Trade union revitalization: Experiences and key lessons from Southern Africa
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Abbreviations

AEIMO  Associação da Economia Informal de Moçambique (Informal Economy Association of Mozambique)
AGOA  African Growth Opportunity Act
ICT   information and communication technology
ILO ACTRAV  ILO Bureau for Workers’ Activities
IUF   International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Associations
LEDIZ  Labour and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe
MACOHA  Malawi Council for the Handicapped
MCTU  Malawi Congress of Trade Unions
OTM-CS  Organização dos Trabalhadores de Moçambique – Central Sindical (Mozambique Workers’ Organization – Central Union)
SATUCC  Southern Africa Trade Union Coordination Council
SINTIA  Sindicato Nacional dos Trabalhadores da Indústria do Açúcar, Álcool e Afins (National Union of Workers in Sugar, Alcohol and Related Industries)
SINTELMO  Sindicato Nacional das Telecomunicações de Moçambique (National Telecommunications Union of Mozambique)
ZCIEA  Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Association
TEVETA  Technical Entrepreneurship and Vocational Education Training Authority (Zambia)
ZaCTU  Zambia Congress of Trade Unions
ZDAMWU  Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Workers Union
ZICTU  Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZILARD  Zambia Institute for Labour Research and Development
Executive summary

Within the framework of the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) Bureau for Workers’ Activities (ACTRAV) programme on “Trade Unions in Transformation - Actors for Change”, a number of studies have been commissioned to look at innovative practices and positive experiences of trade union revitalization in various regions around the world. This paper focuses on good practices related to trade union revitalization in the Southern Africa region. To this end, a number of good practices in trade unions within different economic sectors, ranging from tourism to education to agriculture, are examined in four case study countries: Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. The research looks at positive and innovative practices, with the aim of identifying lessons learned. The study highlights a number of positive experiences in the areas of:

- organizing and servicing vulnerable groups of workers;
- good governance;
- innovative collaborations and coalitions; and
- digital unionism.

Trade unions in the region have shown some success in organizing groups of workers that traditionally have been difficult to organize, such as workers in the informal economy or migrant workers. The paper also showcases good practices in the area of good governance, such as by strengthening sustainability, and in the area of non-discrimination, where trade unions have put in place mechanisms to make sure that the voices of youth, women and/or workers with disabilities are reflected in the union’s decision-making. Trade unions have also engaged in enhanced trade union collaboration across borders, including on a number of themes that have become increasingly relevant, for instance, by enhancing coordination on industrial policies at the subregional level. Finally, the paper shows that trade unions in the region have explored the use of social and digital media platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic to reach out to their membership and to campaign.

Notwithstanding these positive experiences, the paper also addresses important challenges on each of these dimensions that hamper trade union revitalization. As an illustrative example, trade unions increasingly recognize the massive impacts of digitalization on labour markets, on jobs and on the trade unions themselves. But there is an overall lack of long-term strategic planning on these topics, for instance, to address broader challenges such as structural transformation, the use of artificial intelligence, and data rights. In addition, digital unionism – including the use of digital membership databases, the use of e-voting during congresses, the organizing of workers in the digital economy (such as platform workers), or the provision of online services to members – is still relatively immature in the region.

So far, trade unions only limitedly use targeted measures, such as tailor-made organizing strategies or services, in order to address specific groups of workers, such as workers in the informal economy, workers with disabilities or migrant workers.
Based on the findings of the case studies, the paper suggests a number of concrete recommendations regarding lessons learned and the way forward:

- Trade unions should put transformation and revitalization high on their agendas. Through internal evaluations, strategic thinking or foresight, trade unions can reflect and act upon key challenges and opportunities they are faced with today and will face in the years to come.

- Trade unions should put resources and new thinking towards making themselves more attractive to underrepresented groups of workers. This may entail the introduction of special membership programmes with reduced dues and special benefits or tailor-made services, such as targeting youth.

- It is key that emerging, vulnerable and underrepresented groups of workers increasingly drive the trade union agenda of the future, and that their voices are reflected in the organizational and decision-making structures of trade unions.

- Trade unions need to advocate for – and actively participate in – strong and inclusive mechanisms of social dialogue at the sectoral, national and regional levels on the topics of today and tomorrow (such as the informalization of work, digital transformation, just transition, and so on).

- The COVID-19 pandemic has made it more apparent that trade unions need to embrace digital technologies as an integral component of trade union revitalization. However, important challenges still exist, such as developing broader strategies on the topic of digital change and incorporating these strategies into social dialogue and collective bargaining.

- Redesign worker education and training so that it is compatible with the needs of the next generation of workers, for example, by ensuring that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) bodies address the skills needs of industry 4.0 and/or the green and blue economy; by assuring the right to lifelong learning throughout the professional life; and by embracing online learning where practicable.

- Even within the current context of financial constraints, trade unions should find creative solutions to build the research and analytical capacities needed to generate and participate in innovative solutions to emerging labour questions.

- Strengthen the development of a broad trade union agenda on the main drivers of change and key issues for the future of work, such as trade and industrialization or sustainable development.

- Trade unions should invest in building broad coalitions with other trade unions, regional organizations, academics and civil society organizations.
1. Introduction

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, high levels of unemployment and persistent working poverty amid a disconnect between economic growth and decent work were already major obstacles to Southern Africa’s economic and social development. The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated many of these challenges, with some groups of vulnerable workers (such as frontline workers, tourism workers, women, youth, informal economy workers and so on) being particularly hard hit.

These important challenges in Southern African economies and societies have further aggravated existing challenges for trade unions by placing pressure on trade union membership, complicating the organizing of workers in the informal economy, and hindering trade unions’ capacity to defend, protect and advance the interests of all workers (ILO 2021a). In the wake of the pandemic, trade unions are now compelled to take stock of the risks and opportunities brought about by COVID-19 and to consider possible scenarios for progressive change.

