

LRS Labour
Research
Service

Annual Report 2023

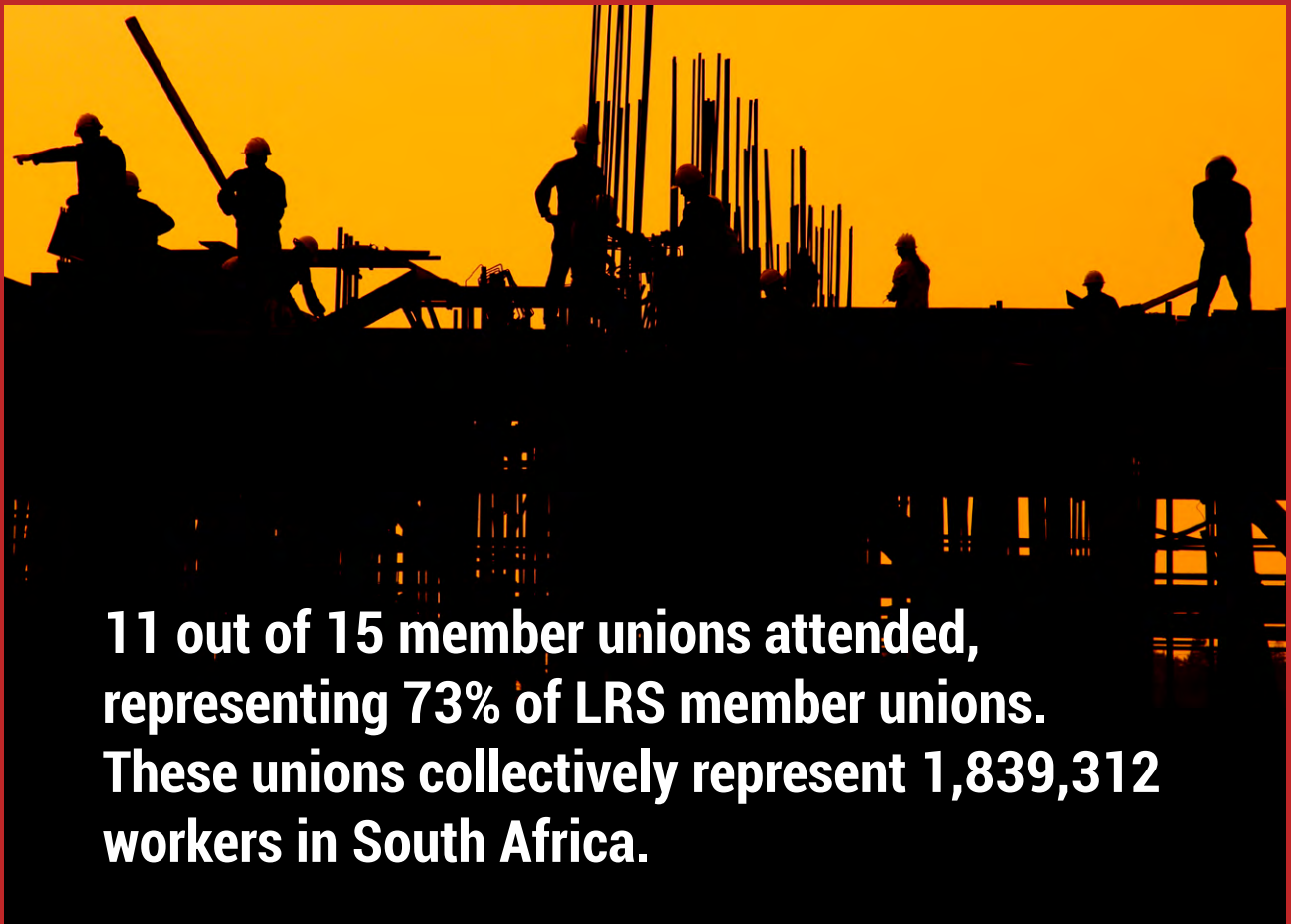
Abbreviations

ALREI	Africa Labour Research and Education Institute
CCMA	Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration
CEPPWAWU	Chemical, Energy, Paper & Printing Workers Union
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DENOSA	Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa
DGB-BW	Solidarity Support Organisation
DITIKENI	Ethical Investment Trust
DoEL	Department of Employment & Labour
EI	Education International
FAWU	Food and Allied Workers
FEDUSA	Federation of Unions of South Africa
FES TUCC	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
GENDER AT WORK	NGO
HOSPERSA	Health & Other Services Personnel Trade Union of South Africa
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDWF	International Domestic Workers Federation
IFWEA	International Federation of Workers Education Associations
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILRIG	International Labour Resource and Information Group
IMATU	Municipal Workers
INDUSTRIALL	Global Union Federation
ITUC AFRICA	International Trade Union Confederation - Africa
IZWI	Domestic workers alliance
JASS	Just Associates
LT Productions	Audio-visual Production
MAWUSA	Maanda-Ashu Workers Union
MEWUSA	Metal and Allied Workers Union
MIWUSA	Migrant Workers Union
NALEDI	Labour Support Organisation
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NEHAWU	Educational and Health Workers Union
NMWC	National Minimum Wage Commission
NUM	Mineworkers
NUMSA	Metalworkers
Olof Palme Centre	Solidarity Support Organisation
OTHER FOUNDATION	Grantmaking organisation
POPCRU	Prison Workers Union
PSI	Public Service International
SACCAWU	Commercial and Catering Workers Union
SACTWU	Clothing and Textile Workers Union
SACWF	South African Care Workers Forum
SADSAWU	Domestic Workers Union
SADTU	Teachers Union
SAFTU	South African Federation of Trade Unions
SAMWU	Municipal Workers Union
SASK	Solidarity Support Organisation
SATAWU	Transport Workers Union
Solidarity Centre	Solidarity Support Organisation
The Coding Ground	Tech Consultancy
TIPS	Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies
TOWU	Transport Workers Union
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDWOSA	Domestic Workers Union
UMP	University of Mpumalanga
UNI	United Network International
UNTU	Transport Workers Union
WIEGO	Women in informal employment

36th LRS AGM attendance highlights

The Labour Research Service sets out to realise good governance, the retention and development of skilled people and to cultivate a supportive environment from which to make the best possible contribution to the labour movement in South Africa, on the continent, and globally.

