

ORGANIZING STRONG UNIONS

Module 1: BUILDING UNITY

TOOLS FOR ORGANIZERS

IN EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES AND INDUSTRIES



BUILDING UNITY

DEFINITIONS

■ **CEAL:** Labor Studies and Support Center, an organization in El Salvador that supported the workers at the Tainan factory in El Salvador's San Bartolo Export Processing Zone.

■ **DISCRIMINATION:** Discrimination occurs when a person or group of people are treated badly or unfairly because they are different, for example, because of their race, sex, religion, age, or disability. Workers often face discrimination at work.

■ **EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES (EPZS):** EPZs are industrial areas in a country that offer special incentives to foreign investors. These incentives may include low taxes, lax environmental regulations, and low labor costs. Low wages, long hours, and dangerous and repressive working conditions are the norm in many EPZs. Sometimes organizing unions is banned or restricted. EPZs are also known by other names, such as Special Economic Zones, Industrial Development Zones, etc.

■ **GENDER:** Gender refers to the social identity of men and women – what it means to be masculine or feminine in the society in which we live. It can also refer to the expected behaviors and beliefs of men and women.

■ **INTERNATIONAL TEXTILE, GARMENT AND LEATHER WORKERS FEDERATION – AFRICA (ITGLWF):** The Africa regional organization of the ITGLWF, an international federation of textile unions with over 10 million members worldwide.

■ **LABOR ORGANIZING:** Labor organizing brings workers together in a way that builds power to achieve a common goal. It is the key to workers' economic power and a key defense against assaults on workers' health, safety, and livelihood.

■ **LABOR UNION:** A labor union is an organization of workers who build collective power in their workplace in order to protect

worker rights and improve working conditions, such as wages, hours and benefits. Often the union negotiates a collective bargaining agreement (or contract) with the employer to define and secure the rights of its members.

■ **MANAGEMENT:** Management is the group of people in a company, business or public agency that makes decisions about how a company, a factory, or a workplace is organized. Management can make rules about how much people are paid, when and how they work, and other rules that affect the workplace.

■ **NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION (NGO):** NGOs are organized groups, independent of government, most often working to achieve a social objective such as ending poverty or serving particular groups of people, such as women or workers. NGOs can be small or large. They may be grassroots activist organizations, research centers, educational groups, or policy advocates.

■ **ORGANIZERS:** Organizers are people who take responsibility for helping others work together on a common goal, such as organizing a union. They may bring people together to talk about issues, educate people about an issue, or help them become involved in a project. Union organizers are people who help workers build workplace unions. Union organizers may be employed by an organized union or may be workers who volunteer their time.

■ **PRIORITIES:** Priorities are the things that matter most to a person or a group. Many organizers have found that the process of setting priorities with other workers is an important way to create unity, define goals, and mobilize for action.

■ **SWAZILAND MANUFACTURING AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION (SWAMU):** SWAMU is a union that has organized workers in export processing zones in Swaziland, including the workers at the Zheng Yong factory.

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INTRODUCTION TO ORGANIZING STRONG UNIONS

Building worker power is fundamental to achieving worker rights, and organizing strong unions is fundamental to achieving worker power. The best unions are rooted in worker activism and analysis, led by capable leaders, and structured to last through many challenges over time. Without strong unions, workers have no voice at the workplace and no way of negotiating current victories into permanent gains.

In this section, we'll examine how some workers have succeeded in organizing strong unions. In the first module "Building Unity," we'll address the importance of developing a deep understanding of the issues workers care most about. We'll discuss how to build unity among workers through collective action despite differing priorities, issues, and diverse worker backgrounds. In the second module "Tapping our Strength," we'll go to Lesotho to study how to confront fear and feelings of powerlessness through union organizing, and we'll see how culturally-appropriate methods can be a powerful tool to do this. In the third module "Developing Democratic Leadership," we'll go to Cambodia to study how a group of workers built their union through a leadership committee that is democratic and accountable to the membership. Finally in the fourth module "Building Unions that Last," we'll go to El Salvador to find out how a group of workers maintained a strong union through immense challenges such as plant closures, monetary payoffs, and lack of income.

With a strong union, workers can build alliances with other unions and organizations. We will look at how to build alliances in Modules 5 to 7. Strong unions are also the base from which workers can impact relevant local, national, and international economic and social policies. In Modules 8 to 10, we will explore a number of strategies workers have used to change the rules of the game. Throughout the 10 modules, the stories from real experiences of organizing in export processing zones illustrate the power and skills unions can develop to defend the rights of workers.

MODULE 1: BUILDING UNITY

WORKSHOP GOALS

INTRODUCTION

Building collective power among workers is not always easy, but the rewards are great. To build collective power, it is necessary to address the fact that workers may come from diverse ethnic, racial, religious, regional, and gender backgrounds, and may bring with them all the stereotypes, prejudices, and mistrust found outside the workplace. Their concerns may vary, depending upon their backgrounds, work classifications, seniority, and so forth. Facing this array of challenges, some activists may think that rather than taking the time and effort to address diversity and build unity for collective action, they can just tell workers what to do. Experience shows that this is no way to build collective power.

When workers are not unified, an individual activist is left vulnerable to retaliation by the employer. A lack of unity allows the employer to pit one group of workers against another. It allows social prejudices that divide workers to become stronger than their interests as a class. When organizers pick issues that aren't vital enough to unify workers, then the campaign will also fail to engage workers sufficiently in the struggle for their own rights.

Collective action is the best tool that workers have in the face of powerful employers. Collective action requires collective analysis of problems, priorities, and strategies. It also involves finding common threads among the diverse and sometimes divergent interests among workers.

In this module we explore ways to find out what issues are most important for workers, to choose a compelling issue around which to begin organizing, and to address the differences among workers in order to build on their collective strength. In the first two exercises, we define organizing and learn to identify important issues as a group. In the third exercise, we analyze the causes, consequences, and solutions of a problem or issue. In the fourth exercise, we prioritize issues based on criteria that many workers have found make for strong organizing campaigns. By understanding what issues matter to different groups of workers, and which ones matter to a lot of workers, organizers can choose a compelling issue that can unite the workforce. In the fifth exercise, we develop skits on gender issues, because while most workers in export processing zones are women, their work and family issues are often neglected in organizing campaigns. These skits and stories point to ways to overcome barriers and involve women workers in organizing campaigns.

