Unions and also Co-Chair of the IndustriALL Shipbuilding-Shipbreaking sector has led the lobbying effort in Japan. In September 2015, Brother Kudoh directly demanded Akihiro Ohta, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism to expedite the ratification of the Hong Kong Convention by the Japanese Government. The minister responded positively that Japan would ratify.

IG Metall's Coastal Region called for action from the German government in September 2015. The union's regional

secretary Meinhard Geiken made a high-profile handover of demands on a large placard to Germany's Maritime Coordinator, flanked by shipyard workers in Hamburg. Parliamentary State Secretary Uwe Beckmeyer committed in writing to achieving the swift ratification of the Hong Kong Convention.

Australian affiliate AMWU has lobbied its government and moved a resolution inside the Australian Labour Party to support the Hong Kong Convention.

In Denmark, CO-Industri linked up with the Danish Shipowners' Association in September 2015 to write to the Danish Minister for Environment and Food, and ask the government to ratify the Hong



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Kong Convention as soon as possible. The letter also urges the Danish government, together with EU member countries, to take the lead in dialogue with the South Asian countries on ratification of the Hong Kong Convention.

The Alang shipbreaking workers' union is also lobbying the Indian government to ratify. The issue was a central demand of the union's public campaign on 7 October, World Day for Decent Work.

The Indian government is also under pressure from the Japanese government and companies to ratify the convention. Japanese funding has been offered to improve yard facilities in Alang, including half-dry docks with proper waste disposal and treatment facilities. A high level delegation of government officials, trade union, shipping industry representatives and experts from Japan who visited Alang in early 2015, said that: "Japan can help if India is ready to ratify the Hong Kong Convention."

An IndustriALL delegation met the Bangladeshi Ministry of Industries in November 2015 to lobby for ratification of the convention. Sector Vice-Chair V. V. Rane handed over the demands of the campaign explaining, "Bangladeshi ratification would be mutually beneficial to all parties. As shipping companies are under increasing pressure to have their ships recycled in a responsible manner, compliance with the Hong Kong Convention would bring investment, health and safety training, and business to Bangladeshi shipyards."



8

The Ministry Secretary told the delegation that a Ship Recycling Act would be presented to parliament at the end of 2015, leading to ratification of the convention.

A number of other governments are working towards ratification. Pressure inside the European Union is expected to deliver ratification by Belgium, followed by other European governments. European ships make up 20 per cent of the world's ships and most are reportedly broken in Bangladesh.

China and Turkey already have ship-recycling industries that are largely compliant with the technical requirements of the convention. The two countries are moving towards ratification.

IndustriALL general secretary Jyrki Raina prioritizes this campaign:



Ship building for 130,000 workers in South Asia is predominantly done in medieval conditions. It is shameful that five years have passed since the Hong Kong Convention's adoption and only three countries have ratified. Major shipbuilding and shipbreaking economies are yet to ratify and we will not stop campaigning until they do. Of course our campaign to clean up the world's most dangerous job is wider than this convention and IndustriALL is committed to strengthening unions throughout the industry, but the Hong Kong Convention will change lives.



9

- 6 IndustriALL delegation to Bangladeshi Ministry of Industries lobbies for ratification of Hong Kong Convention. IndustriALL sector vice-chair V. V. Rane hands over demand letter to the Ministry Secretary. *IndustriALL*
- 7 Chittagong ship breaker hears about global campaign and supports it. *IndustriALL*
- 8 Alang shipyard. *IndustriALL*
- 9 IndustriALL Director for the shipbuilding and shipbreaking industries, Kan Matsuzaki explains to ship breakers in Chittagong the global campaign to enact the Hong Kong Convention. *IndustriALL*

United Students Against Sweatshops UNION ALLIES IN ACTION

United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) is unique in that it is the only completely student-led labour solidarity organization.



profile

Organization: **United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS)**

Countries: **Canada and United States**

Text: **Léonie Guguen**

With thousands of members at over 150 colleges and universities in the United States and Canada, USAS has drawn on the collective strength of students as a force for change both at home and abroad for 19 years.

“We use the power we have as students to force our universities to end their business relationships with brands that violate the rights of their workers anywhere in their global supply chain,” says Morgan Currier, USAS international campaign coordinator and national organizer.

“And we don’t just do this in a vacuum, but rather in solidarity with workers who are often putting their lives on the line to organize in their factories for better living wages, better working conditions, and a voice in the workplace.”