The board of directors, elected from the member trade unions of the LRS met four times in 2023 to play its governance role and I am pleased to say that the average attendance was 90% across these meetings. I will remind you that board members are not remunerated for their efforts and that we can only understand their efforts as a sincere commitment to the trade union movement. 11 out of 15 member unions attended, representing 73% of LRS member unions. These unions collectively represent 1,839,312 workers in South Africa.



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representing 73% of LRS member unions.
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workers in South Africa.**

Chairperson's Report



Our independently audited financial statements are evidence of our transparency and accountability every year and we are pleased to report a clean or unqualified once again.

Our ability to reflect good governance, act in cooperation with other like-minded organisations and retain and develop the skills, capacity, and relationships required to deliver quality work are our greatest assets.

At the level of the board of directors and the annual general meeting, it continues to impress me how a group of trade unionists from different unions and different sectors with different roles can work together so constructively for the benefit of this labour support organisation and its role in the trade union movement.

The staffing complement of the LRS has remained remarkably stable over time and we are pleased to have welcomed two younger staff members in recent years. The LRS supports staff to drive their personal and intellectual development.

The international cooperation and development environment is increasingly challenging for us and other civil society organisations. An ongoing shift to the right in European politics taken together with the wars in Ukraine and Gaza is contributing to a reframing of international cooperation away from solidarity support and towards an approach that is far more instrumentalist, and one that seeks to advance national interests first and foremost.

We believe that our mix of focused research, competency building, leadership development and advocacy is the best way to navigate this difficult terrain.

I thank the member unions of the LRS, the board of directors, and the staff themselves for all they have done to develop this unique labour support organisation of 36 years standing.

Nkosomzi Given Roji (NUMSA)
Chair of LRS Board

Where we work

South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, eSwatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Ghana, the Gambia, Nigeria, Senegal, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Tunisia.



