

# LABOR

## magazine



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CMT  
WVA



**Women are the majority  
in the informal economy**

**DOSSIER  
Migration**

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*Picture  
Informal economy*

# PORTRAIT

**IN 2003, REKSON SILABAN WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF SBSI, THE INDONESIAN MEMBER ORGANISATION OF WCL. HE IS FACING THE DIFFICULT TASK OF REPLACING MUCHTAR PAKPAHAN, THE FIGUREHEAD OF THE AUTONOMOUS ASIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. A NEW WIND IS BLOWING OVER INDONESIA, FOR THE 37-YEAR-OLD REKSON IS THE YOUNGEST TRADE UNION PRESIDENT WORLDWIDE**

*Rekson Silaban*

**Rekson, whence your interest in trade unionism?**

This interest dates back from the time I was a student. I joined a human rights group at the university. I met there Muchtar Pakpahan, who was active in the NGO world at the time. Suharto, a genuine dictator, was ruling in those days. It was really not easy to be a trade union member at the time.



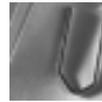
**SBSI sees the light of day nevertheless...**

Indeed. In 1992, I went to Jakarta, where we founded the Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia —SBSI — under the leadership of Muchtar. Mind you, it was not easy. The events that followed made it very clear that being an independent trade unionist was still dangerous, especially in Indonesia, where trade unions were still oppressed. I was confined several times by the authorities, but particularly Muchtar spent a long time in jail. When he was in prison, I applied myself to the international relations. We cooperated with the International Labour Organisation. Muchtar Pakpahan was set free under the pressure of WCL.

**What did you do before you were elected president?**

In 2000-2003, I was vice president of SBSI. When Muchtar decided to leave the trade union movement for politics and to run for the presidency (the SBSI Constitution prohibits the accumulation of a political and a trade union mandate to secure the autonomy), I was elected President for the 2004-2007 term.

*Continued on page 23*



# For a better international balance

*At the moment the 92nd International Labour Conference is almost going to start in Geneva, there are still tensions in the world. Violence and terrorism—including state terrorism—are on the increase and many communities are suffering, in the Middle East and in Iraq, for instance. The same goes for the workers worldwide. The main cause is known: as a result of the neo-liberal policy, which goes hand in hand with globalisation, the inequality is growing at each level. The international policy is subject to a superpower exerted by a superconservative administration. The political changes in Latin America (Brazil, Argentina...) and the emergence of an opposition front in the developing countries, as appeared during the WTO Conference in Cancun, are hopeful signs. The Economic and Social Council of the European Union recently took the initiative to organise in Mexico City a meeting of the civil society from Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, followed by a trade union summit between both regions. The debates were about two subjects: trade agreements and social cohesion. The developing dialogue is essential for the creation of a multipolar world in which equal partners enter upon a dialogue and negotiate, each starting from their own identity, to arrive at a more equitable trade and a fair and sustainable development that takes account of the social and environmental dimension. The report of the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of the Globalisation, which was published late in February of this year, stresses that “a social dimension is an essential element to make regional integration a springboard to a more equitable globalisation”. This is what was at stake at the meetings. In order to work on a new international architecture that*

*is more equitable and more democratic, ILO must be the social pillar of a new governance, on equal terms with the international financial institutions IMF, World Bank and WTO.*



Willy Thys  
Secretary General

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## ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

# State of affairs in the employment field

ON 1 MAY, TEN NEW COUNTRIES ACCEDED TO THE EUROPEAN UNION, AN OCCASION TO HAVE A LOOK AT THE SITUATION AND QUALITY OF THE EMPLOYMENT IN THE EU BEFORE THE ACCESSION OF THE NEW COUNTRIES.

### ENLARGEMENT TO THE EAST

This enlargement of the European Union is the most sizeable ever. In the past the number of member states grew from six to fifteen. Now ten other states have joined. Ten out of the thirteen applicant countries got the “acceding state” status. Most of them lie in Eastern Europe. The ten countries are: Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia. In most of these countries the World Confederation of Labour has member organisations. Bulgaria and Romania hope to jump on the wagon in 2007. One of the requirements for accession to the European Union is meeting the “Copenhagen criteria”, economic and political criteria according to which each country:

- must be a stable democracy in which the human rights and the rule of law are observed and minorities are protected;
- must have an effective market economy;
- must approve the common regulations, standards and policy lines that constitute the legislature of the EU.

### AN ENCOURAGING BALANCE-SHEET, BUT A LOT REMAINS TO BE DONE

In May 2004, the European Union will be enlarged with ten new member states. But how is the quality of work within the European Union? The Commission of the European Communities seeks to answer this question in a report\* that appeared late in 2003. The situation seems to have improved, but a lot remains to be done to ensure quality in work. According to the definition in the report, promoting quality in work is a leading principle in the modernisation of the European social model. The guidelines for employment, which the European Union laid down for the period 2003–2005, comprise three main goals: improvement of productivity and the quality of work, full employment and social cohesion. These three goals are interrelated: “Quality in work goes hand in hand with progress towards full employment, higher productivity growth and better social cohesion”.

The report concludes that a whole series of factors are conducive to the long-term growth of employment, such as a better access to employment in general and better promotion opportunities for “low”-quality jobs, all this of course without impeding the access to the labour market for those living on the fringes of society. Another factor is the reduction of the number of long-term unemployed “without creating situations in which periods of unemployment and of low-quality work succeed one another”. WCL agrees with the Commission that a company’s gain in productivity is dependent on a better work organisation and better working circumstances.

### MODERATELY POSITIVE

The Commission is moderately positive. It is indeed true that considerable progress has been made in the employment field, the training level in the European Union is on the rise, more and more adults are tak-

### WCL SUPPORTS ETUC IN ITS POSITION TO THE ENLARGED EUROPE

WCL fully supports the position of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) that the enlargement is a historic opportunity to unify the European countries on the basis of fundamental democratic values. “*Taking up this important challenge necessitates political, economic and financial solidarity. This implies courageous budgetary decisions*”, says ETUC. By adopting rather ambitious financial perspectives, the European Commission decided to take this course, taking into account the ceiling (1.24% of the Gross National Product) laid down in the treaties. “By adopting these perspectives, the European Commission has declared itself willing to ensure a budget in proportion to its ambitions. This comes up to our expectation”, ETUC goes on to say.



*A lot remains to be done to guarantee quality of work*

ing part in training programmes and the overall rate of employment is rising while the one of unemployment is falling, but a lot of problems persist. The report confirms this. First, there is the safety issue. Even if the number of industrial accidents is on the decrease, it remains very high in some sectors. ILO dealt with this issue at its last year's Conference. If the Governing Body approves, the development of a new instrument will start at the Conference 2005.

Second, there is the matter of youth employment, which is not very rosy in the European Union. In most cases the rate of unemployment among youths is twice as high as among adults. It appears from the report that *"youths have particularly more and more difficulty in finding jobs that offer reasonable career prospects"*.