Campaigning by USAS has forced 21 universities to cut their merchandise contracts with VF Corporation, the largest branded apparel manufacturer in the world, for refusing to sign the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety.

VF Corporation, which produces North Face, Vans, Jansport, Timberland and 32 other brands, sources from 90 factories in Bangladesh employing over 190,000 garment workers.

USAS actions are frequently linked to and support IndustriALL Global Union causes. More than a year’s intensive campaigning by USAS led The Children’s Place to pay an additional US\$2 million into the Rana Plaza compensation fund. The popular kids apparel brand initially paid US\$450,000 - an amount far below what unions and NGOs were requesting.

Alongside garment worker solidarity, USAS campaigns to get better wages and rights for people working on university campuses, and to stop the privatization of the public education system.



USAS, which is headquartered at the offices of IndustriALL affiliate the United Steelworkers, in Washington D.C., also runs solidarity campaigns against Walmart and T-Mobile.

“Domestically we are organizing alongside adjunct faculty, food service workers, custodians, graduate students, and fast food workers on our campuses and in our communities, who are organizing unions, fighting for better contracts, or fighting for US\$15 an hour,” says Currier.

Internationally, USAS continues to back workers in Bangladesh by targeting VF Corporation, supporting workers in the Gulf, and launching a new campaign called Sweatfree Bookstores. The campaign asks universities to ensure that at least 30 per cent of what is sold in their bookstores comes

from factories that pay living wages, allow for freedom of association, and have a collective bargaining agreement.

“Our goal is to one day see garment workers everywhere organized into unions to take back power from the big apparel brands we buy from every day in the U.S. and in our university stores.

“Through talking with workers on our campuses and meeting with workers around the world who produce our collegiate apparel, students learn how the struggle of workers and students around the world are all connected,” says Currier.

Labour’s training ground

One of USAS’s biggest priorities is training students to become activists and labour organizers after they graduate. A very high percentage of USAS alumni are currently organizers or active union members.

“USAS members not only have a deep understanding of why the labour movement is important in addressing issues of racial and economic inequality, but they also have the tools to tackle those issues head-on through running their own campaigns with workers. We see ourselves not only as a corporate campaigning organization, but also as the only college-level, hands-on training ground for the next generation of labour leaders,” says Currier.



www.usas.org



www.facebook.com/UnitedStudentsAgainstSweatshops



@USAS



USAS

- 1 Morgan Currier (second left) with fellow USAS activists. *USAS*
- 2 USAS campaigns have changed universities’ merchandizing contracts. *USAS*

feature

Union: **Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU)**

Country: **South Africa**

Text: **Petra Brännmark**

A TURNAROUND FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S TEXTILE INDUSTRY?



1

Historically one of the biggest garment producers on the African continent, South Africa has experienced falling production over the last 15 years. But 2015 has seen new energy injected in the textile industry where new jobs have been created.

The once mighty South African garment sector has been in steady decline for at least two decades and has shed thousands of jobs. Trade liberalization, increased imports from Asia and the relocation of South African producers to neighbouring and lower wage regimes in Lesotho and Swaziland have hacked away at the South African garment industry.

Over the last 15 years, an estimated 150,000 jobs have been lost in the industry. When South African clothing manufacturers were unable to compete with the influx of cheaper clothing from Asia, they were put out of business.

According to IndustriALL Global Union affiliate, the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU), 2,000 – 3,000 workers have been losing their jobs every year. But now the garment industry in South Africa is growing again with an added uptake of new workers.

Despite job losses, SACTWU has remained well organized with about 80 per cent of workers in the sector belonging to the union. SACTWU is fighting back hard against retrenchments, downsizing and closures while building its influence and engaging on policy at a national level.

The union has upheld its tradition as a fighting union, yet it engages employers and government in dialogue and has made significant gains on sourcing locally and pushing back on trade liberalization.

Simon Eppel, researcher at SACTWU, tells how the union is working to save and increase decent jobs in South Africa's textile sector:

“The industry continues to lose jobs today, but the number is down substantially. At SACTWU we try to save jobs where they would otherwise be lost, and we have recently been able to actually grow jobs in the industry.”

On balance employment in South Africa's textile industry is growing – it is up by 1.5 per cent in the last year.