Important themes & issues



Collective bargaining and organising



Transforming unequal gender relations in the world of work



Corporate governance and ethical investment



Future of work



Climate and just transition



Informalisation



Technology for trade unions



Gig economy



Trade and investment

LRS direct and indirect reach 2023



DIRECT REACH

1,826



WEBSITE USERS

114,115



PAGE VIEWS

176,636



AVERAGE PAGE VIEW DURATION

3MIN 8 SECONDS



DEMOGRAPHICS

**63.4% FEMALE;
36.6% MALE**



EMAILS SENT

6,108



SOCIAL MEDIA REACH

703,000*

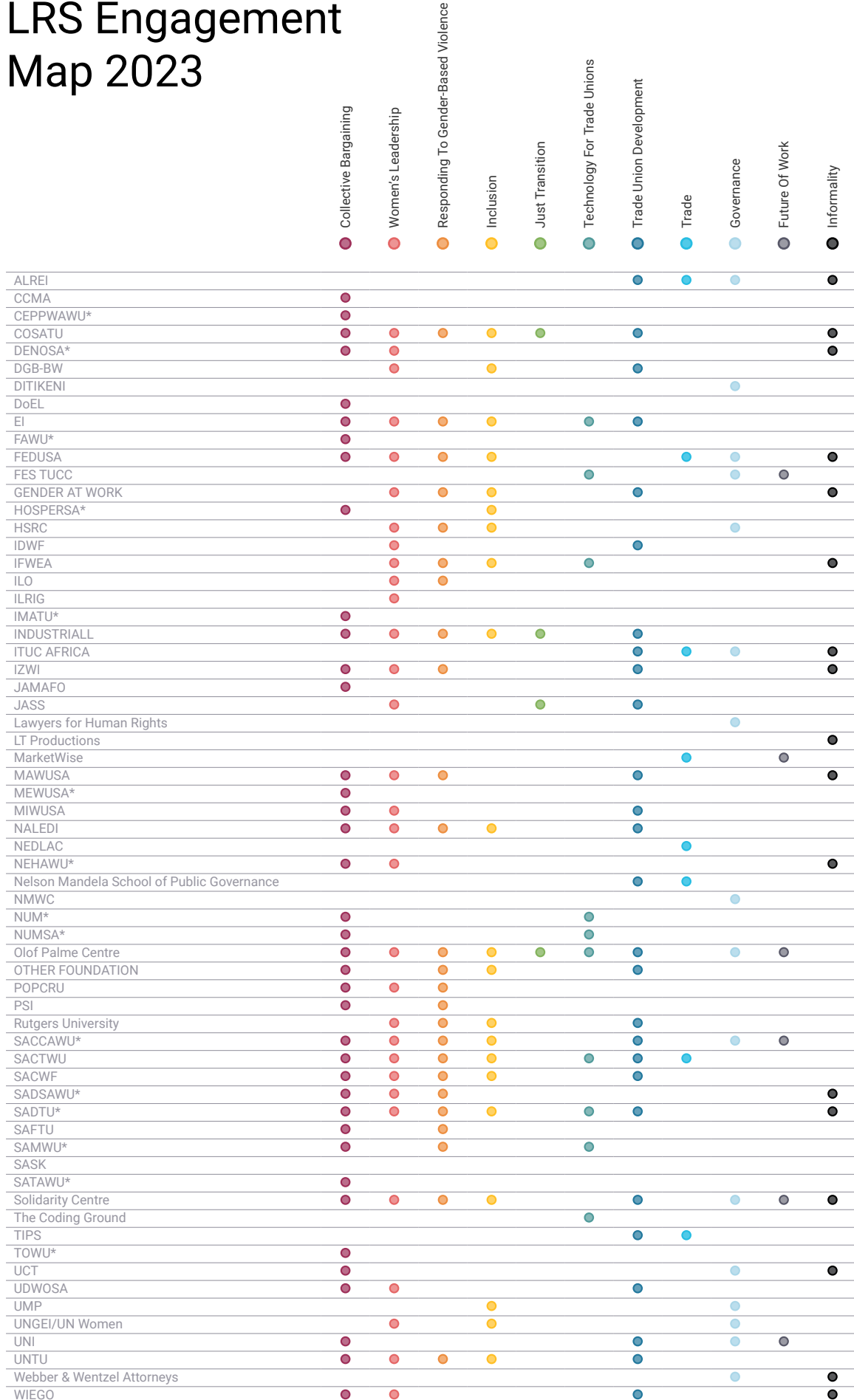
Executive Director's Report

Our work supports trade union collective bargaining and organising. Our work influences wage policy formation in South Africa. Our work enhances women's influence on policies, laws, agreements, public discourse, and societal attitudes, advancing

gender equality in the world of work. Our work helps trade unions develop a voice on trade in Africa. Our work supports trade union corporate governance engagement in South African multinational companies.



