

► ILO Brief

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Emerging Good Practices of Trade Union Engagement in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework



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Contents

Foreword.....	2
Executive Summary.....	3
1. Introduction.....	4
2. Methodology for collecting emerging good practices	5
3. Selection of countries for the collection of emerging good practices.....	6
4. Examples of emerging good practices.....	7
Development of trade union position papers on the Cooperation Framework	7
Harnessing the role of labour research and training institutes.....	8
Coalition building with like-minded organizations	10
Direct engagement with Resident Coordinators.....	10
Development of SDG progress monitoring and tracking methodologies.....	12
South-South cooperation initiative between trade unions in small island States in Asia-Pacific and the Caribbean ...	12
5. Key lessons	14
6. Conclusions and the way forward.....	16
References	17

► Foreword

The emphasis that Agenda 2030 places on partnerships across all stakeholders to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals means that the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) must be anchored on effective engagement with workers' organizations. As key development actors, workers' organizations should not be at the margins of the Cooperation Framework and Country Implementation Plans, but at the centre. And it must also be the responsibility of trade union leaders to ensure that their organizations can seize the opportunity to engage in the Framework as critical and effective partners – and at all levels.

Despite the opportunities that the Cooperation Framework offers for a more participatory approach to policy development and implementation, the engagement of social partners continues to encounter significant challenges. These include exclusion from Cooperation Framework processes at national and regional levels; uneven capacities of trade unions and their ability to influence the contents of the Framework; and, in some cases, a lag in understanding of, and sometimes, unwillingness of Resident Coordinators and United Nations Country Team members, to understand the tripartite governance structure of the International Labour Organization.

However, emerging evidence shows that the workers' organizations that are seeing results in terms of this agenda are mainly those who are doing the following:

- developing position papers on the Cooperation Framework
- harnessing the role of labour research institutes and academia in providing evidence-based policy inputs

- networking with like-minded development actors
- engaging with UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams
- developing monitoring and tracking methodologies and tools on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- harnessing the role of South-South cooperation in advancing effective knowledge and experience-sharing on trade union engagement in Cooperation Framework and UNSDCF and SDG processes.

This booklet documents emerging good practices of trade union engagement in the Cooperation Framework to showcase the lasting benefit and value of social dialogue to institution-building and policymaking. It also outlines the emerging opportunities for trade unions to engage in, learn from and influence the design and implementation of smarter solutions to achieve sustainable results – with the aim of embedding decent work priorities and promote inclusive sustainable growth in national development plans and strategies and contribute to building stronger, more sustainable, democratic and equal societies. The booklet synthesizes key messages drawn from recent studies by ACTRAV.

I am grateful to colleagues in the ACTRAV sub-cluster on Multilateral Partnerships and Development Cooperation (Grayson Koyi, Ariel Castro, Hilma Mote, and Laurent Mottier) for preparing this booklet.

Maria Helena André
Director, Bureau for Workers' Activities

► Executive Summary

In the context of Agenda 2030 and the framework of the reform of the United Nations development system and the UN Decade of Action (2020–30), this report highlights emerging good practices of trade union engagement in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) from 16 countries from the following five regions: Africa; Arab States; Asia and the Pacific; Europe, and Central Asia; Latin America and the Caribbean.

The existence of one or more of the following institutions and activities at the national or regional level were among the criteria for selection of the countries:

- active UN development system work on the UNSDCF
- institutional mechanisms for stakeholder involvement
- active trade union involvement in the SDG/ Agenda 2030 and the UNSDCF process.

Methodologically, the studies on which the report draws were conducted through a combination of desk research and in-depth interviews with key informants.

- These emerging good practices attempt to capture innovative initiatives spurred by trade union engagement with UNSDCFs at the national and regional levels, including the role of collaborative work between different actors. The good practices include the development of trade union position papers on UNSDCFs, harnessing the role of labour research institutes in providing evidence-based policy inputs and information support to trade unions, coalition building with like-minded development actors to present a unified front on UNSDCFs, direct engagement with the UN Resident Coordinators, development of monitoring and tracking methodologies and tools on SDGs, and the role of south-south cooperation in advancing effective engagement in UNSDCFs and SDG processes.

Key lessons learned underscore the need for a proactive trade union agenda in relation to Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development for effective engagement and influence in the UNSDCF; building a portfolio of evidence for the following:

- effective articulation of the labour positions
- acceleration of effective partnerships across all stakeholders – anchored on pragmatism, open-mindedness and flexibility to seize the spaces opening up
- institutional capacity development, especially at the technical level for increased policy influence
- strategic engagements with Resident Coordinators and Country Offices
- scaling-up South-South cooperation initiatives.

The report, focusing primarily on institutional, participatory and procedural aspects, illustrates the lasting benefit and value of social dialogue to institution building and policymaking and the emerging opportunities for trade unions to engage, learn from and influence the design and implementation of smarter solutions to achieve sustainable results – with the aim of embedding decent work priorities and promote inclusive sustainable growth in national development plans and strategies and contribute to building stronger, more sustainable, democratic and equal societies.