Third, there is the women's issue. The Commission has noted a rise in female employment, but points out that the lack of adequate day-care facilities is an obstacle to the female participation in the labour market. And even if the income gap between men and women is narrowing, strong efforts are still necessary in this

regard (cf *Labor 2004-01*). These trends differ strongly from country to country, of course.

The list is still long. We highly recommend you reading the report. The Commission concludes that the social partners should take an active part in improving quality in work, a position the World Confederation of Labour has always defended. It is particularly important that the working conditions are respected in order to guarantee social justice.

MD

\* *Communication* from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: *"Improving quality in work: a review of recent progress"*, November 2003, COM (2003) 728.

### HISTORY OF THE ENLARGEMENT 2002 – 2004

**28 February 2002:** Start of the proceedings to arrive at the Convention on the future of Europe

**12-13 December 2002:** Agreement on the economic and financial conditions for accession. The negotiations with Turkey are suspended until the end of 2004, dependent on reforms in the field of public freedoms and democracy

**6 April 2003:** Official signing of the accession treaty by the ten new member states

**13 June 2003:** Adoption of a draft constitution of the enlarged Europe

**1 May 2004:** accession of the ten new member states to the European Union

**13 June 2004:** elections of the new European Parliament

Source: <[www.monde-diplomatique.fr/cahier/europe/chrono](http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/cahier/europe/chrono)>.



## How to denounce workers' rights violations?

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How to denounce? A simple question, yet a matter of concern for quite a lot of colleagues trade unionists. The international procedures are manifold and in many cases complex, whereas the trade unions are under pressure to solve a huge amount of problems without being able to spend much time to each separate case. The content of the files varies according to the target of the action. The follow-up, too, requires a lot of expertise, time and attention.

The WCL's human rights and international labour standards network was set up in 1995. It provides an answer to this question. Today, the network is structured around five regions: Africa, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, Western Europe and Asia (divided into the SAARC and the ASEAN regions). Each regional base cooperates with the national WCL affiliates, usually with a standards leader, an expert trained under this programme. A positive sign is the fact that in many organisations the national standards committee has extended to various sectors, consisting of representatives of groups like women, the informal economy, migrants and peasants.

Urgent messages are probably the fastest and most effective kind of action. In just a few hours the whole network can come into action and find a solution for cases of social rights violation. The network not only provides the members with a instrument for making their complaints known;

it is also a strong vehicle of social and trade union solidarity. The "standards" programme sends the urgent messages to all the member organisations and to a broad network of other trade unions and NGOs, starting so a solidarity action. By turning to a country's government, one can save human lives and jobs and ensure that trade union leaders remain at the service of other workers. This form of solidarity has taken such a size that a minister recently expressed to a network member his astonishment at the number of messages he receives whenever a serious trade union rights violation occurs in his country.

Eduardo Estevez, who is politically in charge of this ambitious programme, affirms that the number of cases dealt with in recent years has constantly risen, but that lots of them still need to be clarified. "*We must not remain silent about the increasingly frequent violations of the most elementary human dignity*", he often says.

That is why the human rights and international labour standards network will publish before long, besides a training programme in all the world regions, a procedures manual to inform trade unions on the content of the complaints and on the procedures to operate more efficiently and to find concrete solutions for abuses in the world.

*Isabelle Hoferlin*

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# Mauritania

Mauritania is a large desert country in the west of Africa. It is traversed by the river Senegal. This country with nearly three million inhabitants is rich in iron ore and gold. Nevertheless, Mauritania remains victim of poverty and slavery.

## MINIMUM PROTECTION FOR THE WORKERS

The *Confédération Libre des Travailleurs de Mauritanie*—CLTM—is the WCL’s member organisation in Mauritania. The organisation has recently informed us of the serious difficulties confronting the Mauritanian workers, despite a few improvements. At the end of last year the Mauritanian head of state, Maouya O. Sid’Ahmed, announce a salary increase for civil servants, state employees and the military. CLTM welcomes each improvement of the working conditions of the workers in the region, yet has some reservations: “*First, the prices of basic food have gone up enormously in the past decades. Moreover, the state has withdrawn from a lot of fields in that period, including from health care. Most state-owned companies have been privatised, but no social measure was taken to protect the rights of the workers and to ensure them a minimum protection and minimum benefits.*”

So, tensions are running high between the trade union and the authorities. Many workers enjoy no social protection of do not even have an employment contract! Most of them earn between 7 000 and 25 000 UM (1 euro = 400 UM), whereas 50,000 UM is required for a family of five to live in dignity. “*All this is weigh-*

*ing heavily on the workers. A salary increase for the public service is a good thing, of course, but we must not forget the other workers, who still account for 90% of the country’s workforce!*”, says CLTM.

## SLAVERY, INEXTRICABLY LINKED WITH MAURITANIA?

Slavery constitutes an alarming problem in Mauritania. Though slavery was officially abolished in 1981 and is prohibited by the Mauritanian Constitution and law, Amnesty International\* asserts that no concrete measure whatsoever has been taken to actually abolish slavery. Also the *Observatoire mauritanien des droits de l’homme* (Mauritanian human rights observatory) denounces the practice of slavery in Mauritania and has repeatedly reported that the government systematically oppresses the opponents and independent civil society stakeholders who expose this practice. According to the World Confederation of Labour, the struggle against slavery must take several shapes: first, the political will to fight this practice, then the existence of means of control because slavery is in many cases clandestine, and lastly aid to those who want to escape it (see the dossier on slavery, *Labor* 2002-04).

Unfortunately, we see that the will to fight slavery is there in Mauritania and many other world regions, but that the indispensable means to do so, such as the ILO conventions, have not been ratified or are simply not applied.

MD

\* Amnesty International – Records – Mauritania, *A future without slavery?* September 2002.

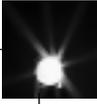


## THE COUNTRY

**Capital:** Nouakchott  
**Population:** 2,9 million inhabitants  
**Religion:** Muslim majority  
**Life expectancy:** ± 52 years  
**Inhabitants below the poverty line:** 50%  
**Infant mortality:** 73.8/1000  
**Employment:** agriculture 50%, services 40%, industry 10%  
**Unemployment rate:** 21%

## CLTM IN FAVOUR OF TRADE UNION PLURALISM

Samory Ould Beye, Secretary General of CLTM, has recently stated that each Mauritanian can join the organisation of his or her free choice. He expressed the wish that the national trade unions “became stronger and showed professionalism in guiding the workers”. CLTM membership is now over 50 000, a strong rise from the 20 000 some time ago.



Congress of ICL - India



WCL visits UGPL



Meeting of the European Section of WCL

## ● UBUNTU campaign Towards a thorough reform of international institutions

UBUNTU was created in April 2001. This international network of intellectuals, universities and social organisations intends to promote cooperation between individuals, cultures and peoples so to arrive at a harmonious and sustainable society. WCL has been closely involved in this initiative right from the beginning. Its Secretary General, Willy Thys, is also part of the UBUNTU committee, which coordinates the “*global campaign for a thorough reform of the international institutions system*”. The campaign was launched during the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) and runs from 2002 to 2005.