LRS Engagement Map 2023



*LRS member unions

Resource and strategy support for collective bargaining and organising

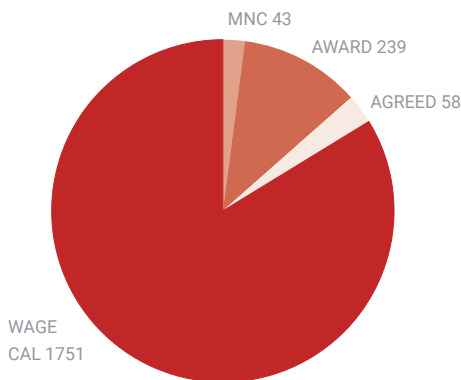
LRS online tools for workers

The LRS Wage Calculator: Helps negotiators convert percentage increases into money amounts and understand the effect of inflation on wage increases, located at <https://bio.lrs.org.za/wage-calculator/>)

AWARD (Actual Wage Rates Database): A repository of collective agreements tracking minimum wages to provide unions with empirical evidence for collective bargaining. [www.lrs.dedicated.co.za/award/]

AGREED (Agreements Database) A repository of collective agreements suitable for research and education located at <https://lrs.dedicated.co.za/award/>

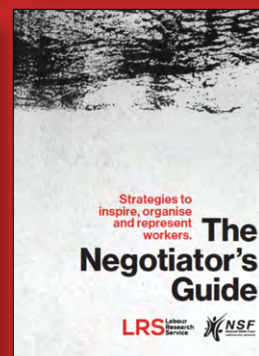
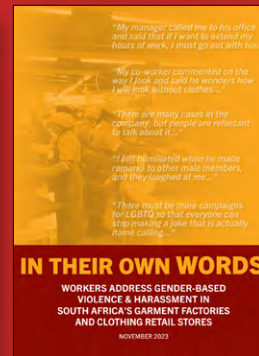
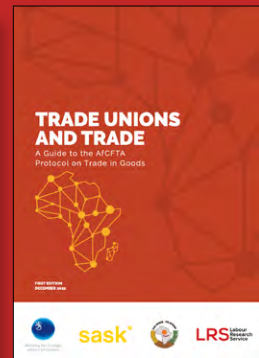
MNC (The South African Multinational Company Database): Financial information for over 80 JSE-listed companies, including executive pay located at <https://lrs.dedicated.co.za/mnc/>



Metric	2023
Resource downloads	5 361
AWARD	239*
AGREED	58*
MNC	43*
Wage calculator	1751*

*Users

Key publications





In 2024, we anticipate challenges due to recent company closures, the impact of load shedding, and the trend by companies to offer increases to employees ahead of central negotiations, among other issues. We must approach negotiations with sensitivity and preparation. Information and understanding are crucial in this preparation. We rely on data to understand industry trends, company and inflation performance, and other relevant factors. We appreciate the LRS support in offering information and insights to assist our negotiators in making informed decisions.”

Spuy Sebotsa, Head of engineering sector at NUMSA



▲ LRS learning intervention for United National Transport Union



▶ LRS learning intervention for Migrants Workers Union of South Africa

LRS works to strengthen gender equality and women's leadership

The organisations we work with engage in self-reflection. They recognise that advocating for collective agreements that address gender demands requires changes in individual attitudes and behaviours, resource allocation and organisational culture.

The Southern African Clothing & Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU) elected female leaders to top positions for the first time, marking a significant step forward for the union's approach to gender representation. The positive changes within SACTWU extend beyond leadership appointments.