The report concludes with recommendations based on lessons drawn from the emerging good practices presented, with the expectation that these examples offer useful guidance or inspiration to countries and regions across the globe that are seeking to create their own success stories stemming from trade union engagement in the Cooperation Framework and Agenda 2030.

► 1. Introduction

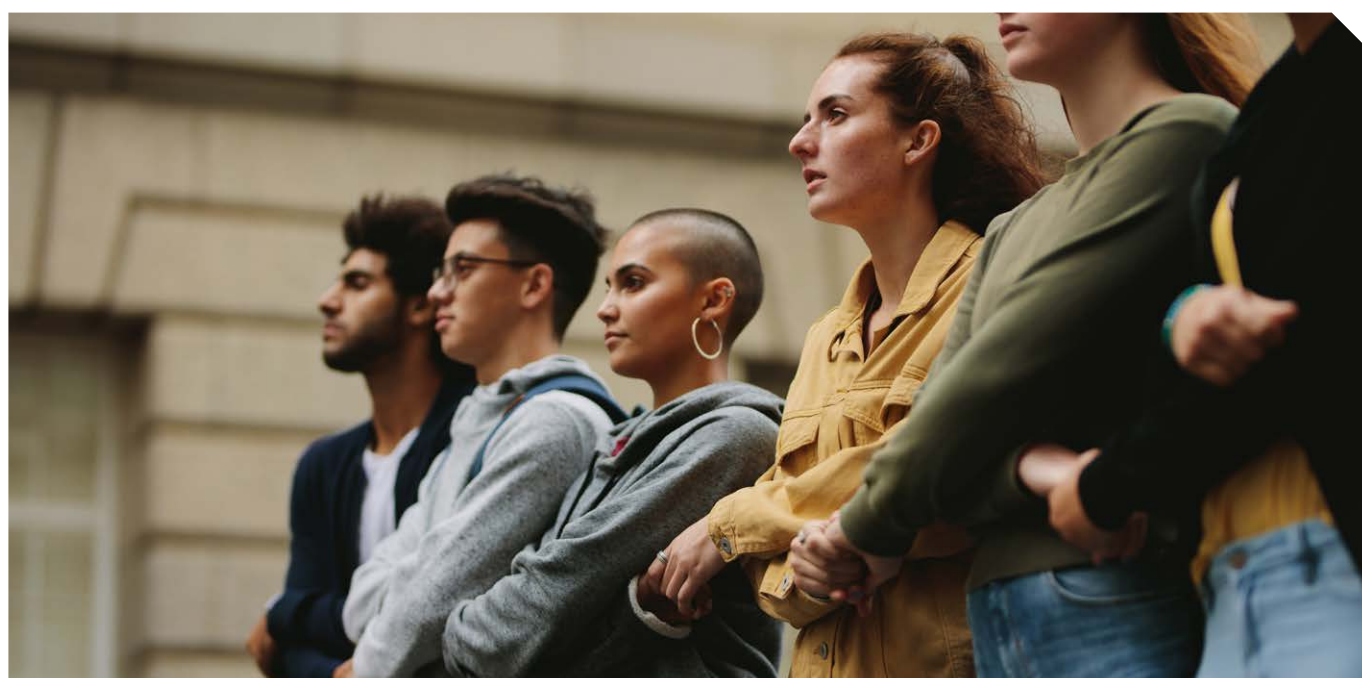
“We know that achieving the 2030 Agenda for everyone, everywhere is humanity’s best chance of ensuring the progressive realization of human rights and a future of peace and prosperity for all. The new UN Cooperation Frameworks offer a tremendous opportunity to scale up implementation of the 2030 Agenda and demonstrate concrete results on the ground.”

Amina J. Mohammed,
United Nations Deputy Secretary-General,
Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly resolution (A/RES/72/279) of 1 June 2018 welcomed a “revitalized, strategic, flexible and results- and action-orientated” United Nations Development Assistance Framework (now renamed the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)) as “the most important instrument for the planning and implementation of United Nations development activities in each country in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to be prepared and finalized in full consultation and agreement with national Governments.”¹

Given the ambition of the 2030 Agenda and the urgency of its timeline, the resolution represented a significant shift. The Cooperation Framework now guides the entire programme cycle, driving planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of collective UN support for achieving the 2030 Agenda at the national level.

While the Cooperation Framework is first and foremost a partnership between the UN and the Government, it is a commitment to a broad range of stakeholders, including trade union organizations. Under national leadership and



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¹ [UN development system reform 101 | United to Reform](#)

throughout its entire cycle, it is a vehicle for identifying development solutions through inclusive social dialogue.

The ILO Governing Body welcomed the UN General Assembly resolution and considered the implications it had for the work of the ILO. At its 334th Session (October–November 2018), it mandated the Director-General to take leadership in ensuring tripartism and the specific role of the social partners in implementing the resolution and related interagency coordination mechanisms, including on how to preserve the ILO's tripartite governance structure, normative mandate and programmatic priorities.²

The Cooperation Framework is well into its fifth year of preparation and implementation and the time is opportune to take stock of emerging national good practices in terms of trade union engagement and influence.³ The timely nature of this report is also reflected in the current trend that States across the world are demonstrating – the importance of social dialogue in response measures and recovery efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic, just as national actors are demanding more involvement.