Justice, freedom, peace and security are still no acquired rights in many parts of the world. Moreover, the global market is in constant expansion whereas the influence of the institutions ensuring its democratic functioning is more and more on the decrease.

The UBUNTU campaign is intended to promote re-

forms within the international institutions in order to arrive at a democratic global governance in which all social groups have an active say. The reforms should lead to an efficient, transparent and consistent whole, based on a democratic international legislation. The United Nations should be able to exert effective and independent control over the democratic functioning of all its organisations. According to UBUNTU and WCL, this is the only way to build a just, diverse, sustainable and peaceful world.

After the launch of the UBUNTU campaign on the Internet, a “*world panel for democratic global governance*” will be set up to establish contacts with the United Nations, governments and various pressure groups. Around 2005, the results of the campaign will be presented to the United Nations General Assembly along with the request to convene a “*conference on the reform of international institutions*”.

## ● NEW WCL BOOKLET Debt Manual

For years on end, the foreign debt has been the main obstacle to progress in developing countries. The relations between these countries and their creditors are regulated *de facto* by the multilateral credit institutions (World Bank and IMF), the Paris Club (an informal consultative body of nineteen creditor countries, chiefly OECD members) and the London Club (association of foreign commercial banks). This “trinity” concludes bilateral or individual agreements and strengthens the power of the financial markets without any consideration for the serious social effects in heavily indebted countries. It is therefore a challenge for all the countries that are burdened with a foreign debt to unite and to compel the creditors to adjust their demands radically in favour of a sustainable development at the service of humanity. Under its Socio-Economic Programme WCL has pub-

lished the “Debt Manual”, in which it explains the origin of the foreign debt and its socio-political context. The manual also gives a survey of the proposals that have been advanced to alleviate the debt, which is weighing on 80% of the world population. It further formulates objections to the functioning of the international financial institutions and makes it clear that structural changes are necessary. In conclusion, it proposes alternatives for refunding the debt while favouring a lasting development.

*You can order this booklet in English, French or Spanish from the WCL Press and Information Department: <info@cmt-wcl>. Please mention clearly your name and address, the language and the number of copies you wish to receive.*



*Migration occurs more and more frequently and is a survival strategy. 175 million people worldwide are said to be confronted with migration! More than half of them, in some countries even the vast majority, are women. So, migration has more and more a female face, just like poverty does. Migration is one of the*

*forms in which the neo-liberal globalisation finds expression. Besides, social and economic deregulation are legion, politically (difficult integration), culturally (racism) as well as socially (problematic reception). This year migration is more and more in the spotlights. The main theme of WCL's annual report is devoted*

*to migrant domestic workers. The agenda of the 92nd International Labour Conference, next June in Geneva, includes a general discussion on migrant workers. In this dossier we will go into the challenges of migration in these internationally difficult times.*

## SUMMARY

**Migrant domestic workers, important part of migration**

**Migration at the centre of the 92nd International Labour Conference**

**Review of the situation of migrant domestic workers worldwide**

**An overall analysis**



# Migrant domestic workers, important part of migration

THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR IS ABOUT MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS. A GOOD OCCASION TO DWELL ON THIS IMPORTANT PART OF MIGRATION IN THIS DOSSIER.

## DEFINITION

According to the International Labour Organisation, a domestic worker is “someone who carries out household in a private households in return for wages”. In a broader sense, migrant domestic workers travel to carry out this kind of work. Domestic workers are confronted with two kinds of migration. First, there is migration in the country itself. This often occurs in countries where there is a strong contrast between rural and the developed urban areas. Then there is international migration (from a developing

to a developed country, for example). A lot of fields in which migrant domestic workers are active are not covered by the official definition.

It goes without saying that the domestic migrant workers are like all other workers and must be protected as such. Anyway, even if the principles contained in the ILO declaration of the fundamental rights at work are not directly centred on migrants, one can conclude from them that they are intended for all the workers, including migrants (see the article on ILO and migration, pages 12-14). In many cases these workers are confronted with extremely difficult working conditions. In numerous countries there is no legal protection whatsoever.

## EXPLOITATION AT THE END OF THE JOURNEY

We have already said that migrant domestic workers in many cases have to contend with awkward working conditions that can be viewed as exploitation. There are many examples of this kind of abuses: very low average wages, irregular payment or even non-payment of them are practices that frequently occur. Working hours, too, are a big problem. It often happens that domestic workers work up to fourteen hours a day and even more in some cases! It is difficult, of course,

to obtain reliable statistics, because the number of domestic workers is largely unknown. Nevertheless, we can say that we are dealing here with a global phenomenon confronting women in the first place and that the difficulties these workers have to contend with do not remain limited to one region!

The migration flows can be described as follows: In Asia there is (domestic) migration to three regions: from Asia to the United States, Canada and Europe; from the least developed Asian countries to the Asian industrial countries; and finally from South and Southeast Asia to West Asia and the Gulf States. There is a high concentration in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates). Latin America women migrate within the own country, usually from rural to urban areas, but also to other Latin American countries. And there is, of course, the migration to the United States, Canada and Europe. The situation in Africa is similar to the one in Latin America. Migration in Africa itself, from the rural to the urban areas. Many African women migrate also to the Gulf States and Europe, in search of a job. Finally, a new trend has emerged in recent years: more and more Eastern European migrate as domestic workers to the West, though usually for shorter periods of time.



*Struggle for life drives to migration*

## WOMEN AND CHILDREN AFFECTED MOST

The majority of the migrant domestic workers worldwide are women. So, migration has more and more a female face, just like poverty does. Migration is for women a survival strategy. Also children constitute an important group. In Central and West Africa, for instance, lots of children between 8 and 14 travel in group from their village to the city or to other countries, says Unicef. Countries of origin are Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo. Countries of destination are Congo, Ivory Coast, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Benin and Nigeria are countries both of origin and of destination.

We must not forget that children employed as domestic workers have never chosen for this, says ILO. Economic pressure often induces parents to make their children work, of course. The struggle for life of these families causes them to take this decision. Children are forced to work either because their earnings are necessary to provide for the family, or because the parents think that the child in question will have a better future if it works for a rich family where it gets enough to eat.

It is true that the part of women in the labour has risen, but women



*Migration, a mass phenomenon*

remain the most important group in the informal sector and in migration. The role pattern causes women almost automatically to land in domestic work, which is the extension of their reproductive role. Once again, it is economic pressure that induces women to migrate. In most cases they migrate from the countryside to the city, hoping to find better job opportunities over there.

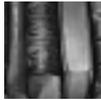
When they arrive, they rarely find a place to live or to work. A job as domestic workers is in many cases the best solution for them.

### WHAT DOES WCL WANT?

The World Confederation of Labour and its affiliates have been aware for a long time already of the

importance of the migration issue. WCL wants to make the voice of the migrants heard wherever it is present. It wants to enforce respect for their human and workers' rights and to organise them either in the guest country or in the country of origin in demand of a humane and consistent migration policy.