The union's culture has transformed, evident in the inclusion of discussions on gender equality, gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH), and parental rights agreements during national leadership education activities to which the LRS contributed.

LRS has a global recognition in transformative leadership through an academic partnership

Over 150 women in countries including South Africa, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe participated in a transformative journey and shared their leadership experiences through the Leadership Journey Map, a visual mapping tool developed by LRS and the Centre for Innovation in Worker Organisation (CIWO) at Rutgers University.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed women's isolation in their leadership roles, necessitating more spaces for connection and support among women and gender-oppressed individuals.

The Leadership Journey Map tool addresses this gap, providing a nurturing space on Zoom and WhatsApp where participants can intimately reflect upon their trajectories in leadership. Users navigate their experiences, drawing insights and connecting with peers traversing similar paths. More than a tool, it supports women excluded in decision-making due to patriarchal leadership practices in worker organisations.



We partnered with the LRS, growing and learning together, not only professionally but also personally during the pandemic. LRS played a crucial role in connecting us with women leaders, labour activists, and like-minded organisations. This collaboration emphasised our ability to adapt, broaden perspectives, and respond to emerging needs in real-time. The development of the Leadership Journey Map, a tool to amplify diverse voices of women, is a notable outcome. Working with LRS provided unique insights and deepened our appreciation for the feminist pedagogy employed in our joint effort."

Sheri Davis, Executive Director at the Center for Innovation in Worker Organization (CIWO), Rutgers University.

COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP JOURNEY MAP

APRIL 21st, 2022



Over 300 women and nonbinary leaders, activists, and educators from around the world have used the Leadership Journey Map tool to share their experiences in a pilot.



LRS/ CIWO Leadership Journey Map tool workshop during the IFWEA conference | December 2023, Cape Town.

“

It forced me firstly to think about myself through the framework of leadership and secondly, to think of the many places where I have led without realising.”

Workshop participant.



◀ LRS/CIWO facilitators at the Leadership Journey Map tool workshop during the IFWEA conference | December 2023, Cape Town.



▲ CIWO, LRS, and allies convened a global strategy session alongside the IFWEA conference for labour educators, facilitators, activists, and women leaders in precarious sectors and the building trades sector.

Building a movement against precariousness in the world of work

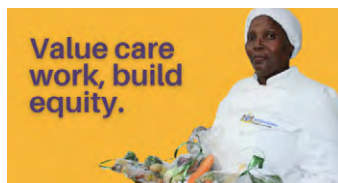
In 2023, our Gauteng Volunteer Food Handlers cohort made significant progress in mobilising and self-organising to make visible their jobs and demand certain rights entitled to them as workers under the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP). We

supported the food handlers by creating spaces for discussion, producing educational resources, and co-creating media advocacy tools highlighting their issues and demands within the NSNP.

The impact of these efforts is evident in several changes



95% of Volunteer Food Handlers in a UIF campaign accessed their benefits. These women workers also expanded and consolidated, with our core group organising a broader network of over 200 food handlers who are more aware of their rights.



LRS member unions, SADTU and NEHAWU, have put the issue of Volunteer Food Handlers in the national trade union discourse on organising workers in precarious employment.



Academics are interested in exploring the role of Volunteer Food Handlers in the NSNP, and a legal firm wants to challenge the status of food handlers as volunteers.



Feminist groups have shown interest in the methodologies employed by LRS to support the movement building of Volunteer Food Handlers.



Volunteer Food Handlers at their media conference in March 2023 in Johannesburg discussed their campaign for decent jobs for over 60,000 workers recruited by the National School Nutrition Programme to prepare and serve meals in schools nationwide.



Former Volunteer Food Handlers outside the Vanderbijlpark labor office in Gauteng, 2023. With support from LRS, they successfully secured UIF benefits in a campaign.

A world of work without gender-based violence and harassment

The LRS recognises that gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) is rooted in personal, situational and socio-cultural contexts. Addressing it requires changes in individual behaviour and attitudes, alongside the changes in workplace practices and policies.

We support trade unions in sub-Saharan Africa to develop effective strategies to prevent and respond to GBVH. We work with unions in various sectors, including domestic work, public health, education, garment, retail and transport.