1 Garment workers' wages are agreed in bargaining councils. *SACTWU*

2 Made in South Africa. *COSATU*

3 Textile factory in South Africa. *SACTWU*

“

This is an endorsement that government support for the industry, coupled with our union's active campaign for jobs, continues to bear fruit,” says Eppel. “After a period of stabilization following years of job losses, employment in our industry appears poised for growth.

Eppel adds that he is “cautiously optimistic” of this tentative turnaround, which is largely due to the energy put in to revive the industry.

One example is the South African government advocating a greening of the industry to make it more sustainable. Among other things this means looking at energy efficiency and assisting companies to replace old machinery with more modern equipment.

Another example is SACTWU's ‘buy South Africa campaign’, where the union enters into agreements with major companies and institutions to support the local industry.

Since the early 2000s, SACTWU has been running a campaign to buy locally-produced textile products by appealing to consumers on how buying South African will affect the community.

Through mass campaigns and fashion shows with factory workers to showcase the clothes they make, SACTWU engages with consumers to influence the choices they make.

“Our message is received better and better. Consumers are increasingly receptive and positive, and the awareness of the difference they can make in their choices is growing.”

But SACTWU is not only targeting individual consumers to buy South African manufactured products, public procurement is another area where the union is working to influence decision-making. Government departments and state-owned companies are encouraged to buy South African products when tendering for public procurement.

Retail companies have been the target of a very deliberate campaign by SACTWU, where the trade union can alert local factories to public tenders. If a company is compliant with South African labour laws, SACTWU will pass on the information and encourage the company to submit a tender.

Eppel says that these measures have been successful due to a combination of reasons. When new legislation was

passed making it easier to participate in public procurement, SACTWU acted to ensure that policy was turned into practice.

BARGAINING COUNCILS FOR INDUSTRY WIDE BARGAINING

There is a strong labour architecture in South Africa and the working conditions in the garment industry are better than in many other parts of the world. This is due to the bargaining strength of the union, which has also resulted in better wages in the South African garment sector.

Like in many other parts of the world, South Africa's garment workers are predominantly women, often single mothers and their family's soul breadwinner. Wages in the garment sector can be very low, so these are usually vulnerable workers who are more than likely very poor with very few other employment opportunities available to them due to South Africa's high unemployment rates.

There are several minimum wages in South Africa and the unions are working to close wage gaps. A top wage for a skilled garment worker is around 950 Rand (US\$67) per week. For a lower skilled worker it could be around 700 Rand (US\$49) per week.

SACTWU prioritizes centralized bargaining as the mechanism to achieve the best wage outcomes for workers. SACTWU negotiates in three national bargaining councils for the clothing, textile and leather sectors and the outcomes affect over 100,000 workers. In 2015 sectoral wage increases were above inflation.

“Although the wages are mutually agreed in the bargaining councils, we would not call them living wages. We are working to develop the industry along decent lines and there are discussions on going towards a living wage.”

“The cost of living is high in South Africa, so unions try to compensate our members and offer additional services like health services for example,” says Eppel.





3

In June 2015, a South African clothing textile and leather tripartite seminar called by SACTWU, was held in Cape Town. The event was held alongside the Cape Town Fashion Festival with the key address given by Minister of Economic Development Ebrahim Patel who spoke of the government's commitment to a green manufacturing sector.

Presentations at the seminar included supportive policy and initiatives from the government to maintain the sector and jobs as well as best practices by industry for greater efficiencies in production and energy and water consumption that have been achieved with state support.

Fresh hope for the sector may also be offered through the model known as quick response.

South African retailers mostly depend on the traditional retailing model which often results in two scenarios. The first is the steady supply of relatively few items. This often results in excess supply that then requires markdown. The second is under supply when the demand for an item is greatest resulting in lost sales.

South African retailers are under pressure to change their model because of increased competition from foreign retailers that have entered the domestic market. Many multinational retailers use quick response retailing which provides improved retained margins and enhanced stock turn, offering the merchandise customers find most attractive, resulting in less lost sales.

Eppel says that changes in retail sourcing practices, resulting in demand driven supply

chains are mostly good news for garment workers in Southern Africa:

“Retailers use technology to analyze what is being bought in store, understanding what customers want, when they want it. So instead of basing orders on forecast demand for a whole season ahead, current trends are analyzed to present the customers with the most attractive products in the shortest possible time.”