A department at the WCL secretariat follows up and coordinates the migrant workers' action to make sure that equal opportunities and equal treatment are recognised for all the workers, without distinction between natives and migrants, between men and women.



## ILO AND MIGRATION

# Migration at the centre of the 92nd International Labour Conference

THE MIGRATION ISSUE IS AT THE CENTRE OF THE DEBATES AT THE 92nd INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE, ON 1-17 JUNE 2004 IN GENEVA.

## BRIEF REMINDER

The constituents of ILO (member states and employers' and workers' organisations from the ILO member states) meet every year in June at the International Labour Conference. Each member state sends a tripartite delegation, composed of two government representatives and one employers' and one workers' representative. They enjoy the same rights and can freely state their views. It is one of the missions of the Conference to draw up and

adopt the international labour standards in the form of recommendations and/or conventions.

As far as the migration issue is concerned, 2003 was an important year at the United Nations.

Indeed, last year two United Nations conventions on migration became operative: on 1 July the convention on the protection of the rights of all migrating workers and their families, and on 29 September the convention on transnational organised crime. Besides, there are two protocols on trafficking in human beings. The year 2004 will be another height: migration and related issues will be at the centre of the debates at the 92nd annual ILO Conference.

Since its creation in 1917, ILO has paid special attention to the migrant workers' issue. In any case the International Labour Organisation did everything possible to make the issue public. According to ILO it is important to develop an overall strategy based on the fact that migrant workers have the same rights as national workers and enjoy freedom of association as well as the right to decent working conditions and to dignified work schedules and wages. Too often, and for years on end, the migration issue has been approached from the perspective of safety.

Migrants are victims of human rights violations. *"In addition, a lot of political and economic factors complicate the situation [...]. We are living in a globalised world in which there is a demand for foreign labour but which at the same time tries to put a restraint on immigration"*, wrote the regional ILO Office for Latin America and the Caribbean on 5 February last in a statement to the press. Many migrant workers are also confronted with xenophobia and racism and are made in too many cases the scapegoats for national problems. *"According to the most recent studies of ILO, Unesco —United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation— and other organisations, migrant workers in most developed countries are getting the jobs the national workers do not want to do anymore"*, the regional office went on to say.

## MIGRATION, A CHALLENGE TO THE ILO MEMBERS

The 92th International Labour Conference will look for new responses to the migration issue worldwide. The main topics promise animated debates and show the challenges: *"international labour migration in the era of globalisation"*, *"policy and structure for a more orderly migration"* and *"better protection of migrant workers thanks to the application of the standards"*.



*Over 175 million migrants worldwide*

Migration has become one of the most complex social and economic issues of the decade. In view of its size, the Governing Body has placed the problem on the agenda for a general discussion. At this moment the International Labour Conference is indeed the only global forum for debates on migration, and this will stay so in the next ten years. Hence the importance of this discussion.

The globalisation has not had consequences for the flows of capital and goods only. It has also changed the nature of the international labour migration. As the phenomenon spread, there was a growing need for a better protection of the migrant workers. Indeed, over 175 million people are not living in their own countries, and 60 to 65 million of them are economically active, with or without a permit. It is also clearly stated in the report migration usually originates in economic factors, even if it has to do with “expulsion” as a result of political and ethnic repression, violence, war and armed conflicts, human rights violations, etc.

#### **THE ILO DECLARATION ON FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES AND RIGHTS AT WORK**

What instruments does ILO have at its disposal in the matter of migration?



*What situation is in store for migrants at the end of their journey?*

On the basis of the principles and rights that are anchored in the ILO's Constitution and Declaration of Philadelphia, the Governing Body adopted in 1998 the “*ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*”. The principle is simple. The ILO member states have to observe and promote them, even if they have not ratified the basic ILO conventions. The fact that they are part of ILO is enough. Though the Declaration is not specifically about migrant workers, it contains provisions that bear upon them.

Moreover, there are two specific international standards on migrant workers.

One is **Convention 97**, adopted in 1949. This instrument lays the foundation of equal treatment of legal national and foreign workers, particularly in fields such as contract procedures, living and working conditions, access to justice, and tax regulations. It also contains provisions on the participation of migrants in vocational training and promotion, family reunion, unreasonable dismissal and expulsion.

The other is **Convention 143**, adopted in 1975. In that period the international community started taking account of the growing migration flows. The report on the International Migration Programme states the two main reasons for



### BASIC LABOUR-RELATED ILO PRINCIPLES AND RIGHTS

Freedom of association and effective recognition of the freedom of collective bargaining.

Elimination of each form of forced and compulsory labour.

Effective abolition of child labour.

Elimination of discrimination at work.

this Convention: 1) regulate the migration flow, eradicate clandestine migration and fight trafficking in human beings; 2) facilitate the integration of migrants in the host country.

Lastly, there is the Employment Policy Convention (122), which is not directly about migrants but

treats of the employment issue in general.

### ILC 2004 AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO MIGRANT LABOUR

The general discussion at the Conference, next June in Geneva, is therefore of paramount importance. According to the ILO International Migration Programme, the discussion will be held on the basis of an integrated approach. The, economic, political, social and human rights issues relating to migrant labour bear upon practically all the standard-setting and technical activities of the International Labour Organisation. The search of jobs for migrant workers is an important

challenge for the employment policy both in the countries of origin and in the host countries. *“The integrated approach will provide a pragmatic answer to issues relating to migrant labour in a process of cooperation between the various sectors and departments of ILO”*, says ILO.

So, ILO is doing its utmost to respond to this issue during the Conference. Let us hope that it will be up to this challenge. The World Confederation of Labour will certainly be at the rendezvous. The International Labour Organisation has worked on this issue for a long time already. Its report 2004 is devoted to it.



*Economic pressure forces migrants*



# Review of the situation of migrant domestic workers worldwide

## IVORY COAST

Edouard Ladouyou Sibahi is in charge of the International Labour Standards Department at the confederation *Dignité*, our affiliate in Ivory Coast. It appears from its report that it is hard to determine the number of migrant domestic workers in Ivory Coast. The Ministry of Labour keeps no records of this group of workers. Nor are statistics available. There is no specific legislation on migrants. As workers they are subject to the Ivorian social legislation. Yet, the Ivorian government, through the Ministry of Employment and the Public Office, and the Lebanese government intend to conclude a cooperation agreement so to give Ivorian workers in the Lebanon a better protection and to facilitate their integration.

To the question if the Ivorian national law protects migrant workers, Edouard Sibahi replies that Ivory Coast has ratified the Forced and Compulsory Labour conventions (29 and 105). So, the national law prohibits slavery and forced labour as well as “*the retention of passports and other identity papers by the employer*”.

Ivory Coast is among the countries that receive children who have fallen victim to child trafficking and landed somewhere as domestic child workers. It is part of the ILO programmes IPEC and WACAP, which

struggle against child trafficking and child labour.