Workers talking with workers about GBVH

In 2023, SACCAWU and SACTWU stood out for their worker-led GBVH participatory action research, which recommends actions unions, employers, and government can take to create GBVH-free workplaces in the garment and retail industries. LRS, together with partners, facilitated participatory action research conducted by 19 worker researchers. 117 workers have shared their experiences with GBVH through our inclusive research approach. They are now empowered to participate in decision-making and advocacy on the issue.



Participants engaged in the GBVH participatory action research process in Cape Town, 2022.



“

“98% of women workers surveyed said they have experienced one or more incidents of gender-based violence or harassment.”

In Their Own Words: Workers Address GBVH in South Africa’s Garment Factories and Clothing Retail Stores report.

Negotiating international trade

African trade unions are engaging on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and strive to advance decent work and workers' rights in the negotiations and implementation of the Agreement at the national, sub-regional, and regional levels.

LRS and ITUC-Africa collaborate to support participating national centres to advocate for AfCFTA in their respective countries. We provide resources and capacity building to inform trade union policies and strategies for the continental free trade area. ITUC-Africa affiliates have specific demands to ensure that no worker is left behind as the AfCFTA develops. We build alliances with national centres, academic institutions, civil society groups and, through ITUC-Africa, regional trade union bodies to facilitate continental action on a complex topic. We

amplify trade union positions and demands to help build a coordinated voice on the AfCFTA. There is evidence that the trade union movement is raising its profile and influence on this topic and are claiming space in the social dialogue channels that do exist.



Nairobi Kenya/November 2023: Media conference after the ITUC-Africa programme on informal economy actors: the case of women and youth and the AfCFTA.

Building capacity for union decent work advocacy on AfCFTA

Nine researchers attached to ITUC-Africa national centres in eight African countries have deepened their understanding of trade and the AfCFTA. In 2023, they participated in three short courses on trade, facilitated by a trade expert. The researchers have shared knowledge with their members through various capacity-building activities, enlarging trade competency on the continent. The researchers contributed insights at workshops and forums, including discussions on informal economy actors and the AfCFTA and lessons from AGOA for union campaigns on the AfCFTA.



Trade union AfCFTA research team in Johannesburg, July 2023.



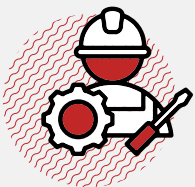
At the Ghana TUC, we have enhanced our capacity in trade and industrialisation, particularly emphasising the importance of advancing developmental regionalism. Ensuring that our TUC-Ghana members are well-informed and actively engaged in trade discussions is a top priority in our advocacy efforts regarding the AfCFTA. We collaborate for capacity building with others, including the LRS and the National AfCFTA Coordination Office, whose officers often serve as a resource in worker education and AfCFTA awareness initiatives. These efforts also help to build our knowledge of the issues of informal economy operators who undertake the bulk of cross-border trade in West Africa."

Prince Asafu-Adjaye, Deputy Director of Research and Policy, Trades Union Congress (Ghana)

"We are now one of the first organisations to be consulted on issues related to the AfCFTA and our views are highly regarded. We have also been invited to provide input into a ministerial order on migrant workers. We have been involved from the drafting stage, all the way through to its publication"

Trade union partner representative.

These are our demands.

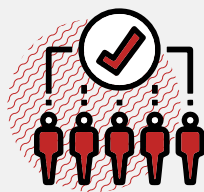


Labour rights are human rights.

The member states of the AfCFTA must honour the ILO convention on freedom of association

Social dialogue.

The member states of the AfCFTA must establish mechanisms for meaningful social dialogue.

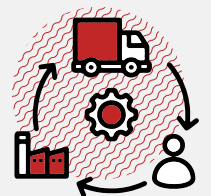


National implementation planning committees.

The member states of the AfCFTA must establish national implementation planning committees that include representatives of the trade union movement, women, youth & informal economy actors.

A simplified trade regime.

for women and youth in informal cross-border trade



The leading economies in each region of Africa Commit to developing the regional value chains

that incorporate the least developed countries in Africa.