► 2. Methodology for collecting emerging good practices

The report is the outcome of research informed by a variety of sources identified from existing ACTRAV reports, including the following:

- reports of sensitization training workshops at country, regional and global levels
- trade union written reports and verbal narratives of country experiences with the Cooperation Framework and SDG implementation, and records of meetings with Resident Coordinators' Offices and UN Country Teams
- ILO-ACTRAV Director's speeches to ILO senior management and on other platforms
- ILO existing knowledge and information products
- actual experiences of workers' organizations.

The report seeks to draw lessons from and build upon existing work relevant to the implementation of the Cooperation Framework and emerging good practices. It is a first but nevertheless important first step. Further studies should broaden the scope of the countries and good practices covered and the methods of data collection.



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² <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/167/23/PDF/N1816723.pdf?OpenElement>

³ As of July 2022, there were 61 cases of the Cooperation Framework under implementation, with 28 under design while there were 42 legacy cases of the Development Assistance Framework still operational [Home | UNSDG Data Portal \(uninfo.org\)](#).



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► 3. Selection of countries for the collection of emerging good practices

Countries included here cut across the five regions of the world. In addition to their geographical aspect, the existence of one or more of the following institutions and activities at the national level in those countries was among the criteria for their selection:

- active UN development system work on the Common Country Analysis (CCA) /Cooperation Framework
- institutional mechanisms for stakeholder participation, follow up and reporting
- active trade union involvement in the Cooperation Framework process
- development of national development/action plans or socio-economic response frameworks.

► 4. Examples of emerging good practices

This section attempts to present the emerging good practices of trade union engagement in the Cooperation Framework and related SDGs processes thematically and includes elements that capture the innovative initiatives at the national and regional levels. It also narrates associated trade union partnerships that have emerged from the Cooperation Framework's emphasis on strategic and broad partnerships to leverage the UN's comparative strengths.

Emerging good practices include development of trade union position papers; harnessing the role of labour research and training institutes; coalition building with like-minded organizations; direct engagement with Resident Coordinators; role of South-South cooperation; and development of monitoring and progress tracking methodologies.

Each of these good practices is presented in the next few paragraphs along the following schema: What is the emerging good practice and in which country or region has it taken place? How exactly did it happen or is happening? What are the key results and/or process outcomes associated with the emerging good practice and what can we learn from it?

Development of trade union position papers on the Cooperation Framework

Trade unions actively engaging with the Cooperation Framework at the national level are formulating new strategies, including developing evidence-based policy position papers on UNSDCF to provide effective input for and influence the CF processes. The position papers broadly aim at integrating the decent work agenda into the UNSDCF and shape its design and implementation, including monitoring, and reporting efforts. Guidance on the scope and coverage of these policy position papers has been provided by ILO-ACTRAV.⁴ Good practice

examples were noted, for example, in the Philippines, Morocco and the Republic of Moldova.

In the **Philippines**, the position paper, covering the period 2020–23, articulates common positions of trade unions and workers' organizations on issues pertaining to the SDGs. This includes indicators that reflect the perspectives of trade unions and workers' organizations on the implementation of the SDGs. The position paper was jointly developed and submitted by representatives of workers' organizations⁵ to the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Manila, with an explicit request for the incorporation of recommendations into the UN analysis documents, particularly the CCA, the socio-economic response plan and the Cooperation Framework. The trade unions and their allies also requested that trade unions be involved in formulating, implementing and monitoring the Cooperation Framework. Ultimately, the positions paper also served as background material for a trade union communication strategy for future trade union activities related to the SDGs and the Cooperation Framework, and to push forward a labour agenda.

Broadly, the position paper aimed at integrating the decent work agenda into the national 2030 Agenda priorities and at shaping the implementation of the latter, at all levels. Leaders of trade unions in both the private and public sectors, trade union technical persons, and representatives of civil society organizations contributed to developing the content of the paper. Within the context of the 2019 UNSDCF, the trade unions used the paper to engage with the UN Resident Coordinator and with other UN agencies. For the 2023 Cooperation Framework, the position is expected to be updated to include new and emerging issues of concern to workers and their organizations.

In **Morocco**, a position paper was developed by the trade unions for input into the country's CCA formulation in March 2021. It articulated unions' perspectives and priorities in relation to the CCA and made proposals for inclusion in the Cooperation Framework. The position

⁴ https://www.ilo.org/actrav/pubs/WCMS_770037/lang--en/index.htm

⁵ Prepared and submitted by: Alliance of Workers in the Informal Economy/Sector (ALLWIES); Confederation of Independent Unions in the Public Sector (CIU); Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits (ECOWEB); Federation of Free Workers (FFW); Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU); IndustriALL Philippines; National Anti-Poverty Commission Sectoral Council Representatives for the Informal Economy, Women, Youth, and Victims of Disasters and Calamities; National Congress of Unions in the Sugar Industry in the Philippines-Philippine Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Workers Union (NACUSIP-PACIWU); Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO); Sweepstakes Employees Union-Kapisanan ng mga Manggagawa sa GOCCs at GFIs (SEU-KAMAGGFI); Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP); Public Services Labor Independent Confederation (PSLINK); Philippine Independent Public Sector Employees Association (PIPSEA); Women Enablers, Advocates and Volunteers for Empowering and Responsive Solutions (WEAVERS); and Youth for Environmental and Social Justice (YESJ).