## PAKISTAN

The All Pakistan Trade Union Congress (APTUC) is the WCL affiliate in Pakistan. The Ministry of Labour keeps no specific records of migrant workers, says APTUC. But the Ministry of the Interior set up a structure, called NARA\*. APTUC has worked on the migration issue for a long time already

## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Migrants from the Dominican Republic usually leave for the United States or Europe, according to the *Confederación Autónoma Sindical Clasista* (CASC), our affiliate in that country. Most of them become domestic workers or fall prey to trafficking in human beings. CASC has developed a programme to help these workers, particularly women and children.

## GHANA

According to the Ghana Federation of Labour (GFL), affiliated to WCL, Ghana is a politically stable country that attracts lots of migrant workers. Moreover, unlike in many other African countries, the labour market is still very open. For the time being there is no framework for bilateral or multilateral agreements on the reception, employment and social protection of

migrant workers, says GFL. GFL has taken lots of actions in favour of migrant workers. It informs opinion leaders and the civil society on the rights of migrant domestic workers. It also organises seminars at which migrants learn their rights. The long list of actions includes, further, training projects and actions to fight human rights violations and abuses to which migrant workers fall victim.

## CYPRUS AND SRI LANKA

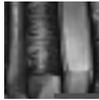
A nice example of trade union solidarity: DEOK from Cyprus and NWC from Sri Lanka, both WCL affiliates, are cooperating on the migration issue. This is normal as most domestic workers in Cyprus come from Sri Lanka. DEOK has suggested a number of actions to improve the working conditions: social security and employment contracts in the language of the person in question so that he or she knows his rights and obligations, a mechanism to secure the freedom of association for migrant workers, and develop a policy to receive migrants (housing, education for children, health care...).

DEOK is convinced that concerted trade union action, international networking and cooperation with NGOs are essential factors to improve the situation of these workers.

MD

GIVEN THE INTERNATIONAL NATURE OF THE MIGRATION ISSUE, WE HAVE REVIEWED BELOW THE SITUATION IN A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES ON THE BASIS OF INFORMATION WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM NATIONAL WCL AFFILIATES.

\* NARA: Nationals Aliens Registration Authority. This structure only takes account of people who arrived in Pakistan before the end of 2000.



## An overall analysis

According to the World Confederation of Labour migration is not an isolated phenomenon. It chiefly results from socio-economic and demographic imbalances worldwide and the growing inequality between countries, regions and continents. There is no denying that migration is one of the aspects of neo-liberal globalisation, under the influence of the structural adjustment programmes of IMF and World Bank. WCL demands equal opportunities and equal treatment for all the workers, national and migrant workers, men and women alike.

The ILO conventions, particularly those related to migration, must be ratified, applied and observed. A still too small number of countries, also European countries, have ratified these conventions (five countries have ratified Convention 143, nine Convention 97!). It is true that Conventions 97 and 143 are deficient and outdated in some respects, but we must be watchful of the way the general discussion at the next ILC will be held. Though we deem it necessary to revise some aspects of these instruments, the ILO must proceed carefully to avoid that the

essence gets lost. Account must also be taken of “paperless” migrant workers in the host countries. It is hard to apply the conventions to them and therefore hard to protect them. They fall victim to ill-treatment, abuses and other violations of the basic human rights. Those looking at migration from the angle of security constantly stress clandestine migration and, as a result, the vulnerability of these workers.

WCL and its affiliates have always been aware of the importance of this problem. Through concrete and daily actions WCL wants to make the voice of the migrants heard wherever it is present. We demand respect for the rights of migrants as human beings, as workers and as stakeholders of social, economic, political, demographic and cultural development.



### MORE INFORMATION

[www.cmt-wcl.org](http://www.cmt-wcl.org)  
[www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)  
[www.socialalert.org](http://www.socialalert.org)  
[www.un.org](http://www.un.org)



**ACTION PROGRAMME 2004-2007**

# Trade Action growing stronger in Africa

It is important to continue the on-going process because, among other things, the socio-economic context in Africa is changing. The results achieved so far are a stage in the process to strengthen eventually the grass roots of the DOAWTU affiliates. *“The fact that the trade structures are still young and the human resources potential nation —as well as regionwide allow optimism about the future”*, says Trade Action.

## CLEAR AIMS

The general aim is to strengthen and consolidate DOAWTU Trade Action. It is particularly necessary to strengthen the internal democracy of the national and regional trade structures, to reinforce the intervention capacity of the pan-African and national federations, to consolidate the trade federations by broadening their

basis, to extend their representativeness and influence, and to promote the organisational development of the trade federations. Efforts will be made, further, better to guide and manage the trade structures and to make sure that the trade organisations are in a better position to bargain, exert pressure and interpellate. An important place is reserved for training. Finally, the emphasis will be on the creation of new organisations, making sure that they affiliate to the pan-African trade federations and the international trade federations of WCL.

So, one of the main aims is to strengthen the internal democracy of the trade organisations. For this purpose a series of pan-African congresses —the decision-making bodies— will be convened in the period 2004-2007. They will take stock of the past activities and develop and adopt new plans of action per organisation.

IN THE PERIOD FROM 1999 TO 2002, THE TRADE ACTION OF DOAWTU, THE REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF THE WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR IN AFRICA, WAS RESTRUCTURED AND A PROCESS WAS STARTED UP TO STRENGTHEN THE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL STRUCTURES. THE FIRST RESULTS ARE ENCOURAGING, BOTH QUANTITATIVELY AND QUALITATIVELY. BUT A LOT REMAINS TO BE DONE. WHAT ARE THE AIMS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE PERIOD 2004-2007?





#### COUNTRIES IN WHICH THE ACTION PROGRAMME 2004-2007 IS IMPLEMENTED:

South Africa, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Mauritius, Madagascar, Morocco, Mali, Niger, Namibia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Chad, Zimbabwe, Mauritania, Liberia, Rwanda.

*“DOAWTU sticks to democratic principles and convenes the decision-making bodies at regular intervals, which proves the democratic nature of the pan-African federations, which are equipped with good working mechanisms”,* says Trade Action.

#### TRAINING AND SEMINARS

Training, too, is an important part of the DOAWTU's plan of action. Specific subjects will be treated of, dependent on the needs of each pan-African federation and on the specific problems facing each sector. Also the current socio-economic context is important. There are regional and national seminars. The regional seminars are intended for trade union leaders and aimed at their better participation in international activities and their seeking continental solutions for the problems of the respective sectors. The sessions are organised by people from outside and training workers of the training centre, in coordination with the Trade Action Department. Besides training them, the national seminars are aimed to teach the trade organisations how to structure and to build a solid institutional foundation. They are intended to improve the training of trade union activists so that they can solve the specific sector-related problems, to improve the institutional framework of the organisations and promote the specific legal instruments in protection of the workers.