MODULE 1: BUILDING UNITY (CONTINUED)

TEACHING GOALS

- To emphasize the importance of addressing issues that unite workers, even when workers experience issues differently, in order to build collective action.
- To teach respect for different points of views and diverse backgrounds among workers.
- To build awareness of gender issues in organizing.
- To motivate workers to develop action ideas that build unity at the workplace.

SKILLS GOALS

- To learn a group process for prioritizing issues.
- To get practice in applying criteria to organizing issues in order to find ones that are both compelling and winnable.
- To gain skills in active listening and resolving conflicts that may arise among workers.
- To become familiar with asking and answering strategic questions about organizing campaigns.

TRAINER'S NOTES

TIME TO DO THIS WORKSHOP:

The whole workshop will take about **8 hours** if you do all the exercises as well as the Welcome, Learn By Doing, and Closing activities. If you want to make it shorter, you can do only one of the exercises or divide the workshop in half and present it over 2 training sessions.



TRAINERS TIP

When a workshop is over 2 hours long or participants are tired, breaks and energizers are important tools to keep participants interested and engaged in the training. Energizers are short, fun activities that let participants move around and take a mental break from the hard work of learning. Be sure to plan time for energizers, especially after lunch and in the evening when participants' energy is lowest. You can even ask a group of participants to form an "Energizer Committee" with the job of calling for a game or energizer whenever they see the participants are getting sleepy or distracted. This committee can then lead the games or ask you to lead them. Energizers can be songs, chants, or any non-competitive game or activity the group can do together.

TRAINER'S NOTES (CONTINUED)

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR THIS WORKSHOP:

- Something to write on that everyone can see: large paper and marking pens or chalk and chalkboard.
- Copies of the Fact Sheet “What makes a compelling union issue” on page 35 (Exercise 3 only).
- A copy of the stories on page 24 (Exercise 4 only): use a photocopier or handwrite each story on a separate piece of paper.
- A hat, basket, can, or other container (Exercise 4 only): fold the papers with the stories and place them in the container.
- Copies of the Fact Sheet on “Good Listening” on page 38 (Exercise 5 only).

BEFORE YOU START:

- Read the whole Workshop Curriculum.
- Plan your agenda for the workshop. Decide how long the workshop will be. Choose which exercises you will do. Plan time for breaks and energizers.
- Collect all the materials you need.
- Set up the room the way you want it.



TRAINERS TIP

Some words and terms in this curriculum may be new for you or for the participants in the workshop. Look on the inside front cover for a list of definitions.

HOW THE WORKSHOP WORKS

HOW THE WORKSHOP WORKS

The workshop has 6 sections. In each section you and the participants will be doing a different kind of activity. There is a picture to remind you of the kind of activity you will do in that section. Here are the pictures and what they are reminding you to do:



WELCOME AND
GET STARTED



DISCUSS THE
STORY AND/OR
PICTURES



LEARN ABOUT
OTHER WORKERS'
SUCCESSSES



DO EXERCISES
TO LEARN NEW
SKILLS



LEARN BY DOING



EVALUATE AND CLOSE
THE TRAINING



WELCOME AND GET STARTED

TRAINER: In this section, you will tell the group what the workshop is about. Then participants will introduce themselves to each other. The other activities can help people feel welcome, comfortable, and respected during the workshop. When people feel comfortable, they will learn more and the workshop will be more successful.

TIME: 30 minutes (or less if there are fewer than 20 people in your group).

ACTIVITIES FOR GETTING STARTED:

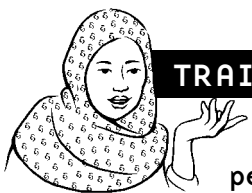
First do Activities **1** and **2**, then choose among **A**, **B**, and **C** for one more activity.

1. Tell everyone what the workshop is about. Review the Teaching Goals from Page 4.
2. Ask everyone to introduce themselves, including their name and place of work.



INTRODUCTION QUESTION:

What is one thing you look forward to in this workshop, and one thing you had to put aside in order to be here today?



TRAINERS TIP

SONGS, PRAYERS, AND POEMS will let people know that their culture and spirit will be respected in the workshop. Songs, prayers, and poems are also an opportunity to let a participant be the leader.



TRAINERS TIP

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS help people use their voices and participate in an easy way for the first time. They will then be more comfortable to speak later on.

WELCOME AND GET STARTED (CONTINUED)

ACTIVITIES FOR GETTING STARTED: (CONTINUED)

- A. Ask everyone to take turns saying why they think the workshop is important.
- B. Ask a volunteer to sing a song, say a prayer, or recite a poem.
- C. Ask the participants to take turns answering the introduction question in the box. Answering the introduction question can help people to start thinking about the topic of the workshop, or just to begin to get to know one another better.



TRAINERS TIP

Thanking the participants for being present and acknowledging that many people may be missing their families or other responsibilities during the workshop is a good way to start. It is similar to how organizers sometimes need to acknowledge what people, especially women, put aside in order to participate in an organizing campaign.



DISCUSS THE STORY AND/OR PICTURES

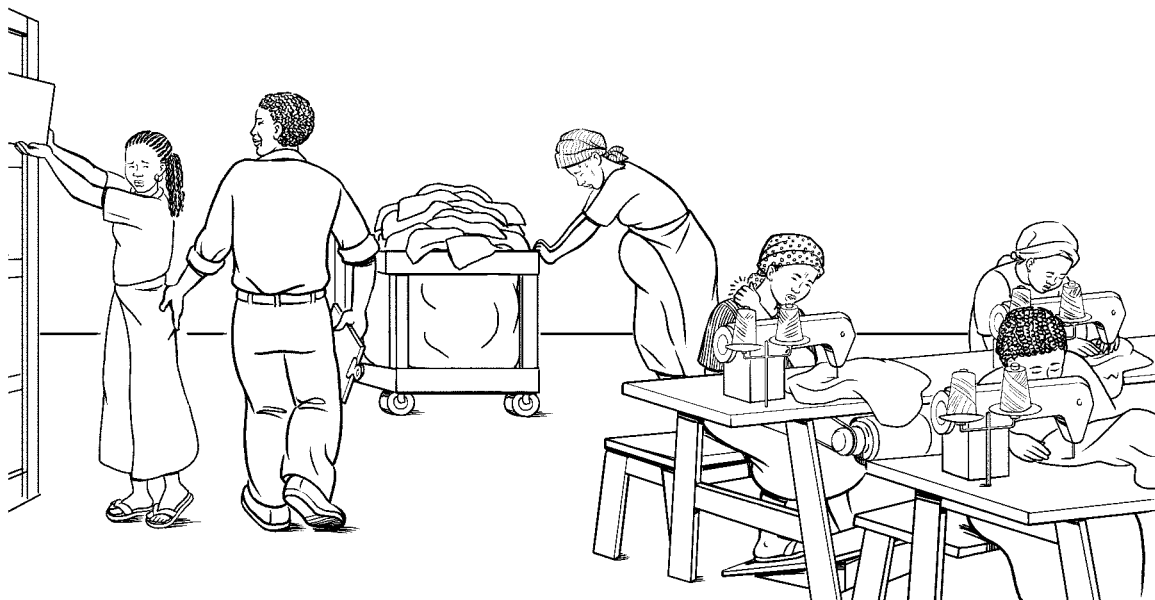
TRAINER: In this section, you can ask someone in the group to read the story out loud or you can read it out loud yourself. If you don't want to use the story, you can just look at the pictures together. Then discuss the story and/or pictures using the questions on the next page.