paper emphasized the important role of social dialogue and collective bargaining as one of the decent work components and good governance systems that needed to be reflected in the CCA and Cooperation Framework for Morocco. It called for a new social contract through a tripartite social dialogue that would rest on a sustainable economic, social and environmental model and advance new job opportunities, fair wages, expansion of the scope of social protection and promotion of trade union freedom and democratic practice. The position paper made specific suggestions for the restructuring of the Moroccan labour market to enable the creation of decent work and sustainable economic growth.

In the **Republic of Moldova**, with the assistance of the ILO, the unions developed a set of priorities and a way forward on the SDGs/Agenda 2030, including on the strengthening of the national social dialogue processes. The set of priorities formed the basis of engagement with the Government, focusing on sustainable employment creation, including jobs for youth, and the importance of upholding workers' rights. As a result, the country's trade unions were included in the monitoring of the SDGs and placed "on the radar" in the wider UN interaction with civil society for achieving the SDGs.

Harnessing the role of labour research and training institutes

The engagement with the Cooperation Framework has also spurred trade union action towards harnessing the role of labour research institutes and related labour-friendly academics in the production of background research to support the work of the trade unions on SDGs and the Cooperation Framework. The background research aims to ensure that CCAs and the Cooperation Framework are well informed by the best available research evidence, particularly in relation to decent work. This is characterized by systematic analysis and informed evidence generation to support trade union inputs and engagement processes in the Cooperation Framework. Examples of emerging good practice can be seen in Namibia, Trinidad and Tobago and Zimbabwe.

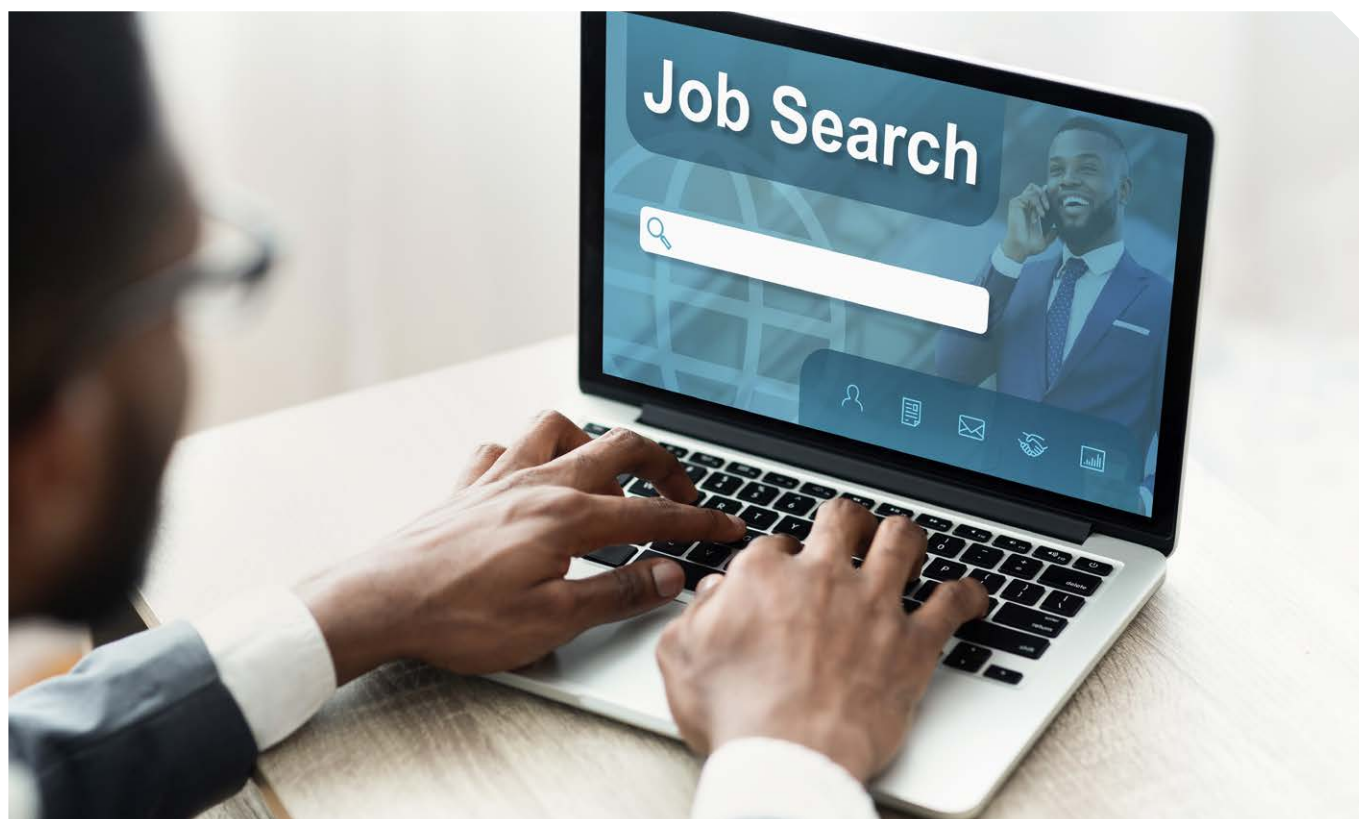
In **Zimbabwe**, the Labour and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe (LEDRI) which has strong ties with the national trade union movement and is a trusted partner of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), has provided research services since 2017 to support the work of trade unions on CCAs and the UNSDCF and related SDGs/Agenda 2030 processes.

