

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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New Trade Union World Briefing (12 pages)

Peru: Trade Unions Respond to "Flexibilisation"

Brussels, 20 March 2006 (ICFTU OnLine): Despite sustained economic growth over the last five years, unemployment continues to rise in Peru, against a background of endemic poverty, rising job insecurity and dwindling salaried employment, massive cuts in the public sector and relentless violations of trade union rights. Still shell-shocked by ten years of "Fujimorian flexibilisation", Peru's union movement is now rising to the challenge of organising a constantly-changing labour market and reclaiming rights which have been taken away. For example, forming a united trade union front has been formed to press for a reform of the Labour Code. This new Trade Union World Briefing, entitled: "Peru: confronting the transformation in the labour market", contains reports and firsthand accounts of the situation. (<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991223578&Language=EN>)

What do a street vendor, a market porter and the head a small family business have in common? They are all excluded from the social security system, and spurned by the local authorities - but fortunately they are also organised by the Peruvian unions. 61% of the economically active population works in the informal economy. Hence the ambitious and innovative trade union strategy developed to organise the men and women working in informal and unprotected jobs

"Rather than turfing us out, the government should thank us for providing it with a solution to unemployment by creating our own jobs," says Gloria who works as a street vendor in Lima. "Those who used to be salaried employees are now working on the streets, as self employed vendors," confirms Luis Valer Coronado of FEDAMPI, the federation of small and micro industrial enterprises affiliated to the CUT, who is also interviewed in this Briefing.

To offset these workers' exclusion from the social security system, Peruvian trade unions are exploring alternatives, based on the principle of collective solidarity, through affiliation to trade unions and the formation of cooperatives.

This new Briefing describes how women are still discriminated against but are increasingly making their voice heard in the trade union movement, even though the road to equality is still very long. It reports on the new measure being taken by the Peruvian trade union movement to free women from poverty via a system of micro-credit, featuring a project to support the income-generating initiatives of women in the Huancabamba region, where 90% of households are unable to meet their basic needs.

This new Trade Union World Briefing also looks into trade union efforts to protect migrant workers and to step up the offensive against the exploitation of children, in a country where nearly one in three children is involved in child labour.

(*) Also on the subject of organising men and women working in the informal economy, see the 4-minute video portrait of Paulina Paucar Peña (FEDEVAL/CUT), entitled "Training to improve organising skills in the informal economy", which can be viewed on the ICFTU website at:

<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991223544&Language=EN>

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