Together with inflation in Asia and a weak Rand, many believe that quick response provides opportunities for South African producers. The model relies on close proximity of the producer to the retailer, with a maximum lead time of six weeks, so distant off shore suppliers are not an option. South Africa is well placed because industry support and a commitment from local producers has resulted in better standards and efficiencies, reducing lead times.

South Africa has been seeking niche market development as a strategy to keep the sector alive and there is a strong tripartite commitment to maintaining existing production capacity and jobs. As a result many producers have already achieved international manufacturing standards and have quick response capabilities.

“The garment supply chain has an important role to play and this tripartite seminar called by SACTWU created a very important space of debate and generation of proposals,” says Fernando Lopes, assistant general secretary IndustriALL.

“Investment in the garment sector has traditionally favoured environments of weak

labour standards enforcement, low wages and poor trade union organization. But changes in sourcing practices mean workers that share proximity to major market can, if united, take on issues as global supply chains become more regional in nature.”

The opportunities for South African producers coming from the quick response retailing model applied in South Africa and even Europe are real, but the general pattern of comparative advantage in low wage neighbouring countries remains unchanged. This underlines the need for SACTWU to continue to drive an industrial policy agenda in the interest of workers, putting pressure on government and manufacturers for policies that support the continued growth of the textile and garment industry, creating more jobs.

SACTWU

The Southern African Clothing & Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU) is the largest trade union in the clothing, textile, leather and footwear industry in South Africa and globally, with nearly 100,000 members.

SACTWU's membership covers around 80 per cent of the textile and garment workers in South Africa.



www.sactwu.org.za



@SACTWU

report

Text: Léonie Guguen

INDUSTRY 4.0 THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION HAPPENING NOW



1

The world of manufacturing is about to undergo a seismic shift. According to some, we are experiencing a fourth industrial revolution that will transform the way things are made. And the impact on workers will be huge.

Industry 4.0 is a term first coined in Germany in 2011 to describe the computerization of manufacturing regarded as the fourth industrial revolution.

The first industrial revolution from the end of the 18th century saw the birth of manufacturing using machines powered by water and steam. The second came at the beginning of the 20th century, when mass production lines were powered by electric energy. The third came with the change from analogue and mechanical production to electronic and digital technology from the 1970s onwards.

The fourth industrial revolution, or Industry 4.0, uses smart technology and real-time data to increase productivity and reduce costs.

In smart factories, machinery, storage systems and production are capable of carrying out complex tasks, exchanging information and giving instructions to each other, without the need for human involvement.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos in January 2015, German chancellor, Angela Merkel, called Industry 4.0 the way we “deal quickly with the fusion of the online world and the world of industrial production.”

Industry 4.0 relies heavily on the Internet of Things - objects embedded with technology that can communicate with IT systems and be detected by sensors.

Cloud computing is also essential to support the billions of sensors, devices and the flow of information or data that they create.

Advances in data analytics mean that powerful software has the capacity to analyze all this information (or Big Data) coming from manufacturing systems in real time. This provides vast benefits to multinational companies giving access to up-to-the-second information on production across supply chains. It also allows companies to be more



2

responsive to business trends and plan better by making more accurate predictions.

Furthermore, developments in 3D printing have the potential to drastically reduce research and development costs, and even omit the need for production facilities entirely.

Where does this leave workers?

Digitalization will no doubt create new jobs but in different sectors. And as robots become increasingly sophisticated and machines control each other, will the need for labour diminish?

“We don’t know yet what the real impact will be,” says Christain Brunkhorst from German affiliate, IG Metall, who spoke on the topic at IndustriALL’s recent automotive working group meeting in Toronto. “While there might be some ergonomic improvements for workers as repetitive or difficult tasks are taken over by robots, workers will rapidly need to develop new skills to keep up with smart factories.”

It is not only production methods that are getting smart in the auto sector – connected and autonomous cars could again transform the industry and driving itself.

“There could be many new high skilled jobs in the areas of planning, configuration and maintenance of new technologies, but low skilled workers could lose out,” says Brunkhorst

Smart technology and systems could also lead to extensive control and monitoring of workers’ behaviour and performance.

Smart factories pose greater expectations on individual flexibility and precarious work is predicted to increase.

IG Metall is currently making work councils aware of the changes at bay and has set up studies to assess the consequences on the workforce. “At this stage we as a trade union are seeking to influence the transition as these new technologies are established in the car industry,” says Brunkhorst.

Meanwhile, iPhone manufacturer, Foxconn, which employs 1.2 million workers, has announced that robots will replace 30 per cent of workers at their production lines in five years.