In response to these challenges, many trade unions in the region have been taking action with varying levels of success. The focus of this paper is to highlight positive and innovative practices of trade union revitalization in Southern Africa, with a particular emphasis on:

- organizing and representing underrepresented groups of workers;
- strengthening good governance;
- exploring new collaborations and coalitions; and
- advancements in the area of digital unionism.¹

¹ This research is a qualitative study that involved two methods of data collection, namely, interviews and document analysis. A total of 19 semi-structured interviews with trade union leaders were conducted in four countries in Southern Africa: Malawi (5 interviews), Zambia (5 interviews), Mozambique (5 interviews) and Zimbabwe (4 interviews). Interviews were conducted from 1st to 7th December 2021.
2. State-of-play: The role of trade unions in Southern Africa

The COVID-19 pandemic has had catastrophic impacts on labour markets in Southern Africa, which has further contributed to increased vulnerability of workers, especially young workers, women, migrant workers, informal economy workers and workers with disabilities, among others (ILO 2021b). Africa has the youngest population in the world, and in Southern Africa, youth are three times as likely as adults to be un- or underemployed, with significant risk of being pushed into poverty. Often vulnerability adds up through multiple dimensions, for instance, where a worker is not only young, but also female and migrant, and thereby facing multiple discriminations in the labour market.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put economic integration front and centre, for instance, the integration of global value chains and accordingly their vulnerability to external shocks. Industrialization and integration in global markets can be an important engine for economic growth and development in Southern Africa, for instance, by triggering the creation of job opportunities at higher skill levels. However, this is not a given, and industrial policies are essential to make sure that trade and investment integration go hand-in-hand with decent work opportunities and respect for labour rights.

Digital technologies, such as robotics, artificial intelligence and data-based economies, are transforming economies and the nature of work across all regions of the world, including Southern Africa (Choi, Dutz and Usman 2020). While the adoption of digital technologies holds the potential to generate new job opportunities for workers at all skill levels, it also has led to the erosion of the employment relationship and created new forms of work that do not always afford adequate labour protection (Mwamadzingo, Kisonzo, and Chakanya 2021). These developments also threaten the traditional model of industrial relations, and are therefore a particular challenge for trade unions. Against this backdrop, the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work has recognized the importance of harnessing and managing digital technology for decent work (ILO 2019a).

Consequently, trade unions have been under pressure to defend workers’ rights in a complex environment of massive employment losses and increased inactivity among workers. Furthermore, since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, there has also been a drastic cut of financial means for trade unions in Southern Africa, both in terms of membership subscriptions and funds from international cooperating partners (EQUINET, TARSC, and SATUCC 2021). In addition, trade union offices remained closed, prompting trade unions to connect with their membership as well as other stakeholders through the use of online platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. Despite positive experiences in this regard, there are still important challenges in terms of affordability and connectivity.

It is in this context of aggravated decent work deficits that workers' organizations are, on the one hand, being pushed to respond to a number of emerging challenges (such as job and income loss; occupational safety and health risks; whole sectors, such as tourism or retail, that are under pressure; and so on). While on the other hand, trade unions are under increased pressure to advance a revitalization agenda aimed at:

- organizing emerging groups of workers (such as gig economy workers, workers in the informal economy, young workers);
- providing innovative services (such as online legal support);
- entering into broad thematic coalitions (for example, at the regional level); and
- addressing governance issues.
Many trade unions in Southern Africa are characterized by ageing and dwindling membership, male domination, limited resources, lack of expertise and challenges with regard to internal trade union democracy. While some trade unions in Southern Africa have made strides in incorporating, for instance, young workers in trade union structures, leadership and decision-making structures, critical challenges still remain. Some trade unions in Southern Africa do not have youth policies and/or youth structures, and where they exist, these may act as cosmetic devices lacking appropriate level of autonomy, regulatory capacity and resources (Southern Africa Trade Union Coordination Council 2018). Furthermore, young workers are often working in the informal economy. As long as trade unions do not begin to assertively organize young workers in informal economy sectors such as agriculture, information and communication technology (ICT), retail, textiles or the platform economy, youth participation in trade unions – particularly in decision-making processes – will remain low. To attract young workers into trade unions, trade unions should grapple with those topics that speak to the reality of younger workers, starting with fundamental questions of socio-economic transformation (Shindondola-Mote 2019). In this regard, structural transformation is required to generate a sufficient number of decent jobs, to equip young people with the skills required for those jobs, and to ensure that they have access to social protection (ILO 2020a).
3. Trade union revitalization in Southern Africa: Country case studies

This section looks at positive and innovative practices of trade union revitalization in four countries in Southern Africa: Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. For each country, the study looks at good practices of trade union revitalization, with a particular focus on:

- organizing and representation;
- good governance;
- innovative collaborations and coalitions; and
- digital unionism.

Box 2. Trade union services

While the main focus of the country cases in this report is on positive and innovative experiences of trade union revitalization, it is important to stress that critical challenges remain in terms of the services provided by trade unions. Trade unions in the four countries continue to focus predominantly on traditional trade union services such as education and training on unionism, negotiation, collective bargaining and representation for members, and these services are typically targeted at workers in formal employment relationships.

However, as will be demonstrated below, in a few instances, these services – such as education and trainings – have been tailor-made to target specific audiences, such as youth and women. It is also worthy noting from the country case studies that some trade unions have taken significant steps towards introducing new innovative services that are attracting workers to become trade union members.

3.1. Malawi

In Malawi, four officials representing four trade unions unions were interviewed for the study. These trade unions are the:

- Communications Workers Union of Malawi;
- Hotels Food Processing and Catering Services Union;
- Private Schools and Employees Union of Malawi; and
- Textiles, Garments, Leather and Security Services Union.