The involvement of the ZCTU and LEDRI in the SDG process started with the drawing up of a first trade union SDG country report in 2017. Since then, its initiatives on the SDGs have grown and gained greater visibility thanks to their engagement at national level, and in regional and global UN forums on the SDGs. Through their engagement anchored on reliable evidence, ZCTU has been included in the Government's multi-stakeholder forum on SDGs and has been consulted in the preparation of the national development strategy 2021–25 during which ZCTU introduced a goal on decent work and their own priorities.

Overall, the work that the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has accomplished on the UNSDCF and SDGs/Agenda 2030 underscores the importance of harnessing the role of labour research and training institutes in supporting trade union engagement in the UNSDCF.

In **Trinidad and Tobago**, Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies, which has strong ties with the trade union movement in the country and is a trusted partner for all the three federations, provided the background research to support the work of trade unions on the UNSDCF in 2021.





In **Namibia**, the Labour Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI), a trade-union-linked research institute, has been reinforcing the efforts of trade unions through evidenced-based advocacy since 1998. It supported the trade unions with the development of a trade union alternative SDG progress report, as the Government volunteered to report at the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2018 and 2021. These efforts contributed to the recognition of the trade unions as actors and partners in development through invitations to participate in various forums related to SDG progress reporting and tracking, especially as far as SDG 8 is concerned.

With regard to UN cooperation in Namibia, trade unions have since held several discussions with the UN Resident Coordinator on various aspects, have been invited to and participated in the UN Country Team retreats, and joined the SDG financing committee for the implementation of the SDGs. The trade unions also now have access to resources provided by other UN agencies in Namibia, notably through working with the United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF) to address challenges related to education. Moreover, the Trade Union Congress of Namibia has begun to encourage the tripartite labour advisory council to consider the sustainable agenda and UN cooperation and its linkages to employment creation, decent work and trade unions rights as part of the council agenda.

Overall, the depth of analysis expected of a CCA and the robustness of engagement in formulating the content of the Cooperation Framework mean that workers' organizations need to seek additional and often external capacity reinforcement. Some trade unions are increasingly embracing the benefits derived from working with research institutes and academics sympathetic to their course.⁶ They recognize that operating like this enables more informed trade union engagement, respect and appreciation for their policy positions and ultimately contributes to wider acceptance by other UN agencies and ultimately improved outcomes for workers.

⁶ According to the [UNSDG | Consolidated Annexes to the Cooperation Framework Guidance](#), the following types of analyses should be included in a typical CCA: social development and exclusion analysis; economic transformation analysis; environmental and climate change analysis and progress on global SDG commitments; governance and political analysis; multidimensional and SDG risk analysis; prevention and human development-peace linkages; financial landscape analysis, and stakeholder analysis. Technical capacities may not be readily available within the trade unions to perform this expected level of analysis. Hence, the merit in harnessing the expertise of labour-friendly organizations.

Coalition building with like-minded organizations

Trade union engagement in the Cooperation Framework is galvanizing collaborative activities and coalition-building with like-minded organizations. A notable good practice was observed in the **Philippines** where trade unions and civil society organizations (CSOs) have formed a coalition to engage effectively in SDG processes at the country and regional levels, including in the Cooperation Framework.⁷ The coalition, called the Asia Pacific Regional CSOs Engagement Mechanisms (APRCM), aims to enable stronger cross-constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all subregions of Asia Pacific are heard in intergovernmental processes at the regional and global levels. The platform is initiated, owned and driven by trade unions and CSOs, and seeks to engage with UN agencies and Member States on development-related issues and processes.

This has led to better coordination between trade unions and civil society organizations on the SDGs and Cooperation Framework. It has also contributed to more collaboration between national, regional and international actors on Agenda 2030. It has also enabled well informed participation of trade unions at high-level political forums related to the SDGs, such as the Asia Sustainable Development Forum. As recognition for their efforts, trade union delegations from the Asia-Pacific region are also often included as part of the delegation of the International Trade Union Confederation to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Fundamentally, it highlights trade unions' willingness to work together better as well as with other CSOs in their quest for decent work, democracy, equality, and social and environmental justice. This also demonstrates that trade unions and workers' organizations have welcomed the UN system reform process, which opens avenues and opportunities for cooperation between social partners and the UN in implementing the UNSDCF and 2030 Agenda.