Kan Matsuzaki, IndustriALL director for ICT, electrical and electronics, says:



Industry 4.0 will be penetrating various industries faster than we could ever imagine. Trade unions must be prepared for the massive impact on employment, working conditions, and workers’ rights, and concentrate on activities towards a just transition.

1 Foxconn will replace 30 per cent of its production line workforce with robots by 2020. *Reuters/Bobby Yip*

2 Humanoid robots work side by side with employees in the assembly line at a factory in Japan. *Reuters/Issei Kato*

ORGANIZERS FIGHTING FOR RIGHTS IN MALAYSIA

profile

Union: **Electrical Industry Workers' Union (EIWU) and Electronics Industry Employees' Union Coalition (EIEU Coalition)**

Country: **Malaysia**

Text: **Alexander Ivanou**

Two of IndustriALL's twelve affiliates in Malaysia, the Electrical Industry Workers' Union (EIWU) and the Electronics Industry Employees' Union Coalition (EIEU Coalition) have taken on the challenging task of organizing electronics workers in the country.

For the last 50 years, gross domestic product (GDP) in Malaysia has increased by an average of 6.5 per cent per year, setting an economic record among Asian countries. A booming electronics industry is one of the major contributors to this growth.

The industry started in 1972 at the first Malaysian free trade zone of Bayan Lepas, now known as the 'Silicon Island of the East', and later expanded to other states in the country.

By 2013, an estimated 350,000 people worked in the electronics industry. Up to 60 per cent of them are migrant workers primarily from Indonesia, but also from Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia and India.

Mainly unorganized, they face numerous troubles at work including high recruitment fees, low, late or non-payment of wages, lack of benefits, unsafe working conditions, inadequate accommodation, and have insufficient legal protection making them easy victims for abuse by their employers. Some 70 to 80 per cent of the workers are women.

Law on union recognition

Wanting to change the situation, IndustriALL affiliates, EIWU and EIEU Coalition, decided to organize more electronics workers.

However, the unions have been hindered by two serious problems: oppressive trade union and labour laws in Malaysia, and language difficulties when communicating with migrant workers. Added to that is a lack of full time organizers and lawyers.

Maniyam Poovan, general secretary of EIWU, says the Industrial Relations Act is a major obstacle for Malaysian trade unions:

"According to this act, trade unions must apply for recognition from the employer, who then decides whether or not to recognize the union by appealing the union registration to the Ministry of Human Resources. If the Ministry decides against recognition, union members are not protected from dismissals."



The recognition can be obtained through 50 per cent plus 1 secret ballot vote in favour of the union. But the size of the bargaining unit is not legally determined, allowing employers to manipulate the votes. For instance they can add temporary or migrant workers who do not have the right to vote, but by default are considered voting against. This makes it difficult to get a 50 per cent threshold.

But problems do not discourage unions. In 2014 both EIEU and EIWU joined IndustriALL's five-year organizing project for electronics workers in the ASEAN region. 600 trade unionists from IndustriALL affiliates in Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Taiwan were trained in organizing and the results were immediate.

In Malaysia, EIEU Northern region has succeeded in organizing more than 900 workers at an electronics multinational company despite strong resistance and union busting tactics by the management. It is the first time the union has negotiated a collective bargaining agreement that includes migrant workers.

Describing his union organizing activities, Maniyam says:

"The activity is on-going, whether we succeed or fail. We identify new companies and try to get contact people there. Then we hold meetings to brief them on trade unions and their functions."

In a move to recognize the role of women, a women's committee made up of affiliates from IndustriALL Global Union was formed in 2014. EIWU representative Kumari was elected chairperson, and will make sure women's issues are discussed and incorporated into the IndustriALL Malaysian Council's priorities.

In June 2015, IndustriALL held a world conference on ICT Electrical and Electronics in Malaysia. The major topics discussed at the conference were organizing and fighting precarious work.

- 1 EIWU activists in a picket line at the PAPAMY Panasonic factory in Malaysia. *EIWU*
- 2 EIWU and EIEU Coalition activists at the session of the IndustriALL Malaysia council on strategic organizing in ICT, Electrical & Electronics in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. *EIWU*

ON 7 OCTOBER, INDUSTRIAL AFFILIATES AROUND THE WORLD TOOK ACTION TO STOP PRECARIOUS WORK



www.industrial-all-union.org