TIME: 30-45 minutes

JUNE HARTLEY's Story:

"I think that in unions, women have been much more sensitized to issues beyond just the workplace, because women have a lot more social and economic responsibility. [Therefore] Gender sensitivity or a gender perspective is important in the early stages of a union campaign. We've talked with workers a lot about health and safety on the job, injuries and illnesses of different kinds, which has brought in a number of issues like pregnancy and sick leave. Men and women may both need sick leave, but a woman may need a little bit more. We also talk about compassionate leave to let women look after their sick babies."

— JUNE HARTLEY, Project Manager,
ITGLWF Africa



DISCUSS THE STORY AND/OR PICTURES (CONTINUED)



TRAINER: Ask the participants to discuss the questions below. Allow 5 to 10 minutes for each question. If you want to, you can write what people say on a big piece of paper or a chalkboard as they answer the questions.

If there are more than 20 people in the room, you can divide into small groups of 4 or 5 people for the discussion. If they are in small groups, visit each group while they talk. Make sure that each person in each group has a chance to talk.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is happening in the pictures?
2. In June's story, what are the kinds of issues that she talks to workers about and why?
3. Do you agree with June that women have more social and economic responsibility than men? How might that affect the main concerns of men and women in the workplace?
4. How might problems like the ones in the pictures or in June's story affect men and women workers differently?
5. In June's story and in the pictures, what brings people together to organize?



LEARN ABOUT OTHER WORKERS' SUCCESSES

TRAINER: In this section, you can ask for several different people in the group to volunteer to read the different parts of the story out loud or you can read it out loud yourself. Then ask the group to discuss the question at the bottom.

TIME: 15 minutes



SHEDARECK MASUKU and MIKE TSABEDZE's story, Zheng Yong factory, Swaziland, Africa

"The workers at Zheng Yong wanted to join the union for many reasons. Many workers were being forced to work overtime but were not paid for it. Sometimes the factory was not paying workers the legal minimum wage, which is already very low. It was also very expensive for workers to travel from their homes to work. Pregnant women were treated very badly at Zheng Yong, and one woman gave birth on the factory floor because she was too afraid to ask for time off. Sometimes people were fired for small reasons, like talking on the shop floor or using the bathroom too much. During a worker protest at the factory, police came and shot a worker.

"One thing that helped us a lot, after we started to understand what was going on in the factory, was to start making pamphlets about the problems the workers were suffering at the factory. We would make a pamphlet about one specific problem and work hard with our group of activists in the factory to solve that problem. This helped us to build confidence and gain each other's trust.

"As we were trying to recruit members, we would look at what the worst problem was, and try to focus on that problem. The people suffering from that problem would meet together and we would talk about how their problem could be dealt with. Then we would start to try to solve that problem."

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

1. What one new thing did you learn from this story?



TRAINERS TIP

After reading this story, it may be helpful to discuss how the issues identified might affect men workers and women workers differently. How could this affect the organizing campaign?



DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 1: DEFINE ORGANIZING

TRAINER: In this exercise, participants will discuss the story from Zheng Yong, to together define organizing and to identify some actions and beliefs that can make a campaign successful.

TIME: 60 minutes

WHAT TO DO:

1. If the group has just completed the activity on page 12, “Learn about other workers’ successes,” then skip to Step 2. Otherwise, explain that for this exercise you want to review the story of the Zheng Yong workers. Ask for several different people in the group to volunteer to read the different parts of this story on page 12 out loud, or read it out loud yourself.
2. Ask participants to sit in 3 groups. Ask each group to pick one person to report back after their discussion. Ask each group to discuss just one of the following questions:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What motivated the workers at Zheng Yong to take action?
 - What were the different activities they did to achieve their goals?
 - What were some of their challenges?
3. Ask the 3 groups to come back together in one circle. Ask each of the 3 small groups to report back their answers to just one of the 3 questions. Ask the other groups to add their comments after each report.
 4. In the large group, ask the following questions:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Based on the story from Zheng Yong and your own experience, how would you define or describe the idea of “organizing”?
- What were some of the values and beliefs that guided the workers at Zheng Yong when they took action?
- What are some of your values and beliefs that would help you in organizing?

DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 1: DEFINE ORGANIZING (CONTINUED)

REFLECTION ON THE EXERCISE:

At the end of the exercise, summarize in your own words what the group has learned. Be sure to include the following points, even if they did not come up:

- Organizing is the process of bringing people together in a way that builds their power to achieve a common goal. Organizing helps workers win important benefits, and that is why the participants are here at this workshop to learn about organizing.
- In any organizing campaign, like the one at Zheng Yong, building unity among the workers is important to the workers' success.
- Sharing information among workers by making pamphlets and holding meetings helps the workers to define a common goal.
- Like the workers at Zheng Yong, we and other workers we know hold certain beliefs and values that support us in our organizing work and give us strength.



DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 2: IDENTIFY KEY ISSUES

TRAINER: In this exercise, participants will use experiences from their own lives to think about good issues for organizing. They will brainstorm a list of issues and set priorities of which issues are most likely to mobilize workers at their worksite.