Today's challenges for sustainable development are monumental and intertwined. Unity, solidarity, alliance building, networking with like-minded organizations and unity of action alliances must exist around a strong and clear common agenda and cause such as Agenda 2030, and the Cooperation Framework. This is necessary if trade unions are to lead the demands for change for better conditions for the majority, the poor, workers and

people who are being affected by social and economic injustices. As noted by Tracey et al. (2021), "The most effective campaigns are those that offer solutions, rather than "asserting principles, without dealing with concrete realities".⁸ Effective trade union engagement and influence in UNSDCF necessitates a thorough grasp of the challenges from various perspectives and technical capabilities to provide concrete solutions. It also requires a coordinated effort and trade unions are acting on present possibilities to lead in alliance building.

Direct engagement with Resident Coordinators

With the help of the ILO, trade unions have also engaged with the UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) to ensure their inclusion in the Cooperation Framework at the national level. The engagement with RCs is aimed at creating a common understanding that trade unions need to play a central role in the negotiation and follow-up mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda, and particularly the development and implementation of the Cooperation Framework. Also, that as the representative voice of workers and as the real actors in the economy, they bring irreplaceable expertise and drive to achieve clear and tangible progress and that they must be fully recognized and involved in developing and implementing the Cooperation Framework to make the UN's work in the country a complete success. Emerging good practice examples can be seen in Armenia, Bangladesh, Namibia, Somalia and Ukraine.



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⁷ Based on Webinar presentation by Julius H. Cainglet Vice President for Research, Advocacy and Partnerships, Federation of Free Workers (FFW) [insert date of presentation and detail of event].

⁸ https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/565/original/A-Just-Transition-for-the-Global-South_full-report.pdf?1652356969

Armenia

The Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia (CTUA) was initially not a member of the National SDG Council. However, with the support of the ILO, the trade unions, together with the Employers' Association of Armenia, submitted a joint letter to the RC informing of their willingness to cooperate and support SDG processes together as ILO constituents at the national level. The trade unions were then appointed to the National SDG Council through a Prime Minister's Decree. The CTUA successfully competed with various non-governmental organizations for a seat in one of the seven thematic areas, "Labour, employment, and poverty eradication". The selection process took place through collaboration between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Office of the Resident Coordinator. With this representation, the trade union positions were integrated in the Armenia Transformation Strategy and in the Cooperation Framework.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, based on the formal request of trade unions, the ILO (on behalf of the United Nations) organized an exclusive meeting with national as well as sectoral trade unions to which the RC was invited. The RC participated in the meeting and discussed the socio-economic response plan process on immediate responses to the COVID-19 impact. She attended the entire meeting and carefully listened to the voices and concerns of trade unions. She also expressed the importance of trade union engagement in achieving the SDG goals in Bangladesh, in particular SDG 8. Another exclusive meeting was organized with the trade unions on the formulation of the Cooperation Framework. UN agencies presented a draft Cooperation Framework to

the trade union representatives and exchanged views before finalizing it.⁹

Namibia

Direct engagement with the RC ahead of trade union engagement in the UNSDCF also took place in Namibia. The Trade Union Congress of Namibia (TUCNA) was engaged in and took part in a meeting organized by the ILO between trade unions and the RC and representatives of UN agencies. TUCNA was subsequently engaged in the UN Country Framework process.

Somalia

In Somalia,¹⁰ trade unions had direct engagement with the RC and subsequently participated in the drawing up of the Cooperation Framework. Trade unions were actively engaged in the discussion groups and progress was made in linking governance to labour rights and to strengthening social dialogue. Consequently, the current Cooperation Framework for Somalia integrates decent work, labour rights and social dialogue. Besides, engagement with the RC helped trade unions to start a discussion with other UN agencies.

Ukraine

In Ukraine, trade union engagement with the RC had the following immediate follow-up actions. Social partners were invited to the new Cooperation Framework consultations, along with civil society. The social dialogue platform was explored to advance the SDG agenda, and the RC sent a letter to the President of the country to welcome the renewal and underline the importance of the Tripartite Council.



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⁹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_844143.pdf

¹⁰ ILO ACRAV Communication, 2021

Development of SDG progress monitoring and tracking methodologies

At the country level, the 2030 Agenda states that national States have an important role to play and urges them to “conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven”. In this regard, the Voluntary National Reviews have been a crucial component of monitoring the implementation of the goals and targets set by the Agenda.

Within this context, there is emerging good practice of trade union development of monitoring and progress-tracking methodologies in relation to SDG progress review. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN) has developed SDG progress monitoring methodologies and tools and has been mobilizing national trade union organizations affiliated to the ITUC, ITUC regional organizations – TUCA, ITUC-Africa and ITUC-Asia Pacific – global union federations, the European Trade Union Confederation and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD to actively engage in Voluntary National Reviews.