These four trade unions exclusive organize formally employed workers. A representative of the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU), the federation to which the four above-mentioned trade unions are affiliated, was also interviewed.
Malawi showcases positive examples of trade union revitalization in terms of:

- organizing amid COVID-19;
- organizing and servicing youth, women, workers in the informal economy and workers with disabilities, including through trade union specialized bodies;
- inclusive collective negotiations;
- the use of digital technologies; and
- the development of trade union revitalization strategies.

### 3.1.1. Organizing amid the COVID-19 pandemic

Generally, trade unions in Malawi have the potential to organize workers – including workers in the informal economy – during a time of crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, during the pandemic, the Communications Workers Union of Malawi established new trade union branches.

However, as the revenue derived from membership is low, trade unions in Malawi largely depend on external financial support. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, both revenue from trade union membership and external financial support from development partners have been under pressure. This has negatively impacted trade unions’ efforts to organize amid COVID-19. For instance in the tourism sector, in which the Hotels Food Processing and Catering Services Union organizes, there have been massive retrenchments and shut downs due to the pandemic.

> “COVID-19 has hit us bad as a union because almost 70 per cent of our membership are from hotels, lodges or holiday resorts, and with lockdowns in our country as well as other countries that means hotels are not operating as they used to and some have put their employees on half pay and others even have shut down completely. As such, we have lost [a] huge chunk of our membership and source of revenue”
> (Interview respondent, Hotels Food Processing and Catering Services Union).

Furthermore, external cooperating partners have reduced or stopped financial support to trade unions in Malawi, as their own countries have also been severely hit by the pandemic. This has negatively affected the financial muscle of Malawi trade unions, reducing their capacity to conduct organizing and recruitment exercises.

Nevertheless, the Private Schools and Employees Union of Malawi reported that amid the COVID-19 pandemic it had managed to increase its membership. This increase was related in large part to the challenges faced by workers in the country’s private schools, as many were retrenched while others were forced to go on unpaid leave as a result of school closures mandated by the State. The Private Schools and Employees Union of Malawi devised strategies to reach out to these private school workers by putting messages on its social platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp that encouraged some workers, including those on retrenchment and unpaid leave to contact the union. Many of them did, and some eventually became members.

> “Despite [the] COVID-19 pandemic, we have still managed to organize over 1,100 new members through one-on-one [meetings] as well as calls and social media platforms”
> (Interview respondent, Private Schools Employees Union of Malawi).
3.1.2. Inclusive trade unions

The members in the four Malawi trade unions covered in this study are predominantly young workers. Table 1 below shows the interview respondents' estimates of youth and women membership in each of the four trade unions.

Table 1. Estimated women and youth membership in interviewed Malawi trade unions (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade union</th>
<th>Youth (%)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications Workers Union of Malawi</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels Food Processing and Catering Services Union</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Schools and Employees Union of Malawi</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textiles, Leather and Security Services Union</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Estimates provided directly by interview respondents from each trade union.

Previously, the Textiles, Leather and Security Services Union had a higher number of young women members. This was at a time when there were many textile companies, which predominantly employed young women. Owing to the expiry of the African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the proliferation of the market for imported second-hand clothes, the number of women formally employed in the textile sector has declined significantly. This has also resulted in a significant reduction in the number of the women and youth members in the Textiles, Leather and Security Services Union.

At the federation level, the MCTU has a youth policy, a gender policy and structures at the national executive committee level for youth and women that serve as platforms for the youth and women to advocate for their respective rights and interests. However, representatives from the four unions and the MCTU indicated that the awareness and advocacy activities being carried out generally target all workers and do not specifically target vulnerable workers such as women, youth, migrants and workers with disabilities. However, the Hotels Food Processing and Catering Services Union did indicate that it was involved in a project funded by a global union federation – the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Associations (IUF) – that aims at organizing women and empowering them with trade union leadership skills. The Textiles, Leather and Security Services Union also established a branch at the Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA) that has about 100 members, more than 80 of whom are persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the MCTU noted that one of its affiliates – the Malawi Union for the Informal Sector – is a trade union that organizes informal economy workers.

The Communications Workers Union of Malawi, the Hotels Food Processing and Catering Services Union and the MCTU have youth and women committees incorporated into their respective constitutions. The chairpersons of the youth and women committees participate in the national executive committees of their respective trade unions. However, these youth and women structures also face challenges in implementing their planned activities due to lack of prioritization and budgeting. The Private Schools and Employees Union of Malawi and the Textiles, Leather and Security Services Union are in the process of reviewing their respective constitutions to better accommodate existing structures for youth workers. However, none of the four trade unions interviewed have programmes specifically aimed at empowering youth or women workers to take up leadership positions (although such a programme does exist at the MCTU).

As for other vulnerable categories of workers, such as migrant workers and workers with disabilities, the constitutions of the four trade unions and the MCTU do not make any special reference to them beyond general provisions that prohibit any form of discrimination.
A more inclusive approach has not only been increasingly reflected in internal union organization in Malawi, but also in collective negotiations. For instance, the Hotels Food Processing and Catering Services Union has embarked on negotiations so that working women who have returned after maternity leave be accorded a one hour break in the morning and afternoon for breastfeeding and be provided a conducive environment for breastfeeding.

Relevant and successful collective negotiations also can have a positive impact on membership. For instance, the Private Schools and Employees Union successfully negotiated for employees at private schools to receive their salaries at a time when some employers refused to pay following the closure of schools as a preventive measure imposed by the State against the spread of COVID-19. This effort prompted more private school workers to join the trade union.

3.1.3. Connecting with members through digital technology

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the four trade unions made strides to connect with their membership through the use of virtual meetings and other online platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and their websites. For instance, as mentioned above, through online platforms and a radio programme, the Private Schools and Employees Union of Malawi was able to organize new members and increase its membership amid the COVID-19 pandemic:

“In March 2020 schools were closed for over five months in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. We could not meet our members; we could not collect subscriptions, as most of the teachers were not paid. So we came up with the communication strategy via digital technologies like our Facebook page with so many updates, and WhatsApp groups where messages could easily reach members and ask them to pass the information to potential members”

(Interview respondent, Private Schools Employees Union of Malawi).