#### STRENGTHENING, A CONSTANT CONCERN

Like in the past, the pan-African Trade Action Committee will meet once a year. The Committee was created

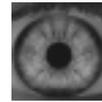
in 2000 at an extraordinary session of the DOAWTU General Council to achieve structural strengthening. It is composed of the secretaries general of the eight trade federations, the Deputy Secretary General of DOAWTU, the Chairperson of the Committee and the Executive Secretary in charge of Trade Action.

The Committee also conducts missions to raise the visibility of Trade Action and to ensure the follow-up on the activities and previous missions. Another aim of the missions is to get new organisations to affiliate to DOAWTU.

#### DIRECTION ENGLISH-SPEAKING AFRICA!

Another important point in the plan of action of DOAWTU Trade Action is the expansion to English-speaking countries in southern and East Africa. The democratic wind, which started blowing in the 1990s in Africa, has strengthened trade union pluralism in French-speaking Africa. *“The stress will be on the observance and application of ILO Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining Conventions (87 and 98) [...], which give each workers the freedom to join a trade union of his or her choice.”* It seems to be difficult to introduce this concept of pluralism in English-speaking Africa. As, moreover, DOAWTU is not strongly represented in that part of Africa, it must make great efforts to raise its influence and to recruit new organisations in the following countries among others: Botswana, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Swaziland, Malawi and Lesotho. With this end in view, the workers in French-speaking Africa need to be sensitised on the soundness and necessity of cooperating on the dynamics of trade union pluralism. The single trade union tradition indeed seems to be still strongly present in that region.

The challenges of the action programme of DOAWTU Trade Action come up to the expectations. Everything possible will be done to achieve these aims in a positive manner. If this succeeds, there will be more social justice in Africa, which is in such strong need of it.



# Child labour

## CONVENTION 182 NOT ALWAYS APPLIED

The estimates of the International Labour Office are not very rosy. Worldwide, over 246 million children between 5 and 14 are working. One-eighth of them are exposed to the worst forms of child labour. As a result, their physical, mental and moral health is in jeopardy. Whether it is a form of socialisation or whether it is an inevitable economic obligation, it is chiefly and in most cases just exploitation. And this is true for all the sectors: agriculture, industry and trade. Also in the informal economy of course, and even in armed conflicts, in which too many child soldiers are deployed.

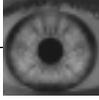
According to WCL, this evil can be eradicated by means of concrete field actions, sensitisation campaigns and lobbying. This was true, for instance, in the matter of the

ratification and application of Convention 182 of the International Labour Organisation —ILO. The struggle is by far not over, however. Though Convention 182 was massively ratified, too many countries just do not apply it. ILO adopted Convention 182 in June 1999. It deals with the worst forms of child labour. Its aim is to prohibit these worst forms and to take immediate measures to eradicate it. It goes without saying that education is an important means in the struggle against poverty. The number of children, particularly girls, who does not go to school and must work is not going down, unfortunately. On the contrary, despite of attempts made at summits like the Dubai one. “*We must not forget that child labour is chiefly a consequence of poverty resulting the policy pursued by the international financial institutions*”, says Kattia Paredes, coordinator of the Women and Work Department.

CHILD EXPLOITATION REMAINS TOPICAL. THE WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR AND ITS AFFILIATES ARE STRUGGLING THROUGHOUT THE WORLD FOR THE ERADICATION OF THIS EVIL. IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2004, ILO PUBLISHED A REPORT THAT GOES TO SHOW THAT THE ERADICATION OF CHILD LABOUR WOULD YIELD SEVEN TIMES MORE PROFITS THAN THAT IT WOULD ENTAIL EXPENSES IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WHERE MOST WORKING CHILDREN LIVE! LET US GO INTO THIS PHENOMENON.



*Children at work from a very young age*



## ELIMINATE CHILD LABOUR YIELDS MORE THAN THAT IT COSTS!

According to the ILO study “Investing in Every Child, An Economic Study of the Costs and Benefits of Eliminating Child Labour”, which appeared in February, the elimination of child labour will yield seven times more than that it costs. The yields would amount to 5 100 billion dollars in the transition and the developing countries, where child labour occurs most. The report was drawn up by the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). It appears from this report that one out of six children worldwide are confronted with child labour. It would cost 760 billion dollars to eliminate child labour replace it by universal education by 2020. In this regard ILO Director General Juan Somavia says that *“a good social policy is also a good economic policy. The eradication of child labour will have a high investment output and an invaluable impact on the lives of the children and their families”*. According to ILO the study does not proceed to a cost-benefit analysis *“to justify the necessity of eliminating child labour”*, because there is already a consensus about this. The text is intended to explain the economic consequences of these international commitments. *“The eradication of child labour would be ‘an investment for one generation’, of course, and a permanent support for children, today and tomorrow. In the first five years the costs would exceed the benefits, but this trend would be reversed and there would be a surplus as the positive effects of education and health care make themselves felt. In 2020 the costs would be largely covered by the yield of the investment, with a favourable balance amounting to 60 billion dollars. As compared to other social costs, the average annual cost price of the elimination of child labour would be much lower than the financing of the debt service or the military expenses. The annual average cost price of 95 billion dollars would be 20% of the present military expenses in the developing and transition countries, or 9.5% of the 1,000-billion-dollar debt service in the developing countries”*, says ILO.

Besides the calculated advantages, health and education are of vital importance to the children, of course.

## A FEW EXAMPLES OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

### CGTD and its “children and youth group”

The “children and youth group” of CGTD, our Colombian affiliate, was created in 1996. Initially it arose from association of hawkers and independent

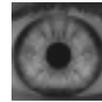
transporters from the informal economy. One of the tasks of the group is to ensure training and action on child labour, eg by means of seminars at which the children’s rights are explained in a pedagogic manner. The group is active in other fields as well, such as the May Day march and the march on the occasion of the International Day Against Child Labour. To this day, all these training activities and services have been monitored by the Executive Committee and the confederation’s organising team, the National Institute for Social Studies (INES) and the Emilio Maspero workers’ university of Latin America.

### Child labour, pet subject of CSTT

According to the *Confédération Syndicale des Travailleurs du Togo*—CSTT, our Togolese affiliate, childhood is no doubt a period of time in which the foundation of future life is laid. That is why it created structures such as a confederal secretariat in charge of the protection of women and children, a “Social Alert” base and a Committee on international labour standards and human rights. *“Besides, it is important to sensitise the population so to eradicate this awful phenomenon”*, says CSTT. It conducted sensitisation campaigns and organised debates on Convention 182, which it translated into “Ewé” and “Kabyé”, the two most spoken languages in Togo. This initiative has made it possible to spread the information all over the country. The list of CSTT activities in the struggle against child labour is long. Thanks to the “Social Alert” base, child traffickers could be arrested and the children were taken back to their families. Moreover, there are projects such as the creation of a reception and reintegration centre for children who have fallen victim to child trafficking or child labour, and a project that struggles adolescent prostitution.