Transforming corporate governance



LRS provides company information, financial literacy, and insights to support the bargaining strategies of retail unions in seven countries. UNI-Africa retail affiliates work to improve collective bargaining at three major South African retail multinationals. In 2023, there were notable improvements in conditions of service, including better parental rights in some countries, such as a change in breastfeeding policy negotiated by SINNACOSE in Mozambique, a 30% increase in maternity leave and one month of paternity leave for non-birthing parents reported by Malawi's CIAWU. South Africa got equal parental rights through a court ruling.



Being passive is not an option for a union representing workers at a multinational retail company. We pushed for better parental rights and did not wait for the company to decide to do it. Having thorough research was crucial in negotiating these rights. For instance, we discovered that other comparable companies offered more generous maternity and paternity leave, and we had insights into Game Stores and the broader retail sector through the LRS. This preparation helped to approach the negotiating table with confidence and fearlessness.”

Elina Nzumwa, Vice Chairperson of Women's Desk at Commercial Industrial & Allied Workers Union (CIAWU)

▼ CIAWU members at Game Stores in Malawi celebrate a win for parental rights.



Inclusion as a guiding principle in what we do

[LRS methodology] LRS supports trade union gender equality teams to achieve their inclusion missions. We use the 'Head, Heart, and Hands' approach in engaging with different groups. Even in discussions typically focused on ideas (head) and actions (hands), such as policy development or negotiating collective agreements, we ensure emotional aspects

(heart) also emerge. The approach has deepened our collaborations, especially with marginalised groups like older and younger women, women in precarious employment, and young LGBTQ+ individuals seeking work who express feeling respected and able to bring their whole identities into our educational spaces.

Grassroots activism drives change in UNTU

The dedication of UNTU union members advocating for LGBT+ rights and inclusion is an example of the transformative impact that collective action can have on a workplace issue. A core group within UNTU recognised and addressed their own biases and took action to create a more inclusive union. With the knowledge gained from LRS resources and learning support, these activists used the LGBTI Rights Resolution of FEDUSA and ILO Convention 190 as rallying points for their cause. As a result, there has been a noticeable increase in awareness about LGBTI+ rights and the need to protect them within and beyond the union. The union members have embraced advocacy roles in their families and communities.



A core group of UNTU members now advocate for inclusion, challenging heteronormative behaviours and practices while acknowledging the role of C190 in supporting LGBTI+ workers' and job seekers' rights.



The programme is exceptional and provides fertile soil. It's our responsibility to nurture it. We overlook the importance of educating all workers, not just union representatives. At UNTU, we've lagged. But starting today, we will incorporate what we have learned into our training manuals. My comrades will ensure I stay true to this commitment."

Mandlakhe Zondo, Deputy General Secretary of UNTU



Positive influence out in the world

LRS stakeholders recognise the contribution of the LRS to the labour movement

South African law will recognise equal parental leave rights for women and men (or primary caregivers). In 2023, a landmark case in Johannesburg High Court challenged sections of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, advocating for equal parental leave rights regardless of gender or the nature of parenthood. It means that a change in the law on parental leave is imminent and likely to affect both maternity and paternity rights.

The case was initiated by a couple, Werner and Ika van Wyk, along with Sonke Gender Justice and the Commission for Gender Equality, against the Minister of Labour. The Labour Research Service and other organisations appeared as friends of the court. LRS was invited to participate because of our commitment to gender equality and our support for trade unions in developing policies and collective demands for fair bargaining. This case is strengthening our efforts to challenge gender stereotypes around care work and the importance of recognising workers not only in their role as workers but also in their role as parents.



The ruling challenges the notion that caregiving is solely a woman's responsibility. When men choose to take parental leave, it shifts the perception of the leave itself and introduces a new perspective that adds value to it. The real challenge is ensuring the ruling translates into concrete action rather than simply remaining as words on a page. It's crucial that our collective agreements also align with this decision."

Nina Benjamin, Leader of Transforming Unequal Gender Relations in the World of Work programme of LRS

LRS impact on wage policy

For decades, LRS has contributed to policy and campaigns on a national minimum wage through research papers, education interventions, and active engagements. Following the establishment of the national minimum wage in 2019, Trenton Elsely, Executive Director of the LRS was appointed Commissioner on the National Minimum Wage Commission, and is serving his second term from 2024.