The TUDCN has contributed to capacity-building among national trade union bodies to advocate with national governments to promote decent work and social dialogue, and to monitor and present trade union reports monitoring compliance with the 2030 Agenda. Thus, the Voluntary National Reviews have been a key opportunity for advocacy, both because they have been used to report progress, setbacks, or stagnation in relation to the SDGs, and because the absence of such reviews and spaces for dialogue in some jurisdictions has been denounced in international forums (regional or global), creating situations of public tension for national authorities before their peers. The ITUC, through the highest level of leadership, has prioritized Agenda 2030 and succeeded in ensuring that the position of trade unions is integrated in the apex policy frameworks and platforms.

South-South cooperation initiative between trade unions in small island States in Asia-Pacific and the Caribbean

Asia-Pacific and Caribbean island States are both involved in developing regional level cooperation frameworks that are operationalized at the country level through Country Implementation Plans (CIPs). Taking into account development trends beyond national boundaries, these frameworks contribute to regional, subregional and cross-border strategies and partnerships. This regional approach to developing cooperation frameworks also provides opportunities for South-South cooperation between trade unions involved in Cooperation Framework and SDG processes in these regions.

In this regard, there is an emerging good practice of exchanging experiences and lessons learned on trade union engagement through South-South initiatives. The subregional and interregional exchanges aim to strengthen trade union capacities for effective engagement in the Cooperation Framework.

To support these efforts, two subregional studies – separately in the Caribbean and Asia-Pacific – were conducted in the period from January to August 2023 to document emerging good practices of trade union engagement in the Cooperation Framework and SDG processes. They were carried out by ILO-ACTRAV in collaboration with the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Unit of the ILO'S Department of Partnerships and Development Cooperation.

While there are several ongoing initiatives within and between the two subregions, the South-South cooperation mechanism offers a unique means to extend cooperation among worker's organizations that would not otherwise be in contact. The exchange of experiences has the potential to showcase the lasting benefit and value of social dialogue to institution-building and policymaking, and provides opportunities for trade unions to engage, learn from and influence the design and implementation of smarter solutions to achieve sustainable results – with the aim of embedding decent work priorities and promoting inclusive sustainable growth in national development plans and strategies and contributing to building stronger, more sustainable, democratic and equal societies.



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Mutual learning and exchange through South-South cooperation has an important role to play in advancing the SDGs generally and in strengthening trade union capacities specifically. South-South cooperation has proven to be consistently valuable for sharing successful practices and experiences. It can, for instance, serve as a platform for trade unions to discuss challenges, best practices and lessons learned in relation to driving meaningful contributions towards achieving the SDGs. And through collaboration beyond specific regions, South-South cooperation can provide trade unions with an opportunity to contextualize their local efforts and develop a better understanding of how their work fits into the global picture.

The ILO supports South-South cooperation by working with governments, workers and employers to identify, document and disseminate good practices, facilitate exchanges and peer-to-peer learning approaches, promote knowledge-sharing, and broker agreements and memoranda of understanding.

The ILO was the first UN agency with a dedicated strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation – in the form of the Governing Body-endorsed “South-South and triangular cooperation: The way forward” in 2012.¹¹ During the 2018 International Labour Conference discussion, it was requested that the ILO step up its South-South cooperation.

¹¹ GB.313/POL/7, para. 11.

► 5. Key lessons

The emerging good practices of trade union engagement in the Cooperation Framework reflect activities and mechanisms at the national level that can be used to draw lessons that may offer useful guidance to countries across the world that are seeking to create their own success stories stemming from trade union engagement in the Cooperation Framework and Agenda 2030.

1. Defining clearly articulated priorities ahead of engagement is critical for trade union effectiveness in the Cooperation Framework

The articulation of trade union priorities in a position paper, for instance, has been essential in integrating decent work priorities on which trade union inputs have been anchored. It has also facilitated institutional commitment and systematic follow-up. Despite CCA/Cooperation Framework processes not being clear enough in some instances, drawing up clearly articulated position papers has provided trade unions with an edge in advancing the labour agenda.

The breadth and depth of the recommendations made and follow-up actions, for instance in Morocco, the Philippines and the Republic of Moldova, altogether attest to this as a key learning point. In all three cases, trade unions clearly articulated common positions presented a unified front and identified various ways to ensure the integration of the priorities and recommendations made in the CCA and Cooperation Framework. This offers a good learning point that can usefully be replicated and scaled-up elsewhere.

2. Generating a portfolio of evidence for informed policy input helps the trade unions engage more effectively

Where this was done, notable results were obtained. It has been associated with the practice of harnessing the role of labour research and training institutes as well as the role of academia in supporting trade union engagement with the Cooperation Framework process. The role of LEDRIZ in technical backstopping of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), and LaRRI in Namibia in the Cooperation Framework/Agenda 2030 is a case in point.

Fundamentally, the generation of a portfolio of evidence for informed policy input in countries where trade unions could benefit from such technical support can bring about greater and effective trade union engagement nationally. In general, the CCA and Cooperation Framework provide an opportunity for trade unions and other stakeholders to: (a) advocate more forcefully and strategically on issues of common interest; (b) engage in social dialogue for policymaking on decent work issues that may otherwise be of less interest to others; (c) facilitate a platform for discussions between State entities and civil society actors on labour rights and the need for a new social contract; and (d) showcase the links between the ILO labour and human rights recommendations and the 2030 sustainable development agenda.