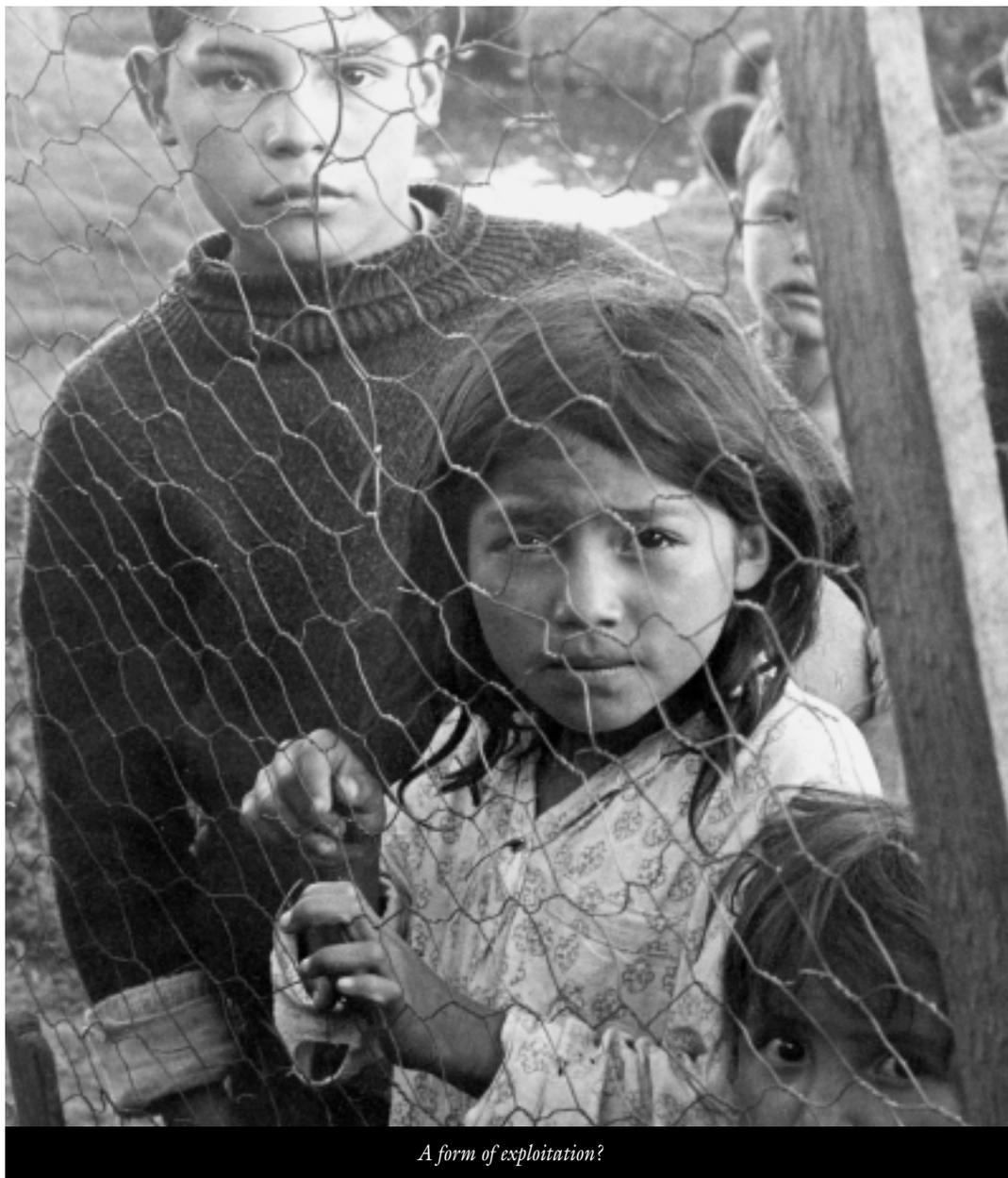
### Child exploitation in Indonesia

The F-KUI—the trade federation of the SBSI from Indonesia which protects the rights of the building and informal economy workers—has informed the WCL and the WFBW about the problematic situation at P.D. Jaya Bersama. This company harvests the “swallow’s nests” that are so much appreciated in the Chinese kitchen, and renders itself guilty of workers’ rights violations. They employ children, and transport allowances, social security, a pension fund and maternity leave are nonexistent. The company also exerts pressure on the workers to sign contracts of limited duration. On



top of this it does not respect the freedom of association. After 47 workers had constituted the factory union PK F-KUI, they were immediately intimidated and threatened by the owner and employer. Eleven workers, among them the entire staff of the PK F-KUI, were dismissed then and there. The minister of Labour summoned the workers and the managers, but the lat-

ter never showed up... Upon this, the WFBW and the WCL sent letters of protest to the Indonesian Minister of Labour. They also protested with the management of PD. Jaya Bersama, demanding to put an end to the violations of the freedom of association and to see to it that the child workers are given the opportunity to attend a vocational training.



*A form of exploitation?*



## PRESS REVIEW



### FRANCE: WOMEN STILL PREJUDICED ON LABOUR MARKET

[...] More than thirty years after the promulgation of the first French equal job opportunities laws and more than a quarter century after the first European directive some progress has been made, but a lot remains to be done. “*Real inequality does not disappear by decrees for the simple reason that it escapes the law*”, writes Monique Boutrand, national secretary of CFDT Executive Staff in the organisation’s review (January 2004), pointing out sociological factors. Young girls are doing better than boys at school, and more and more women have presented themselves on the labour market since 1975, but the French rate of female unemployment was still 2% higher than the rate of male unemployment in the first quarter of 2003. The difference was even stronger among young workers under 25, says the *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques* (INSEE — National institute for statistics and economic research) in its publication of 2004 under the title *Femmes et hommes, regard sur la parité* (Women and men, a view on equality). Women are under more uncertain contracts and hold a mere third of the executive and hardly one-fifth of the managerial offices in the private sector. [...] Mixed employment does not automatically guarantee equal treatment. The research workers have found that the inequality is most outspoken in the mixed occupations, particularly as far as the wages and salaries are concerned. [...]

Francine Aizicovici, *La lutte contre les inégalités professionnelles s’intensifie* (The struggle against occupational inequalities intensifies), supplement on employment to *Le Monde*, dd 9 March 2004.

### BOLIVIA, ILLEGITIMATE DEBT

During the violent riots in Bolivia, last year in October, the demands were centred on sovereignty over the national resources, the coca cultivation, Bolivia’s access to the sea and the rejection of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) project. More attention should also have been paid to the foreign debt issue, however. “[...] *Between 1998 and 2002 the income per inhabitant fell by practically one-fifth. According to figures of the Ministry of Finance, the annual income per income amount to slightly over 1100 dollars in 1998, against merely 900 dollars in 2002. [...] It appears from the official figures that the income of the one-fifth richest households is almost fifty times higher than that of the poorest fifth. 10% of the richest section of the population owns one-third of the national income and has more money than 70% of the population, composed chiefly of natives, peasants, moonlighters, workers and women.*” (Walter Chavez.). The country’s GDP amounts to barely 7.8 billion dollars (2002). Poverty affects 64% of the population and up to 82% of the rural population. And the IMF sticks to the same recipe, even if its policy is a downright failure and it is under severe criticism as a

result of the crises in Argentina, Brazil and Asia. So to eliminate the country’s public deficit (8.9% in 2002), IMF demanded of the Goni administration, in February 2003, to reduce the state expenditure and to raise the taxes. An insurrection —the so-called *impuestazo*— forced it to go back on this. Yet, the weakened government continued to obey the Fund: in March 2003 it signed an agreement, establishing a framework for macroeconomic stabilisation and the continuation of the counterreforms to get international support. In consequence of this agreement the government adopted a new tax law, which boiled down to a 60% tax relief for the managers. This favour comes to 300 million dollars or 40% of the state deficit (ADITAL, December 2003). The Goni administration fell eventually, because it allowed gas exports via a Chilean port for the benefit of the multinationals [...].