TIME: 90 minutes



TRAINERS TIP

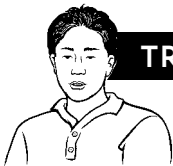
An issue is a specific problem or concern that workers feel strongly about. Many organizers find that when workers begin to organize, it is important to find out what issues the workers in their factory care about, and especially, which issues matter enough to move people to take action.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Ask the participants to sit together in one large group. If you want, you can ask for a volunteer to write down what people say on a big piece of paper or a chalkboard, especially the part of the discussion about **problems** or **issues**. Leave a little space around each issue listed, so that you can write more about it as the discussion continues. Ask the participants to answer these questions to identify 5 to 15 important issues for their workplace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What things happen in your workplace now that are problems for you and other workers?
- Are there things that happen that are unfair or unjust?
- Are there things that happen that are dangerous for workers?
- What is particularly important to you about each of these items?



TRAINERS TIP

When talking about the problems in your factory, some of the workers may start to share a longer story. To keep the focus on brainstorming, it may be helpful to ask workers who have been talking for more than 3 minutes to identify in that story what was the main problem or main thing they want to see changed.

DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 2: IDENTIFY KEY ISSUES (CONTINUED)

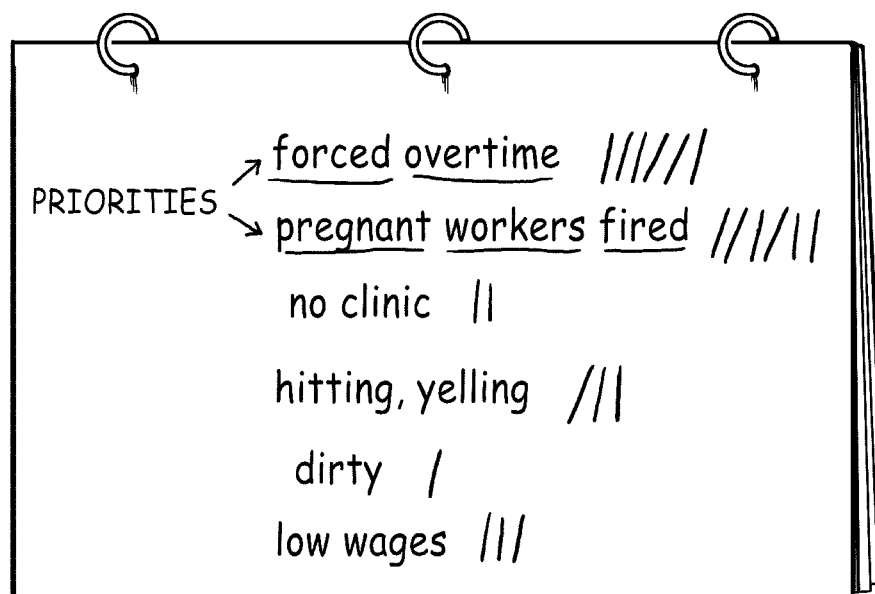
WHAT TO DO (CONTINUED):

2. Now you are ready to set priority issues with the group. Ask for a volunteer to read the list of issues. Then, ask the participants to set priorities among these issues by raising their hand (voting) for the issues they believe would be the most likely to mobilize other workers to action. Each participant gets to vote 3 to 5 times (you can decide how many). Record the number of votes for each issue as in the picture below.

After everyone has voted, you can circle or underline the issues that got a lot of votes.

3. Discuss in the large group the following questions:
 - Do we agree that these are the most important issues?
 - In what ways do differences among workers sometimes lead to different priorities for organizing?
 - What helps workers build unity despite their differences?

Mention any important differences or ways to build unity among workers that may not have been mentioned, such as those in the Trainer's Tip on the next page. You may also want to read out loud the quote from Meas Morokot, in the Trainer's Tip on page 18.



DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 2: IDENTIFY KEY ISSUES (CONTINUED)



TRAINERS TIP

Differences among workers that can lead to different priorities include worksite differences (like different shifts, jobs, or hazards) as well as different social conditions (like different genders, ethnicities, or languages). All these can lead to workers having different needs.

Things that help build unity despite differences among workers include having a common employer, belonging to the same union, and sharing some of the same risks and challenges. Listening to one another and showing mutual respect and support also helps to increase unity among workers.

REFLECTION ON THE EXERCISE

At the end of the exercise, summarize in your own words what the group has learned. Be sure to include the following points, even if they did not come up:

- People may have different ideas about what is important at the workplace
- Prioritizing issues helps to identify what concerns are shared by a large number of workers. This can help to shape the “collective will” or the direction shared among all workers



TRAINERS TIP

If participants voted for their top issues on a large paper, save that piece of paper. You can use it in Exercise 3, and again in Module 4 for Action Planning.

DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 2: IDENTIFY KEY ISSUES (CONTINUED)

REFLECTION ON THE EXERCISE (CONTINUED):

Before moving on to the next exercise, ask the group to name 1 or 2 actions they could take to build their union using the lessons learned in this exercise. Ask a volunteer to remember or write down these Action Ideas for the group. You will use the Action Ideas to make an Action Plan later (either at the end of this workshop, or after completing the first 4 Modules in the workshop curriculum).



TRAINERS TIP

Here is an example of how workers in one factory identified the issues that mattered most to them:

“We conduct a dialogue with the membership. Leaders meet with workers in small groups to ask what they want in the collective bargaining agreement... Then we run a big meeting to prioritize those issues. The task is to prioritize all the issues collected, put it all on one big flip chart. We say, ‘These are the issues our leaders got from you, so we want you to prioritize.’ We give each worker the right to raise their hand 5 times or 10 times, but we’ll have 20 issues... So each worker has to prioritize their top 5. We don’t actually count hands raised, but we count if it’s a lot of people who raised hands, just a few, or almost no one.”

-- MEAS MOROKOT, Top One, Cambodia.



DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 3: CHOOSING A “GOOD” ORGANIZING ISSUE

TRAINER: In this exercise, participants will discuss the factors that can divide and unite workers. They will also read the fact sheet “What Makes a Compelling Union Issue” and discuss it in small groups in relationship to the priority issues they identified in Exercise 2.

TIME: 45 minutes

WHAT TO DO:

1. Hand out copies of the Fact Sheet: “What Makes a Compelling Union Issue” on page 35. Ask for volunteers to read it out loud, or you can read it to the participants.
2. Ask the participants to comment on what they agree with or disagree with about the items on the Fact Sheet. Ask the participants if they would like to make additions to this Fact Sheet to include their own ideas about what helps workers to build unity or overcome differences. Write those additions on the large paper or blackboard so that everyone can see them.
3. Write on the large paper or the blackboard the most important issues that were identified in Exercise 2. (You can use the same large paper you used for voting in that exercise if you still have it.) Ask the participants to discuss the following questions for only the few most important issues that were identified:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- In what ways does this important issue fit the criteria (or qualities) listed on the Fact Sheet?
- In what ways does it not fit the criteria (or qualities) listed on the Fact Sheet?
- Do you think this issue is a good issue for your union to organize around? Why or why not? Which issue should be the number one priority for organizing?

DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 3: IDENTIFY DIFFERENT TYPES OF POWER (CONTINUED)

REFLECTION ON THE EXERCISE:

At the end of the exercise, summarize in your own words what the group has learned. Be sure to include the following points, even if they did not come up:

- Organizing is successful when it addresses deeply-felt needs of the workers.
- Building unity among workers often involves recognizing differences, listening to everyone's concerns, and understanding the issues from diverse points of view.
- A good or compelling union issue is one that appeals deeply to a large number of workers and provides a clear, winnable focus to a campaign.

Before moving on to the next exercise, ask the group to name one or two actions they could take to build their union using the lessons learned in this exercise. Ask a volunteer to remember or write down these Action Ideas for the group. You will use the Action Ideas to make an Action Plan later (either at the end of this workshop, or after completing the first 4 Modules in the workshop curriculum).



DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 4: SKITS ABOUT ORGANIZING WOMEN WORKERS

TRAINER: In this exercise, participants will create skits showing a problem and a solution, based on quotes from workers involved in organizing campaigns around the world. The skits are about organizing women workers. You will need to prepare a few materials before leading this exercise: slips of paper with the stories copied from page 24 and a small container such as a hat, basket or can. Depending on the time you have and the size of the group, you might decide to use only some of the slips of paper instead of all of them.

TIME: 60 minutes or more

WHAT TO DO:

1. To get ready for this exercise, use a photocopier or handwrite to copy the stories from page 24 onto individual pieces of paper. Fold the papers and place them in a hat, can or basket.
2. Have the participants form small groups of 5 to 8 workers each. Ask each group to draw one paper from the hat.
3. Tell the group that each story is a quote from workers in different campaigns. All the stories have something to do with the power differences between men and women and how this affects workers when they are organizing.
4. Ask each group to read the story aloud within their own group. Ask each group to discuss the following questions:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What's the problem that is happening in this story?
- Is there a solution proposed in the story? If so, do you think it's a good solution?
- What's the best solution to this problem that you can think of?

DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 4: SKITS ABOUT ORGANIZING WOMEN WORKERS (CONT.)

WHAT TO DO (CONTINUED):

5. Ask each group to prepare a brief skit that shows 2 things: the problem and the best solution. Remind the groups that they can use their own experiences, as well as the story on the paper, to create the skit. Give the groups 15 to 20 minutes to read the story, discuss it, and prepare the skit.
6. Gather all the small groups together and perform the skits. Applaud and encourage one another!
7. After all the skits are performed, ask the whole group to discuss the following questions:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What were the differences you noted in the lives and opinions of men and women in the skits?
 - In your experience, do men and women have equal power at work or at home?
 - What are some of the things that organizers should think about when organizing women?
8. Read the Fact Sheet on pages 36-37, "Organizing Women Workers," after the discussion, or ask for volunteers to read it out loud.



DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 4: SKITS ABOUT ORGANIZING WOMEN WORKERS (CONT.)

REFLECTION ON THE EXERCISE

At the end of the exercise, summarize in your own words what the group has learned. Be sure to include the following points, even if they did not come up:

- Differences between men and women affect union organizing.
- To build strong unions, organizers need to take steps to address gender inequality within the union, as well as in the workplace.

Before moving on to the next exercise, ask the group to name one or two actions they could take to build their union using the lessons they learned in this exercise. Ask a volunteer to remember or write down these Action Ideas for the group. You will use the Action Ideas to make an Action Plan later (either at the end of this workshop, or after completing the first 4 Modules in the workshop curriculum).

STORIES ABOUT ORGANIZING WOMEN WORKERS:

“On home visits, we always went out in mixed pairs, men and women, to avoid problems of violence against women, especially from the taxi drivers.”

Aurelia Cruz, Dominican Republic

“The men are afraid to join unions. Women are hired more than men in Lesotho clothing factories, so there are few men in the factories. The men are afraid to lose their jobs, even though they like what we do in the union. They say, ‘These women are strong. They are not afraid of our employer.’”

Marashalane Ramaliehe, Lesotho

“We would also come to people’s houses to visit them... Since we organizers at Zheng Yong were men and almost all the Zheng Yong workers were women, it was important for us to bring women workers with us on the visits, so that the workers’ boyfriends would not be jealous or feel threatened.”

Shadareck Masuki, Swaziland

“My husband, before, asked me to stop working for the union. But I said no, the union is important, all the workers suffer – including me and our daughter who works there. I explained to my husband and now my husband supports me. Now my husband gives me rides to meetings and waits outside.”

Tham Sovan, Cambodia

“Generally, women don’t join unions, and if they join they don’t participate very much due to machismo, household chores, cooking, children, etc. It makes their participation difficult because they do that on Saturdays and Sundays, and those are the days to meet.”

Vinicio Reyes, Dominican Republic

“We have been alerting women trade unionists about safety, about rape... And we have been educating men that if women fear going out at night, then at least 50% of the working class will be prevented from participating in the labor movement – so this is a class concern, so it must be taken up by the union.”

Stephen Faulkner, South Africa

“The whole concept of a free working woman has changed. Some women can't go back to their villages because of what has happened to them. They can't marry because of the low social status of Free Trade Zone working women. So we've become enslaved to the Free Trade Zones.”

S.A. Chandrawathi, Sri Lanka

“I’m always working, 9 hours out of the house at the factory, then there’s 15 hours more for which there is no salary. What does a man do? He works and when he gets out of work, he goes home to change his clothes and goes out to play football.”

Daisy Hernandez, El Salvador

“The campaign changed my life completely, and I know it changed the other women workers as well... I learned things I never conceived of, like how to be a leader... But actually, my husband had to change his life more. He had to learn to cook. I leave at 7 in the morning and get home after 9 at night. He had to learn to bathe the kids and put them to bed.”

Aurelia Cruz, Dominican Republic



DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 5: PRACTICE LISTENING AND RESOLVING CONFLICTS

TRAINER: In this exercise, participants will practice listening skills by listening carefully to each other's strategies for resolving conflicts between union members.