Furthermore, the MCTU is running a project to develop the capacity of affiliates in organizing and keeping records electronically. However, high costs for mobile data, poor connectivity and financial constraints to maintaining the hosting of websites have been some of the challenges that the trade unions face in their efforts to embrace digital technologies.

3.1.4. Strengthening research and analytical capacity

The respondents concurred that it was critical for trade unions to have their own research departments with a solid knowledge on a large variety of thematic issues. A research department at each affiliate could provide technical assistance to trade unions, including in recruitment and organizing as well as with preparations for collective bargaining negotiations. However, the respondents also indicated that some trade unions had not yet appreciated the significance of having a research department in their structures. Hence, trade unions depend on the MCTU’s research department, which is inadequately resourced to adequately service all of the federation’s member trade unions. Among the four trade unions under study, only the Private Schools and Employees Union of Malawi reported having a research department.
3.1.5. Strategy on trade union revitalization

In 2020, the MCTU conducted an internal evaluation that identified a number of critical challenges that contribute to sustainability risks to the federation and to trade unions in Malawi. Against this backdrop, in November 2021, the MCTU embarked on a process to produce a strategy for achieving sustainability. The strategy was validated in March 2022. Among others, the strategy speaks to key aspects of revitalization of the MCTU in its move towards sustainability, such as:

- re-building of trust among workers and society;
- strengthening internal democracy;
- intensification of efforts to organize workers in the informal economy and other vulnerable categories of workers;
- enhancing coordination among unions and merging splinter unions; and
- developing viable means for resource mobilization.

The strategy was finally presented for the consideration by MCTU general council members during their meeting held on 8 April 2022.

Box 4. Summary of good practices from Malawi

From the case study of trade union experiences on revitalization in Malawi, the following good practices can be highlighted:

- The membership of trade unions under study is predominantly young workers.
- The affiliation of the MUFIS to the MCTU has strengthened the representation and active participation of informal economy workers in trade union activities.
- To a certain extent, the four trade unions and the federation (MCTU) are currently using social and electronic media platforms to conduct virtual meetings as well as to reach out to trade union members. The Private Schools and Employees Union of Malawi utilized online platforms to embark on an organizing campaign that led to an increase in membership amid COVID19. The MCTU organized capacity-building on organizing and electronic recordkeeping.
- The example of the Private Schools and Employees Union of Malawi shows that relevant and successful collective negotiations can also have a positive impact on membership.
- The experience of the Hotels Food Processing and Catering Services Union showcases trade unions engaging in relevant and innovative collective negotiations for young mothers.
- The Textiles, Leather and Security Services Union established a branch in which the majority of members are persons with disabilities.
- The MCTU has conducted an internal evaluation identifying important challenges to trade union revitalization.
3.2. Zambia

In Zambia, three officials representing three trade unions were interviewed. These trade unions are the:

- Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia;
- Commercial and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia; and
- Hotels, Catering, Tourism and Allied Workers Union of Zambia.

Two representatives of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZaCTU), the federation to which the three above-mentioned trade unions are affiliated, were also interviewed.

As with Malawi above, the paper here looks at positive examples of trade union revitalization in Zambia in regard to:

- organizing and servicing underrepresented groups of workers, such as workers with disabilities, and making sure that these workers are also represented in internal trade union structures and decision-making;
- the use of digital technologies;
- strengthening the research and analytical capacity of trade unions; and
- skills development and lifelong learning.

Notwithstanding the positive examples that are highlighted in the section below, it is important to underline that the trade union movement in Zambia faces similar challenges as those in other countries in the region, such as: the informalization of work, which too often remains outside the trade union realm, and limited financial resources and technical capacity to tackle a broad number of challenges and drivers of change in the world of work.

3.2.1. Inclusive trade unions

In the Commercial and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia, 70 per cent of the membership are youth and women. The Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia has 60 per cent women members, while the youth membership stands at 41 per cent. Sixty per cent of the membership in the Hotels, Catering and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia consists of young workers. This entails that the membership of trade unions under study predominantly consists of young workers.

The three trade unions have established policies and structures that provide for participation in decision-making as well as grievance mechanisms. Interestingly, all three trade unions acknowledge that youth and women are the driving force for trade union revitalization. Nevertheless, the trade unions find it challenging to financially support activities for youth and women due to budgetary constraints.

The Commercial and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia has youth and gender policies that provide guidance on how to address the special needs of youth and women. The Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia has a gender desk that coordinates the activities of youth and women in the trade union. The Hotels, Catering, Tourism and Allied Workers Union of Zambia has been less active in this space, but it has recently established a gender committee to champion the interests of both youth and women, and through the committee will conduct capacity-building targeting youth and women.
Box 5. Addressing the needs of workers with disabilities

The Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia recently established a department called “Director Special” which is directly responsible for organizing and coordinating interventions targeting members (that is, teachers) with disabilities. The trade union also involves workers with disabilities in the negotiation teams during collective bargaining. The union effectively negotiated for a double transport allowance for the workers with disabilities who use a wheelchair to commute to work and therefore require assistance from another person to move from one place to another (home to work and back). The Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia took further steps to target workers with disabilities to equip them with skills for leadership positions in the trade union at all levels. Furthermore, the Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia has mechanisms to collect and disseminate information to and to consult with workers with disabilities through the use of social media, such as WhatsApp groups.

“Our union has established a department called ‘Director Special’, which is responsible for organizing and coordinating activities targeting our members with disabilities”
(Interview respondent, Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia).

The Commercial and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia is working towards introducing sign language interpretation during some of its activities as part of accommodating persons with disabilities into trade union activities.

The Hotels, Tourism and Allied Workers Union of Zambia and the ZaCTU have programmes targeting women on sexual harassment and violence in the world of work and empowerment in trade union leadership. Specifically, the Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia conducts education programmes in schools to sensitize teachers and students on gender-based violence and sexual harassment at both home and school.