However, to be more effective and influential, trade unions' involvement and inputs in social dialogue for policymaking will need to be based on concrete analysis, focus and clear targeting of key issues pertinent to workers' organizations.

3. Ensuring unity within trade unions and collaboration with other key stakeholders is key to influencing the national process and outcomes of the Cooperation Framework

Evidently, as key stakeholders expected to complement government and employers' efforts in designing and implementing the Cooperation Framework, trade unions have had to act to present a unified front as well as build coalitions with like-minded organization. This provides a major learning point as the collaboration has contributed to an overall increase in trade union involvement in social dialogue for policymaking and implementation, while raising awareness of the Cooperation Framework and related Agenda 2030 processes. Such unity of purpose and collaboration can lead to increased trade union influence and sustainable development results.

The creation of coalitions with like-minded organizations, as seen in the case of the Philippines, has brought perceptible change to the nature of trade union-civil society collaboration on SDGs/Cooperation Framework. It has also led to an increase in timely advocacy with the international development community in various countries, the media and government, and independent institutions.



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4. ILO regional and country offices playing an active role in ensuring that the RCs and Country Teams understand the ILO's normative mandate and operations¹²

As seen from the good practice examples of direct union engagement with the RCs contained in the current report, RCs can play a key role to coalesce social partnership at the national level towards a common engagement with the Cooperation Framework. Such a unifying role comes about through regular consultation and collaboration with social partners into ensuring compliance with the Framework principles before, during and towards the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases.

5. Ensuring that trade unions can build capacities for progressive learning, through development and adaptation of monitoring and tracking methodologies of policy influence and impacts

A useful starting point and the emerging good practice of involvement in Voluntary National Reviews has considerably helped to illuminate the monitoring and implementation practices.

6. Mutual learning and exchange through South-South cooperation

This has an important role to play in advancing the SDGs generally and in strengthening trade union capacities specifically. South-South cooperation has proven to be consistently valuable for sharing successful practices and experiences.

¹² The ILO and, in particular, the ACTRAV specialists in the field, have ensured greater involvement of trade unions at national level.

► 6. Conclusions and the way forward

Workers are behind most human endeavour. By our thinking through a lens of emerging good practices of trade union engagement in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, this report has presented us with a varied range of lived experiences and lessons from trade union engagement with the Cooperation Framework to address the world of work challenges – challenges that are increasingly complex and multidimensional.

The report is rooted very strongly in the voices and experiences of those who participated in the Cooperation Framework. It has taken us from the fundamental conviction that the participation of trade unions in the Cooperation Framework is essential to realizing the aspirations of Agenda 2030/SDGs through to the actual specifics of how trade unions could engage better at local levels.

Emerging good practices range from the conceptual to the urgent and practical. The collection of various good practices shows some of what is working well in relation to trade union engagement in the Cooperation Framework and Agenda 2030 processes. This does not mean that even a fraction of the ground has been covered.

This report might be seen as a first of many steps ahead. We hope that the report will encourage supporting trade unions to engage and influence social dialogue mechanisms for policymaking, building solidarity for and around workers in this difficult time of great uncertainties but also of new opportunities.

Anchored on the basic tenet of Agenda 2030 of “leaving no one behind”, we hope the examples cited, the challenges reflected and the opportunities implied might encourage a cross spectrum of policymakers at all levels to open the space for trade unions to represent workers effectively and influence the decisions that affects the lives of workers and their families.

Thus, Agenda 2030 and the Cooperation Framework offer a rallying point through which trade unions can bring together the many voices that need to be heard and represented to demand social, economic and environmental justice. The report may also open the way to more systematic, in-depth analytical research on the effectiveness of trade union engagement in the Cooperation Framework and development policy processes and practice in general.

The overall conclusions of this report demonstrate the multiple benefits of engaging at the national level with the Cooperation Framework. And it is now evident that good practices of such trade union engagement are becoming increasingly prevalent across the world.

For us at the ILO, this is not yet the beginning or the end, but just the start of an important process to continue building on this work with the view to obtaining a more comprehensive sense of the success of trade union engagement in the Cooperation Framework, including the influence and impact of trade union engagement in national development generally, and more specifically in employment and decent work outcomes.

From a methodological perspective, ILO-ACTRAV intends to work with other departments within the Office to venture beyond the good practices established in this study to conduct in-depth primary, on-site research that further demonstrates how the ILO constituents and, more generally, member countries are strengthening institutional capacities to influence the policy design, implementation and review of development frameworks. Such work must also include the impact of the ILO normative frameworks in the processes and contents of global, regional and national policies generally. The ultimate success of Agenda 2030/SDGs and the Cooperation Framework must be seen in the positive and tangible improvement of the working and living conditions of people and workers and of their organizations on the ground.



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Contact details

International Labour Organization
Route des Morillons 4
CH-1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland

T: +41 22 799 7239
E: actrav@ilo.org

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