Frédéric Leveque, *La dette illégitime de la Bolivie, Les autres voix de la planète* (The illegitimate debt of Bolivia, the other voices of the planet), 1st quarter 2004

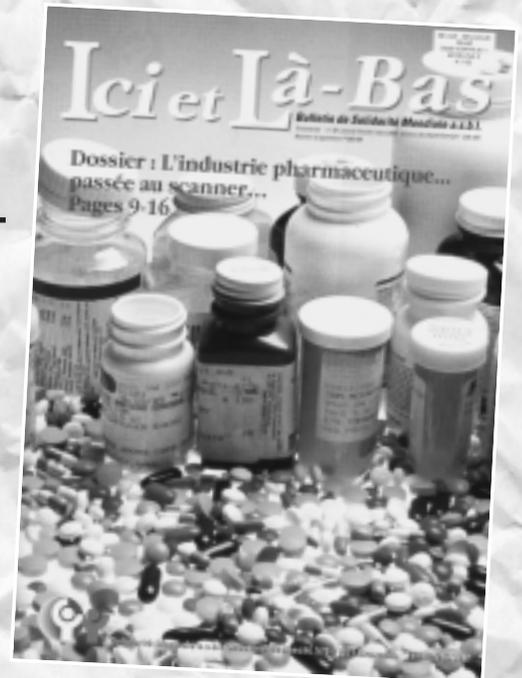
## BOOKS AND DEBATES



### ICI ET LÀ-BAS

*Ici et là-bas* (Here and there), the magazine of *Solidarité Mondiale*, celebrated in the first quarter of 2004 the publication its fiftieth number. The magazine was founded in 1993 and voices the concerns and actions of the workers’ movement in the South. The fiftieth number starts with a very complete dossier on the pharmaceutical industry, focusing on the changes as a consequence of the globalisation. The anniversary number also goes into the informal economy and FTAA. Happy birthday and a long life...

*Ici et là-bas*, magazine of *Solidarité Mondiale asbl*, nr. 50-January-February-March 2004.



# PORTRAIT

## **You are the youngest trade union president of the world**

This is no coincidence. Under Suharto's rule only young people could organise themselves and develop an independent trade union movement. At the end of Suharto's rule most of these trade unionists were between twenty and forty years old. You know, I may be the youngest president, but I am one of the oldest in my union!

## **What do you think is the main challenge facing you?**

The civil society in Indonesia is still seriously oppressed. Moreover, by far not everybody is in favour of a trade union that is independent of the political power. We at SBSI are convinced that autonomy is an essential condition for the observance of social justice. Unfortunately this is not enough. One has to be autonomous and strong. Hence the absolute necessity of raising the membership, even if it is already high.

## **How high?**

Today, SBSI has more than 1 700 000 members. In a country with more than 220 million inhabitants this is a nice start, but it is not enough. We must keep making efforts and still improve the excellent work of Muchtar Pakpahan. If we are stronger, we can weigh more heavily on the negotiations with the government and even with the

employers. We must cooperate at all levels, at the national and the regional level, and also at the international level, of course, with the World Confederation of Labour (Rekson Silaban is member of the Confederal Board of WCL). Human rights and therefore also workers' rights are important rights that must be respected at all levels..

## **In your opinion, what is the place of the trade union movement in these times of globalisation?**

Trade unions are more important than ever before! They must represent and protect the workers. The neo-liberal globalisation still has absolutely disastrous effects, partic-

ularly in the developing countries. SBSI has taken a lot of actions in the field to counteract this, to call a halt to child labour among other things. We have created credit cooperatives in order to give small traders and artisans easier access to credits than at banks, which in many cases deny them this access (cf *Labor* 2004-01). We are going through difficult times as far as social justice is concerned. We must make every possible effort to promote social justice.

*Interview by MD*



# TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES

## trade union activities

## Trade union action in the civil society

The latest years were marked by the emergence of the civil society. Not only were lots of organisations created, they also entered more and more into alliances. What is the place of trade unions in the new civil society?

Globalisation with its positive as well as negative aspects has given an impetus to the civil society. On the one hand the new communication technology has created a space for meeting and dialogue between the stakeholders of the civil society, on the other the neo-liberal globalisation has brought about poverty and social injustice. Nevertheless, the civil society is active, standing up for another world than the one advocated by the international financial institutions. The success of the World Social Forum is proof of this.

### WHAT IS THE PLACE OF TRADE UNIONS IN THE NEW CIVIL SOCIETY?

The representativeness of the trade unions makes them important stakeholders of development. They draw their legitimacy from the important principle of internal democracy based on an election process and the creation of structures at the company, the national, the regional and the international level.

The trade union movement is facing a huge challenge, however: the poor functioning of the trade union structures and the composition of the labour market. Indeed, the informal economy is constantly expanding, and also migration is still on the rise. These groups of workers keep growing as a result of a policy that makes the working conditions more and more insecure and fragments the labour relations. The trade unions, including WCL, have developed projects to help these groups, for all the workers have to be respected the same way.

### SOCIAL DIALOGUE

One of the specific trade union roles is to bargain over collective agreements. This bargaining is a privileged way to achieve a better regulated shopfloor. This is not the only role of trade unions, of course. They are also privileged partners in the social dialogue, follow up the integration agreement and are active in the International Labour Organisation – ILO, the only tripartite structure within the United Nations. They also have meetings with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

### ESSENTIAL COOPERATION

We must be aware of the aspects that distinguish trade unions from the other stakeholders of the civil society, but we must not oppose the civil society. We should pursue concerted actions and cooperation so to enter into stronger strategic alliances. Such alliances have been created within the International Council of the World Social Forum. The dialogue we have entered upon allows us to cooperate on a more equitable world.

The trade union action must be strengthened to develop a project of society based on values, a project in which the human being is respected, the economy is at the service of the human being and not the other way round, and the common interest is prevalent. Another way to arrive at such a model are campaigns such as the one launched by Ubuntu, the world forum of civil society networks. WCL lends its full support to this campaign for a reform of the international financial institutions.

The civil society constitutes a enormous challenge to us. The trade union movement certainly is one of the factors of the construction of a new world in which social justice prevails.



*Hope of a better world*