The three trade unions under study have mainstreamed youth and women structures into their respective constitutions. The Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia and Commercial and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia have both youth and gender policies; while the Hotels, Catering, Tourism and Allied Worker Union of Zambia is currently in the process of finalizing the drafting of a youth policy. Commercial and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia also intends to develop a policy for the protection of the rights of migrant workers.

This inclusive trade union approach has also been reflected in collective negotiations. For instance, the Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia has successfully negotiated the inclusion of gender clauses in collective bargaining agreements, such as the right to 10 days of paternity leave and 120 days of maternity leave. Furthermore, the Commercial and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia commenced negotiations for new working conditions that regulate sexual harassment and violence in the world of work, as well as the introduction of recreation facilities at workplaces for young workers.
3.2.2. Strengthening digital technology for organizing and servicing members

The three trade unions and the ZaCTU indicated that, to a certain extent, they are utilizing social media platforms to organize and service union members, such as conducting virtual meetings and utilizing WhatsApp and Facebook to reach out to members. For example, the Hotels Catering, Tourism and Allied Workers of Zambia have formed WhatsApp groups for members, shop stewards and union leadership through which information about the union and labour issues are shared and circulated. The unions also use Facebook to publicize collective bargaining agreements. This attracts potential members to join the union and enables current union members to communicate among themselves. High costs for mobile data and poor connectivity, however, remain challenges for trade unions in Zambia to fully embrace digital technology.

“The challenges that our union faces is the use of digital tools in the day-to-day running of union affairs, and that our members need capacity-building and ICT skills to access information”
(Interview respondent, Commercial and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia).

The Commercial and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia is formulating its ICT strategy to facilitate reskilling and upskilling of its members and to promote lifelong learning in a future world of work that is underpinned by digital technology. The Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia recently introduced a special programme through which the trade union distributes laptops to its members (teachers) with a favourable purchase discount. The members use the laptops to participate in the union’s virtual activities. The trade union also plans to do the same for smart phones: offering discounts to its members and facilitating online connectivity.

Box 6. Skills development and lifelong learning

Trade unions have increasingly recognized the importance of skills development and lifelong learning in order to increase workers’ opportunities for career development as well as their access to decent and sustainable livelihoods. Trade unions increasingly seek to address training issues for broader groups of workers, as they acknowledge that not only their members, but workers in general, are interested in the development, recognition and certification of skills and competencies. This has pushed trade unions to get more actively involved in skills development in workplaces and in seeking to ensure the integration of employees’ rights into training and staff development as well as implementing new modes of formal and informal partnerships with management and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions.

The Commercial and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia recently formed a Skills Advisory Committee whose role is to engage with the Government’s Technical Entrepreneurship and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TEVETA) to design and conduct skills training courses for young trade union members.

The Hotels, Catering, Tourism and Allied Workers Union of Zambia has been engaging with employers to identify the skills training needs of employees, particularly the youth, and engaging with TEVETA so that it will offer the necessary training programmes. The Commercial and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia provides start-up capital to union members with intention to venture into small-scale businesses as well as to provide bursaries to members who are pursuing further studies. The Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia also supports persons with disabilities among its membership with bursaries for further education.
3.2.3. Enhancing research and analytical capacity

Most recently, the ZaCTU founded and launched the Zambia Institute for Labour Research and Development (ZILARD) to provide technical support to affiliates on research and analysis. However, so far, few trade unions have utilized the ZILARD. Furthermore, the majority of trade unions in Zambia experience financial difficulties that hinder them from establishing their own technical department for research and analysis. Individual trade unions in Zambia could consider exploring the mobilization of external financial resources from international development partners in order to strengthen their research initiatives.

Box 7. Summary of good practices from Zambia

From the case study of trade union experiences on revitalization in Zambia, the following good practices can be highlighted:

- The membership of the trade unions under study is predominantly young workers.
- Trade unions have established mechanisms to enhance representation of youth and women in trade union structures.
- Successful experiences exist of incorporating women’s priorities into collective negotiations. For instance, the Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia successfully negotiated for the inclusion of gender clauses in collective bargaining agreements, such as a 10-day paternity leave and a 120-day maternity leave.
- To a certain extent, the three trade unions and the federation (ZaCTU) are currently using social and electronic media platforms to conduct virtual meetings as well as to reach out to trade union members.
- The Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia recently introduced a special programme through which the trade union distributes laptops to members (that is, teachers) at a discount rate to facilitate digital platform connectivity.
- The Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia has had positive experiences in organizing and addressing the needs of workers with disabilities.
- The Commercial and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia has been working towards introducing sign language interpretation as part of accommodating persons with disabilities in trade union activities.
- Trade unions are increasingly engaged on the issue of skills development and lifelong learning. The Commercial and Industrial Workers Union of Zambia and the Hotels, Catering, Tourism and Allied Workers Union of Zambia have engaged the Government through the TEVETA to design and offer training programmes targeting young workers.
3.3. Mozambique

In Mozambique, three officials representing three trade unions were interviewed. These trade unions are the:

- Sindicato Nacional dos Trabalhadores da Indústria do Açúcar, Álcool e Afins (SINTIA, or the National Union of Workers in Sugar, Alcohol and Related Industries);
- Associação da Economia Informal de Moçambique (AEIMO, or the Informal Economy Association of Mozambique); and
- Sindicato Nacional das Telecomunicações de Moçambique (SINTELMO, or the National Telecommunications Union of Mozambique).

One representative of the Organização dos Trabalhadores de Moçambique – Central Sindical (OTM-CS, or the Mozambique Workers’ Organization – Central Union), the federation to which the three above-mentioned trade unions are affiliated, was also interviewed.