TIME: 90 minutes

WHAT TO DO:

1. Introduce this exercise by noting that listening and resolving conflicts is an important factor in building unity among workers and increasing loyalty to the union. It is also helpful for finding solutions to a wide range of issues that workers may care about.
2. Ask participants to sit in pairs. Ask one person in each pair to raise his or her hand. Tell them that they are Group 1. Ask the other person in each pair to raise his or her hand. Tell them that they are the Group 2.
3. The participants will need to understand the steps of this exercise before they begin. Describe the exercise to the participants like this:
 - "I (the trainer) will read a story out loud about conflict in a union.
 - Group 1, each of you will have three minutes to tell your partner in Group 2 how you would resolve the conflict.
 - Group 2, while your partner is talking, you must listen quietly, without interrupting or asking questions. When your partner finishes talking, you may ask questions to make sure you understood what he or she said.
 - Then I will ask someone from Group 2 to tell the whole group your **partner's** solution.
 - Next, we'll repeat the process with a new story, but this time Group 2 will give their solutions, and Group 1 will listen first, then ask questions, and finally have a chance to tell the whole group about their partner's solution."

DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 5: PRACTICE LISTENING... (CONT.)

WHAT TO DO (CONTINUED):

3. Begin the steps you just described by reading Conflict #1 out loud (see conflict stories on page 27). Ask Group 1 to tell their solutions to the problem to their partners for 3 minutes. Give Group 2 about 2 minutes to ask questions.
4. Ask for 2 or 3 volunteers from Group #2 to tell their **partner's** solution to the whole group.
5. Repeat the process with the second story, reversing the groups.
6. Ask participants to answer the following discussion question as a large group.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What one new thing did you learn about listening?
 - How did it feel to be listened to or not listened to by your partner?
 - What one new thing did you learn about solving conflicts within a union?
 - What is one way you could use something you learned in this exercise to improve communication and conflict resolution in your own union?
7. Give the participants copies of the Fact Sheet: Good Listening (on pages 38-39). Read the Fact Sheet or ask for volunteers to read it aloud. Ask participants to answer the following discussion question as a large group.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Are there ideas from this Fact Sheet that you saw happen in this exercise today? Which ones?
 - Are there ideas you would like to try out later? Which ones?
8. If you like, you can add any suggestions from the Fact Sheet on Communication and Conflict Resolution (on page 40) for preventing and resolving conflicts in unions.

DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 5: PRACTICE LISTENING... (CONT.)



CONFLICT #1:

About 20 members of your union were fired and blacklisted two months ago for organizing others to join the union. Many families are running out of money and food. Single mothers and their families are especially suffering. A local church donates 10 sacks of beans to help the union members keep struggling. Some union members say that the beans should be divided equally among all the blacklisted workers. Others say that the beans should be divided among the single mothers only. At a union meeting, several union members begin to argue angrily about this. You are a leader among the blacklisted workers and you yourself are also out of work. What will you do to resolve this conflict?

CONFLICT #2:

In the middle of the campaign to organize a union at your factory, the managers announce that they are going to close the factory and fire all the workers. Your union is working with a sister-union in the United States to get support from consumers there for a boycott to put pressure on the factory to stay open. The sister-union in the U.S. has offered to pay for one member of your union to travel to the U.S. to talk to consumers there. Many members of your union want to go, including several members of the Executive Committee. At the last union meeting, you overheard several members saying that probably someone from the Executive Committee would go because "they make all the decisions in this union anyway." You are a member of the Executive Committee. What will you do to resolve this conflict?

DO EXERCISES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

EXERCISE 5: PRACTICE LISTENING... (CONT.)

REFLECTION ON THE EXERCISE:

At the end of the exercise, summarize what the group has learned. Be sure to include the following points, even if they did not come up:

- Listening is hard, and needs to be practiced
- Communicating what we have heard is hard, and needs to be practiced
- Good listening and communicating is important for the internal life of the union
- Good communication can help to prevent conflicts before they start, as well as resolve conflicts once they appear.

Before moving on to the next exercise, ask the group to name one or two actions they could take to build their union using the lessons learned in this exercise. Ask a volunteer to remember or write down these Action Ideas for the group. You will use the Action Ideas to make an Action Plan (either at the end of this workshop, or after completing the first 4 Modules in the workshop curriculum).



LEARN BY DOING

TRAINER: In this exercise, participants will review the key ideas from the workshop and use them to make plans for taking action in their own worksite.

TIME: 30 minutes or more

WHAT TO DO:

1. Ask the participants to state one thing they have learned in this workshop. (If the group is more than 25 people, you may lead a brief brainstorm about what was learned. If the group is smaller than that, you may want to ask each person to say one thing they learned.)
2. Summarize the main ideas discussed during the workshop, including building unity among workers, selecting a good union issue, and understanding how to address gender and other differences when organizing to increase unity. See the “Trainer’s Tip” box on this page for an example of how to make a summary statement.



TRAINERS TIP

An important goal of this workshop is for participants to use their new skills in action. This exercise and the sample worksheet that goes with it are some activities that can help participants move from learning to action.



TRAINERS TIP

Here is an example of a summary statement that a facilitator could offer near the end of a workshop:

“Over the course of the day, we have looked at ways to build unity among workers by understanding what matters to them. We have defined organizing as working together to gain power to resolve problems. We identified problems and solutions, and thought about how to pick the best issues for organizing. We also talked a lot about the differences among workers, like between men workers and women workers. We practiced listening and resolving conflicts. We saw in the skits how important it is to address differences directly, so that we can build a stronger, more united union.”

LEARN BY DOING (CONTINUED)

WHAT TO DO (CONTINUED):

3. Explain that the next step in organizing is to take action. Even small actions help workers to build a strong union. After completing the first 4 training modules on “Organizing Strong Unions,” participants will make a more complete Action Plan. This exercise is like a stepping stone toward an Action Plan, and it gives the participants a chance to put some of their learning into practice.
4. Make a “Learn By Doing” Worksheet like the one on page 32 on a large piece of paper or chalkboard. Explain to the participants that you will fill out this Worksheet together. Ask for a volunteer to take notes if you are writing on a chalkboard so the participants will have a record of their plan.
5. Ask the volunteers who have been remembering the Action Ideas from each exercise to say them out loud. Write these ideas in the left-hand column of the large sheet of paper or chalkboard. Ask the participants if they have any other action ideas for building unity among workers that is not yet on the list. Write down these additional ideas.
6. Ask the participants to identify which of the Action Ideas would be especially good at building workers’ power. Put an X in the column under “Builds Power” by those Action Ideas.
7. Ask the participants to identify which of the Action Ideas would be especially strong for increasing the unity among workers, or increasing the participation of women (or other specific groups) in the union. Put an X in the column under “Unifies Us” by those Action Ideas.