The national minimum wage matters. It benefits about six million workers in low-paid and low-unionised sectors. We have a minimum wage where there was none before. But it is not a living wage. Through our research project with partners, we have a picture of a decent life in South Africa that can inform policy debates and provide ideas for unions negotiating issues of dignity and value of workers.



I am proud of our efforts to equalise the national minimum wage for domestic and agricultural workers. Equalising is about valuing, making visible, and recognising this work. I am proud that the Commission has made modest positive gains on minimum wages without harsh trade-offs.”

Trenton Elsely, Commissioner of the NMWC





LRS as the 'hands, ears and eyes' of unions at social dialogue mechanisms

The LRS Executive Director participates in the trade subcommittee of NEDLAC, the statutory social dialogue body, offering union insights into the developments and dynamics of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) negotiations. South African trade unions have prompted NEDLAC to commission research on a social clause with labour provisions for the AfCFTA. ITUC-Africa affiliates advocating for the decent work agenda under the continental free trade agreement want member states to establish formal social dialogue mechanisms. The LRS supports this advocacy by building trade union competency on trade matters across Africa.



“Two-thirds of negotiations take place at home. If we cannot influence our national government, then we have squandered our main opportunity for influence.”

Technology for trade unions

We are working on developing a mobile application organising resource, called Indlela. We are facilitating ongoing discussions with union representatives to properly map the application onto trade unions as organisations, before the development phase. Trade unions should embrace technology to represent workers' interests and adapt to technological advancements in the world of work and society.

We are exploring new ways of communicating and sharing knowledge. We have developed a podcast on trade for African trade unions and civil society groups called **A Labour of Love**. The first interview with a trade specialist was in 2023. We will collaborate with Impuls Radio, a pan-African streaming service with two million listeners, to broaden our reach and make complex knowledge accessible beyond lengthy research reports.

Zambia retail union leverages WhatsApp to recruit workers at Shoprite

In LRS working networks, we have seen good examples of unions using technology tools for organising. The National Union of Commercial and Industrial Workers (NUCIW) uses WhatsApp for real-time communication with its 41 chairpersons to coordinate membership recruitment at Shoprite in Zambia. Chairpersons actively recruit potential members and ensure they acquire the necessary documentation, such as stop orders. NUCIW collects stop orders from remote Shoprite branches through the drivers of the biggest national grocery distributor. Using WhatsApp helps NUCIW branch officials stay connected, leading to more unity and more members joining.



We improved the recruiting process, got into more Shoprite stores, and got workers to assert their rights collectively. Using WhatsApp for quick information sharing helped us get more members.”

Vasco Mainza, Regional Chairperson of the National Union of Commercial and Industrial Workers



Sustainability through programme development

We pursue sustainability through programme development, and more specifically, we are committed to building intellectual capital around the future of work, climate and just transition, informalisation, and trade and investment.

We are building significant knowledge and partnerships on trade and investment in Africa. We actively engage with corporate governance and ethical investment in South Africa.

We are thinking about the future of work and have had a strong focus on the retail sector. We are

mapping location-based gig work as a distinct form of employment relations. We are working at several points along the continuum of work that ranges from the more formal to the more informal.

We have an eye on developments in the artificial intelligence space, to support the movement both to respond to new technologies and to deploy new technologies for social justice.

We are building knowledge and competency and defining our role in relation to Just Transition and the trade union movement.



Networking and alliance building for influence

We view networking and alliance building as a vital strategy, especially for smaller organisations that seek to work on complex themes and to amplify their reach.

Our networks include individuals and organisations with an affinity for working-class politics that we can collaborate with. Among our partners you will

find trade unions, trade union national centres, regional and continental worker formations and organisations, global unions, universities, and other tertiary institutions, solidarity support organisations, role-players in government and statutory institutions, community-based organisations and private sector consultancies.



The new IFWEA Executive Committee elected at the 24th General Conference in December 2023. Saliem Patel is IFWEA General Secretary, and Trenton Elsey of LRS (left) is an Executive Member.

Knowledge is too important
to leave in the hands of the
bosses.

LRS Labour
Research
Service

LRS.ORG.ZA