This section looks at positive examples of trade union revitalization in Mozambique focusing on:

- organizing workers amid the COVID-19 pandemic;
- organizing vulnerable groups of workers, such as migrant workers or workers in the informal economy;
- adoption of digital technologies; and
- trade unions addressing their research capacity.

3.3.1. Organizing amid the COVID-19 pandemic

Generally, trade unions in Mozambique have had the institutional capacity and potential to organize workers amid COVID-19 pandemic, including workers in atypical forms of work. During the pandemic, some unions continued to organize workers using digital platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook.

Even so, to a certain extent, job losses and business closures, the increasing informalization of work, and the proliferation of atypical forms of work have negatively affected the organizing efforts of the trade unions during COVID-19 pandemic. In the cases of SINTELMO (telecommunications workers) and SINTIA (sugar and alcohol workers), membership has declined in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“When it is not the time for sugar cane cutting in the fields, the company dismisses the seasonal workers and they do not pay their union dues. This negatively affects the levels of membership and union finances”

(Interview respondent, SINTIA).

However, AEIMO – the informal workers’ trade union – has realized an important increase in its membership during COVID-19. This was possible because the trade union, through social dialogue, entered into an agreement with city and town council authorities such that for someone to be allocated a space to trade in the markets, she or he must first be registered with AEIMO. And as more and more people are being pushed into the informal economy due to COVID-related job losses and retrenchments in the formal economy, the more the membership of AEIMO has grown.
3.3.2. Inclusive trade unions

With the exception of AEIMO, the majority of members in the interviewed trade unions are not youth. Table 2 below shows the estimates of youth and women membership in the three trade unions under study.

Table 2. Estimated women and youth membership in interviewed Mozambique trade unions (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade union</th>
<th>Youth (%)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SINTIA</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEIMO</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINTELMO</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n/a = no estimate provided. Source: Estimates provided directly by SINTIA, AEIMO and SINTELMO.

The low membership of women in SINTIA and SINTELMO is a reflection of the situation in most trade unions in Mozambique. Generally, trade union membership for youth and women in Mozambique is low compared to that of older adults and men.

Youth and women members in the three trade unions require capacity-building in trade union leadership, career development and skills development. AEIMO added that youth and women members in the trade union often lack social protection and safe and healthy places to work.

While the OTM-CS has structures in place to represent the voices of youth and women, often these structures are not allocated adequate funds to carry out their planned activities. The OTM-CS also has a youth policy and a five-year strategic plan for youth, which among others, focuses on recruitment of more young people into trade union membership. The three unions and the federation indicated that they do not conduct awareness and advocacy activities specifically targeting vulnerable workers such as women, youth, migrant workers and workers with disabilities.

While the constitutions of SINTIA and SINTELMO are not discriminatory when it comes to organizing underrepresented or vulnerable groups of workers, there are no specific provisions targeting workers in the informal economy, migrant workers or workers with disabilities. In contrast, AEIMO exclusively organizes workers in the informal economy, and all of its activities are directed at servicing these workers. It should be noted, however, that SINTIA has extended its domain of organizing to migrant workers, most of whom come from South Africa.

“It is complicated to organize migrant workers in Mozambique. However, our trade union has an advantage to reach out to migrant workers because, in Mozambique, migrants are already organized in associations according to nationality”

(Interview respondent, AEIMO).

At the federation level, the OTM-CS has recently taken a decision to amend its constitution during the next congress to include specific provisions on the protection of the rights of migrant workers and organizing them into the trade unions. Furthermore, in order to promote the active involvement of migrant workers in social dialogue processes, the OTM-CS has recently introduced a project targeting the active participation of migrant workers in trade union training, social dialogue and collective bargaining at the company and branch levels.
3.3.3. Strengthening the use of digital technology to reach out to members

The three trade unions and the federation under study indicated that, to a certain extent, they are utilizing social media platforms for organizing and servicing union members, such as by conducting virtual meetings and utilizing WhatsApp and Facebook to circulate and share information and updates to the membership. High costs for mobile data and poor connectivity remain challenges for the trade unions in Mozambique to embrace digital technology. AEIMO testified that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic they were already using social media platforms to reach out to the members, but the pandemic has intensified this activity. SINTELMO, which operates in the ICT sector, has made strides to embrace digital technology in its operations in the wake of COVID-19. In the case of SINTIA, however, union officials indicated that its membership is relatively disadvantaged when it comes to embracing digital tools due to the nature of the sector. Most SINTIA members work in factories and cane fields.

SINTELMO, SINTIA and AEIMO have been using Teams and Zoom to meet with workers in order to listen to their concerns and provide guidance on negotiating strategies with employers. In the case of AEIMO, they limit themselves to the use of WhatsApp. However, connectivity remains a major obstacle.

At the OTM-CS Secretariat there are state-of-the-art facilities for virtual meetings. All staff at the OTM-CS are ICT literate. The OTM-CS also has a fully functioning website and Facebook page. Furthermore, all constitutional structures of the OTM-CS have their own WhatsApp groups.

3.3.4. Need to address research and analytical capacity

The OTM-CS and its affiliates do not have research departments/units. In the past, the OTM-CS had a functional research department under a technical cooperation project supported by trade unions in Denmark. Upon the expiry of the project, the department was also closed due to the financial constraints to sustaining it. The OTM-CS is now exploring possibilities of mobilizing financial resources from other cooperating partners to resuscitate the research department.

“Because of the importance of research, in recent years we have fostered partnerships with the various research institutions and academies to support us in this area” (Interview respondent, OTM-CS).

SINTIA has deployed volunteers who serve as research assistants in some of its branches. These volunteers collect data from the branches and submit these to the Secretariat. The Secretariat in turn utilizes the data to prepare documents for collective bargaining and other purposes. This is a measure that the trade union has put in place in the absence of a fully fledged research department at both the affiliate and federation levels.