TRAINERS TIP

At the end of Module 4: Building Unions That Last, you will find an Action Planning tool using ideas from Modules 1, 2, 3, and 4. These 4 modules were designed to work together to address the single topic of “Organizing Strong Unions.” If you are not offering all 4 of these workshops together, you may want to look at the Action Plan section of Module 4 for additional ideas about using the information in this module.

LEARN BY DOING (CONTINUED)

WHAT TO DO (CONTINUED):

8. Ask the participants to identify which of the Action Ideas could be done right away, even before the next workshop. For example, if there is a week before the next workshop, the action might be to “Talk to 10 workers about the main problems they see in the workplace.” If there is only one night before the next workshop, the action might be to “Think of 3 people who are good listeners and how they could help build unity among the workers.” Put an X in the column under “Do Now” by those Action Ideas. Ask all the participants to commit to doing one action from this list before the next workshop. (If many actions are possible to do right away, you may want to pick one that has X marks in all 3 columns.)
9. For the Action Ideas that are not identified as “Do Now,” put an X in the column under “Do Later.” Tell participants that you will come back to these ideas to see how they fit together into an Action Plan after completing the first 4 Training Modules on “Organizing Strong Unions.” At that time, participants will identify which action ideas fit best with their goals.



“LEARN BY DOING” WORKSHEET

| ACTION IDEA | BUILDS POWER | UNIFIES WORKERS | DO NOW | DO LATER |
|-------------|--------------|-----------------|--------|----------|
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EVALUATE AND CLOSE TRAINING

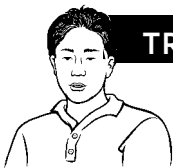
TRAINER: In this section, you will remind the group what the goals of the training were and acknowledge the goals you have accomplished together in the training. You will thank any individuals or groups who helped make the training a success. Then participants will have a chance to evaluate the training and commit to taking action. The closing activities suggested on this page can help people feel successful, hopeful, and powerful as they complete the workshop.

TIME: 30 minutes (or less if there are fewer than 20 people in your group)

ACTIVITIES FOR EVALUATION AND CLOSING:

1. Remind the participants of the goals of this training (see page 4). Acknowledge that everyone has worked hard to finish the training and accomplish these goals.
2. Thank any individuals or groups who contributed to the success of the training, including those who contributed meeting space, food, time, etc.
3. As a large group, ask each person to say:
 - One thing she or he learned in the training,
 - One thing she or he liked about the training,
 - One thing she or he will do to build their union based on what they learned in the training.

Options for this step: If you have a large group (more than 20 participants), you can ask for 4 or 5 volunteers to answer the 3 questions or ask each person to answer only one question—rather than asking each person to answer all 3 questions.



TRAINERS TIP

You may want to spend more time evaluating the workshop with the participants if:

- you're working on improving your own training skills and you want to know how you can improve your facilitation;
- you're unsure of whether the content of the workshop was too easy, too hard, or just right for your participants;
- you're trying to decide whether to use this workshop again as part of your union's education program.

EVALUATE AND CLOSE TRAINING (CONTINUED)

ACTIVITIES FOR EVALUATION AND CLOSING (CONTINUED):

4. Lead the group in a closing ritual. This could be a chant, song, dance, poem, or prayer.



TRAINERS TIP

Ask one of the participants to choose the closing ritual and lead the group in a chant, song, poem, prayer, etc. This gives someone in the group a chance to exercise leadership. It also makes clear to the group that what they have accomplished in the workshop belongs to them, not to you as the trainer.

FACT SHEET: WHAT MAKES A COMPELLING UNION ISSUE

A compelling union issue or problem in the workplace is one that workers feel strongly about. It is likely to mobilize workers to action. A compelling issue strengthens an organizing campaign or a campaign for a union contract.

The following questions will help you to decide whether the issues you have identified are compelling ones for your workplace.

- Does the issue affect a lot of workers?
- Do workers care deeply about the issue?
- Would workers be willing to take risks in order to win a solution to this issue?
- Is the issue winnable? Does the group of organizing workers have enough power to force a change in the situation?
- Is it clear who has the power to do what you want?
- Will other workers in other factories care about the issue?
- Will individuals and organizations outside the workplace (such as NGOs) care about the issue?
- Is the importance of the issue easy to communicate to other workers or allies?
- Will the issue involve new leaders among the workers?

FACT SHEET: ORGANIZING WOMEN WORKERS

ORGANIZING WOMEN WORKERS IS LIKE ORGANIZING MEN WORKERS – BUT DIFFERENT

- Women and men both can be underpaid for their work, but sometimes women are paid less just because they are women.
- Women and men both face harassment on the job, but women are more likely to face sexual harassment.
- Women and men both are often forced to work overtime, but this may have a bigger effect on women because they often have young children, old people or sick relatives at home waiting for their care.

BARRIERS WOMEN EXPERIENCE TO PARTICIPATING IN THE UNION

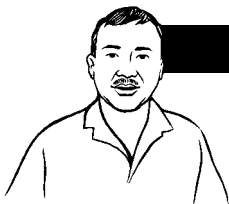
- **Double Work Day:** Women usually do most of the cleaning, child care, laundry, food purchasing, food preparation, care for the sick and elderly, and other work in the home in addition to their work in the factory.
- **Discrimination:** Women are often discouraged from taking certain jobs, leading meetings, or speaking up at all simply because they are women. These narrow expectations based on gender can deprive a workplace – or a union – of many great leaders who happen to be women.
- **Lack of Education or Economic Power:** Women often have fewer opportunities than men to go to school, develop job skills, control their own money, or make independent decisions.
- **Violence Against Women:** Women face greater risks of rape and assault which may make it difficult for women to attend evening meetings or conduct outreach. In addition, some women face violence in their own home at the hands of relatives or husbands, especially if their relatives or husbands do not approve of their participation in the union.

FACT SHEET: ORGANIZING WOMEN WORKERS

(CONTINUED)

IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZING WOMEN WORKERS

- Despite these barriers, it is vitally important that unions involve women in organizing campaigns, especially in EPZs, because in EPZs women make up the majority of the workforce. No union can succeed if it doesn't involve the majority of workers.
- Involving women workers in organizing means addressing safety concerns, adjusting schedules to accommodate women, developing women leaders, and ensuring that all workers are treated with respect and dignity within the union, regardless of gender.