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2 Available at: www.otm.org.mz.
Box 8. Summary of good practices from Mozambique

From the case study of trade union experiences on revitalization in Mozambique, the following good practices can be highlighted:

- SINTIA extended its domain of organizing to include migrant workers from South Africa.
- AEIMO utilized social dialogue to engage town and city council authorities on a modality that has resulted in a drastic increase in membership among informal economy workers amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
- SINTELMO and OTM-CS have made significant strides to intensify the adoption of digital technologies in trade union operations in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The OTM-CS took a decision to amend its constitution to include specific provisions on protection of the rights of migrant workers and organizing migrant workers into member trade unions.
- In the absence of research departments at both the affiliate and federation level, SINTIA deploys volunteers who serve as research assistants that collect data from the branches.

3.4. Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, three officials representing three trade unions were interviewed. These trade unions are the:

- National Union of the Clothing Industry;
- Zimbabwe Bank Workers Union; and
- Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Workers Union.

A representative of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), the federation to which the three above-mentioned trade unions are affiliated, was also interviewed.

The following section looks at positive examples of trade union revitalization in Zimbabwe in the areas of:

- organizing workers amid the COVID-19 pandemic;
- organizing and servicing underrepresented groups of workers;
- adoption of digital technologies; and
- trade unions addressing their research capacity.
3.4.1. Organizing amid the COVID-19 pandemic

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, most trade unions in Zimbabwe were being denied access to workplaces following the imposition of COVID-19 measures by the State. For most trade unions, virtual means of communicating and organizing members were new and only embraced at a much later stage amid the pandemic – at the time when COVID-19 restrictions were first imposed, trade unions were not prepared. Furthermore, trade unions in Zimbabwe lagged behind digitally, and had to establish programmes to equip themselves with both ICT skills and tools (both software and hardware). Eventually, following an appeal to the State by the ZiCTU, trade unions were allowed to physically access workplaces to conduct various activities, such as organizing and workplace inspections on adherence to COVID-19 protocols. Meanwhile, trade unions are still grappling with alternative ways of organizing amid the pandemic.

3.4.2. Organizing and servicing underrepresented groups of workers

Youth and women constitute about 60 per cent of total membership of the National Union of the Clothing Industry. In the Zimbabwe Bank Workers Union, 47 per cent and 49 per cent of the total membership are youth and women, respectively. More than 80 per cent of the members of the Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Workers Union are males.

At the federation level, deliberate policies have been developed and adopted by the ZiCTU to integrate women, youth, migrant workers and people with disabilities in activities. Furthermore, the ZiCTU, Zimbabwe Bank Workers Union, and Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Mining Workers Union have structures for youth and women, who are also represented on the National Executives of the Zimbabwe Bank Workers Union and Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Workers Union and represented on the ZiCTU General Council. In recent years some graduates from the youth structure of the ZiCTU have come to occupy positions in the top leadership of ZiCTU, such as the former President, the current President and the current Second Vice-President.

The ZiCTU urges each affiliate to develop youth and women policies, as well as to incorporate youth and women structures into their respective constitutions. In this regard, the ZiCTU has developed templates that can be adapted and used by affiliates. There is also a committee within the ZiCTU that was set up to facilitate the development of youth and women policies as well as the establishment of youth and women structures within the affiliates. As of 2021, 11 (of 34) affiliates had youth structures and 30 (of 34) affiliates had women structures.

There is a working committee in the ZiCTU on issues concerning persons with disabilities. Furthermore, a new department has been established at the ZiCTU to deal with the issues of the informal economy workers, youth, women and persons with disabilities. The Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Workers Union has also established a department for women and is in the process of setting up a department for youth; while the Zimbabwe Bank Workers Union has an officer in the union who is directly responsible for women and youth. The National Union of the Clothing Industry is still undergoing constitutional reviews to incorporate youth and women structures.

The three trade unions that were interviewed indicated that they do not conduct awareness and advocacy activities specifically targeting vulnerable workers such as women, migrant workers and workers with disabilities. Accordingly, awareness and advocacy activities being carried out by the three trade unions generally target all workers. However, trade unions in Zimbabwe have the potential to organize these vulnerable or traditionally underrepresented groups of workers. In 2001, the ZiCTU, aiming to bridge the gap between the trade union movement and informal economy workers and to build the capacity of informal workers, brought together a group of 22 informal business associations and established the Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations (ZCIEA). To date, the ZCIEA has managed to recruit a total membership of around 100,000 informal economy workers. The National Union of the Clothing Industry and the Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Mining Workers Union are
currently developing strategies to extend organizing to workers in the informal economy. These include, for instance, the recruitment of artisanal miners by the Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Mining Workers Union, and the National Union of the Clothing Industry is now embarking on organizing tailors in the informal economy.

“The next step for ZDAMWU [Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Workers Union] is to organize artisan miners. We have already started discussions and work in the areas where they are highly concentrated, like Kwekwe and Kadoma. Every mine worker should be represented by ZDAMWU; that is our objective” (Interview respondent, Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Workers Union).

Furthermore, at the ZiCTU Elective Congress held in October 2021, the delegates adopted internal policies on migrant workers and persons with disabilities. As the three trade unions under study are affiliates of the ZiCTU, they are urged to implement the ZiCTU policies on migrant workers and persons with disabilities. The National Union of the Clothing Industry has already embarked on internal processes to align its constitution and activities to the ZiCTU policies, and thus to include women, youth, migrant workers and persons with disabilities into the constitution and to establish trade union structures to represent the voices of these workers in the union’s decision-making.

### 3.4.3. Strengthening trade unions’ capacity to use digital technology

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the three trade unions and the ZiCTU have made strides to connect with their membership through the use of virtual meetings and other online platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp and websites. For instance, the Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Workers Union has now shifted away from physically organizing at the mines towards using video clips circulated on WhatsApp and other social media platforms to inform members and potential members of the services rendered by the union.

High costs for mobile data, poor connectivity and financial constraints to maintain the hosting of websites have been some of the challenges that the trade unions face in efforts to embrace digital technologies.

“Our global union federation assisted us with technological gadgets, and this has assisted us to close the digital gap that we had. Our biggest challenge is now the cost of internet and mobile data. Zimbabwe has one of the most expensive internet data plans in Southern Africa” (Interview respondent, National Union of the Clothing Industry).

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**Box 9. Strengthening the provision of innovative services**

Zimbabwe Bank Workers Union has extended the traditional trade union services it offers to its membership to also facilitate access to solar equipment and technological gadgets at more affordable rates. The services that the National Union of the Clothing Industry, Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Workers Union and ZiCTU are currently providing to their membership remain the traditional trade union services, such as education and training on unionism, negotiation, collective bargaining and representation for members. Furthermore, these services are exclusively targeted at formally employed workers in general.

“To ensure that the union is more attractive to young workers and also speaks to the needs or challenges faced by the members, we have embarked on a project where we are selling smart phones and other ICT gadgets and also supplying solar equipment to members through hire-purchase arrangements” (Interview respondent, Zimbabwe Bank Workers Union).

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3 An example of one of the videos is available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kPvAIa0qo7JnPQ9aIrCCDw_S366VY/view?usp=sharing.
3.4.4. Strengthening the research capacity of trade unions

The majority of trade unions in Zimbabwe experience financial difficulties that hinder them from establishing a technical department for research and analysis. In 2003, the ZiCTU founded and launched the Labour and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe (LEDRIZ) to provide technical support to affiliates on research and analysis. However, the LEDRIZ is too resource constrained to optimally service the trade unions affiliated to the ZiCTU.

Box 10. Summary of good practices from Zimbabwe

From the case study of trade union experiences on revitalization in Zimbabwe, the following good practices can be highlighted:

- The ZiCTU has established and affiliated a trade union that directly organizes informal economy workers called the Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Association (ZCIEA).

- There is a working committee in the ZiCTU on persons with disabilities, as well as a department that is responsible for activities advancing the rights of migrant workers and persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the ZiCTU has adopted policies that the affiliates are supposed to implement at the sectoral level.

- The Zimbabwe Bank Workers Union has extended its services to include provision of solar equipment and technological gadgets at affordable prices.

- The Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Workers Union has embarked on door-to-door organizing targeting the homes of mine workers as an alternative to physical visits to the mines.

- The ZiCTU, Zimbabwe Bank Workers Union, and Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Mining Workers Union have structures for youth and women, who have three representatives that are members of the General Council (for the ZiCTU) and National Executive (for Zimbabwe Bank Workers Union and Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Workers Union).

- At the federation level, recently some youths have graduated from the trade union youth structures to occupy positions in the top leadership of the ZiCTU, including the current President and Second Vice-President.
4. Lessons learned and the way forward

This paper has looked at different good practices related to trade union revitalization in the Southern Africa region and considered the efforts of trade unions in a number of economic sectors, including education, mining, banking, communications, hospitality and agriculture.

The paper finds that trade unions in the region have found some success in organizing groups of workers that traditionally have been difficult to organize and are often only limitedly represented in trade unions, such as workers in the informal economy and migrant workers.

The paper showcases a number of good practices in the area of good governance, for instance by strengthening sustainability, and in the area of non-discrimination, where trade unions have put in place mechanisms to make sure that the voices of youth, women and/or workers with disabilities are reflected in the union’s decision-making.

Trade unions in the case study countries have also engaged in trade union collaboration across borders, including on a number of themes that have become increasingly relevant. This has been achieved, in part, by enhancing coordination on industrial policies at the subregional level, such as through the Southern Africa Trade Union Coordination Council (SATUCC).

The paper also shows that trade unions in the region have explored the use of social and digital media platforms, for instance, to conduct virtual meetings during the COVID-19, pandemic and to reach out to their memberships and to campaign.

However, relatively few efforts have been made by the interviewed trade unions to use tailor-made organizing strategies, union identity and decision-making bodies, or member services to specifically target vulnerable categories of workers, such as workers in the informal economy, workers with disabilities and migrant workers.
Based on the findings of the case studies, the paper suggests a number of concrete recommendations regarding lessons learned and the way forward:

- Trade unions should put transformation and revitalization high on their agendas. Through internal evaluations, strategic thinking or foresight, trade unions can reflect and act upon key challenges and opportunities they are faced with today and will face in the years to come.

- Trade unions should put resources and new thinking towards making themselves more attractive to traditionally underrepresented groups of workers. This may entail the introduction of special membership programmes with reduced dues and special benefits or tailor-made services, such as targeting youth.

- It is key that emerging, vulnerable and underrepresented groups of workers drive the trade union agenda of the future, and that their voices are reflected in the organizational and decision-making structures of trade unions.

- Trade unions need to advocate for – and actively participate in – strong and inclusive mechanisms of social dialogue at the sectoral, national and regional levels on the topics of today and tomorrow (such as the informalization of work, digital transformation, just transition, and so on).

- The COVID-19 pandemic has made it more apparent that trade unions need to embrace digital technologies as an integral component of trade union revitalization. However, important challenges still exist in this field, such as developing broader strategies on the topic of digital change and incorporating these strategies into social dialogue and collective bargaining, developing e-campaigns, and so on.

- Redesign worker education and training so that it is compatible with the needs of the next generation of workers, for example, by ensuring that TVET bodies address the skills needs of industry 4.0 and/or the green and blue economy; by assuring the right to lifelong learning throughout a person’s professional life; and by embracing online learning where practicable.

- Even within the current context of financial constraints, trade unions should find creative solutions to build the research and analytical capacities needed to generate and participate in innovative solutions to emerging labour questions.

- Strengthen the development of a broad trade union agenda on the main drivers of change and key issues for the future of work, such as trade and industrialization or sustainable development.

- Trade unions should invest in building broad coalitions with other trade unions, regional organizations, academics and civil society organizations.
Trade union revitalization: Experiences and key lessons from Southern Africa
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