GILBERTO GARCIA, CEAL, El Salvador:

“We still have to learn how to better work with groups of workers, mostly women, who have been subjected to oppression for years, who have had mostly negative experiences in the workplace, as well as in the home, the family, and the community. I believe that solidarity is the basic human instinct, so the question is how to overcome all this oppression and rebuild relations of solidarity. Part of this must also be rebuilding the relations between men and women which currently support neither organization nor solidarity.”

FACT SHEET: GOOD LISTENING: A KEY SKILL FOR TRAININGS AND FOR ORGANIZING

FOR WORKERS

Workers who are listened to feel respected and valued. Good listening is a way of showing workers that their ideas are valuable and important for finding solutions to their own problems.

Good listening can help people in a group stay calm and constructive as they deal with hard problems. Listening to each other is an important skill for being able to plan, work and make decisions together. That is to say, for organizing!

FOR THE FACILITATOR OR ORGANIZER

Good listening is an extremely important way to identify the real issues that participants have, not just what the facilitator or organizer thinks they are. Good listening helps facilitators, organizers, and leaders to understand what participants are feeling or thinking, what their obstacles are, and what will get them more engaged.



FACT SHEET: GOOD LISTENING: A KEY SKILL FOR TRAININGS AND FOR ORGANIZING

(CONTINUED)

TIPS FOR GOOD LISTENING

- **Good listening is not the same as being silent:** Good listening means encouraging others to speak, letting them know that you want to hear what they have to say, and asking open-ended questions.
- **Ask clarifying questions:** To encourage participation, ask questions that begin with “tell us more about...?” or “what happened when...?” or “what do you think...?”
- **Listen to what is not being said:** Pay attention to people’s words, but also to their body language and tone of voice to understand what people are really saying and how they are feeling emotionally.
- **Listen with your body:** Use your body language to show that you are really paying attention by sitting down with participants, making eye contact, or moving closer—whatever is culturally appropriate for the group you are training.
- **Summarize key points:** Repeat back to people what you have heard them say to let them know that you really were listening and to make sure you understood correctly what they meant.
- **Acknowledge feelings that you “hear”:** Show that you understand people’s non-verbal communication by saying how you think they might be feeling through questions or statements such as “you seem upset about what happened...do you want to talk about it?”
- **Acknowledge good intentions and points of agreement:** Acknowledge people’s good intentions as you understand them and ways in which people are in agreement with one another when this is true.

FACT SHEET: COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Strong unions are ones that maintain a high degree of communication among members and with leadership of the union. The structure of the union should facilitate communication both horizontally (among those at the same level) and vertically (between members and leadership of the union). But structure alone is not enough – you need to develop a culture of communication in the union. Trust grows where decisions are made in a transparent fashion and information and resources are shared.

Trust is an important element of communication, especially in settings where political repression has sown a lot of distrust, or where rumors are used to shame or hurt individuals. For example, many women workers have been reluctant to participate in unions due to rumors about their behavior, especially where attending union meetings and carrying out house visits are not traditional roles for women. Women workers who can count on the men and women in their union to contradict such rumors are more likely to join the union and even win the support of their husbands and families. Trust grows where decisions are made in a transparent fashion and information and resources are shared.

No group of people has ever organized without encountering some conflicts along the way. For this reason, union organizers and leaders often find it helpful to set up a process for airing conflicts before they get out of hand. For example:

- In Cambodia, workers at Nien Hsing made sure that the union had leaders in all sections of the factory so that any conflicts could be brought to the attention of the union as soon as possible.
- In El Salvador, the workers at Tainan factory continued to meet regularly to talk through any problems even while the factory was closed.

Workers in many unions have testified to the value of being completely and respectfully heard, as a first step toward resolving a conflict within the union. The practice of active listening as described in this Module is one tool for ensuring that individuals in a conflict are heard.

Another useful tool in helping to resolve a conflict is to help the parties to the conflict separate their emotional response from the facts of the situation. In some cultures, it is appropriate to voice those emotions out loud, while in other cultures, it is more common to acknowledge them in other ways. After a person has “let the steam off” the conflict, a skillful listener can help him or her focus attention on the facts of the situation and possible solutions.

DEFINITIONS (CONTINUED)

■ **TOP ONE:** Top One is a factory in an Export Processing Zone in Cambodia, Southeast Asia.

■ **UNION CONTRACT:** A union contract is a written, legally-binding agreement between a group of workers and an employer. The contract generally describes how the employer will treat workers, including wages, work hours, and working conditions. The goal of many union organizing

campaigns is to negotiate with the employer to get a union contract. A union contract is also called a “collective bargaining agreement.”

■ **ZHENG YONG FACTORY:** The Zheng Yong factory is a clothing factory in Swaziland, Southern Africa, where workers organized with the Swaziland Manufacturing and Allied Workers Union.

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WRITING: Sara Flocks, Lea Grundy, Katie Quan, Janey Skinner, Tamar Schnepf, Danilo Trisi

RESEARCH: Elisabeth Lamoureux, Danilo Trisi

PROJECT MANAGEMENT: Lisa McGowan, Katie Quan, Louise Walsh

CASE STUDIES: Tom Dundon, Todd Jailer, Isobel White

EDITORIAL COORDINATION: Lea Grundy, Todd Jailer, Lisa McGowan

DRAWINGS: Mary Ann Zapalac

DESIGN: Design Action, Oakland, California

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TOOLS FOR ORGANIZERS

IN EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES AND INDUSTRIES

TRAINING MODULES IN THIS SERIES:

SECTION I: ORGANIZING STRONG UNIONS

1. Building Unity
2. Tapping Our Strength
3. Developing Democratic Leadership
4. Building Unions That Last

SECTION II: BUILDING ALLIANCES

5. Allying With Other Unions
6. Linking With Non-Governmental Organizations
7. Mounting International Campaigns

SECTION III: FIGHTING FOR LABOR RIGHTS

8. Negotiating Labor Rights in Export Processing Zones
9. Using Trade Provisions to Organize
10. Stopping Anti-Worker International Financial Institutions Policies

This booklet, **BUILDING UNITY**, is Module 1 of 10 in a series of training modules for working people organizing in Export Processing Zones or other export-oriented industries.