

# TRADE UNION RESPONSES TO GLOBALIZATION

A review by the Global Union Research Network

Edited by Verena Schmidt

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE • GENEVA

GLOBAL UNION RESEARCH NETWORK

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V. Schmidt (ed.)

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## ACRONYMS

ACP	Africa, Caribbean, Pacific
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act (US)
BWI	Building and Wood Workers' International
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPSU	Caribbean Public Sector Unions
CSR	corporate social responsibility
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
GUN	global union networks
GUF	Global Union Federation
GURN	Global Union Research Network
GVC	global value chain
FDI	foreign direct investment
ICEM	International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICT	information and communication technologies
IFA	International Framework Agreement
IFBWW	International Federation of Building and Wood Workers
IFI	International Financial Institution
IMF	International Metalworkers' Federation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITGLWF	International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation

## Trade union responses to globalization

ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
IUF	International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association
LDC	least developed countries
MFA	Multifibre Agreement
MNE	multinational enterprise
ODM	original design manufacturer
OEM	original equipment manufacturer
OFR	operating and financial review
PSI	Public Services International
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SME	small and medium-sized enterprises
SRN	social responsibility network
TNC	transnational corporation
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TUAC	Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD
UNI	Union Network International
WCL	World Confederation of Labour
WFBW	World Federation of Building and Wood Workers
WSF	World Social Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization

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## PREFACE

This book is about trade union responses to globalization from different parts of the world. Globalization is a complex and multi-faceted process for workers worldwide as are the strategies they must develop to face its challenges.

Successful policies for development and poverty alleviation require the involvement of workers' representatives through trade unions in policy development and implementation. Trade unions are a crucial agent in implementing the ILO Decent Work Agenda and fighting for a fair globalization. This involves the struggle for transparent governance for a fairer globalization, the implementation of labour standards, employment creation, social protection, and poverty alleviation including meeting the UN's Millennium Development Goals and gender equality. But to engage effectively, trade unions – like all civil society organizations – need access to thorough research on globalization and development to inform their arguments.

Trade unions throughout the world are facing the challenges of rapid economic and social changes through a globalization process that is undermining existing regulations and arrangements without providing an adequate new regulatory framework. On national and global levels, trade unions need to strengthen their analytical capacity, their organizational efficiency and their political ability to represent working people effectively in social and economic policy debates in general, and to achieve economic and social justice. The issues of good governance, civil society development and people's involvement in development programmes within the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process or similar restructuring initiatives require a prominent role for workers' organizations. The PRSP approach was initiated by the IMF and the World Bank in 1999. A PRSP describes the macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programmes that a country will pursue over several years to promote broad-based

growth and reduce poverty. These issues are also reflected in the follow up activities on the World Commission Report on the Social Dimension of Globalization which was established by the ILO in 2002.

In response to this the Global Union Research Network (GURN) organized a workshop on “Trade Unions, Globalization and Development” which took place in January 2005 before the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. This book is an outcome of this workshop. All contributions in the book were selected by means of a call for papers and were edited by coordinators and network partners of the Global Union Research Network: Pierre Habbard and Clóvis Scherer on multinational enterprises and corporate governance; Esther Busser on bilateral and multilateral trade agreements; Lawrence Egulu on international financial institutions; Luc Demaret and Lene Olsen on migration and Verena Schmidt on trade union development.

The GURN (see: [www.gurn.info](http://www.gurn.info)) is a platform for trade unionists and researchers dealing with the challenges of globalization from a labour perspective. It is a cooperation project of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC), the Global Union Federations (GUFs), the ILO’s International Institute for Labour Studies (IILS) and the ILO’s Bureau for Workers’ Activities (ACTRAV). Currently, the ITUC, TUAC and ILO/ACTRAV form the steering committee of the GURN.

The objectives of the GURN are to:

- facilitate access to research carried out within the global trade union movement and allied research institutes;
- promote cooperation of trade unions and research institutes on common research issues;
- encourage knowledge and resource sharing, especially between the global North and South; and
- support efforts to enhance the capacity of trade unionists to develop analyses and to increase participation in debates and policy formulations.

The GURN initiates research, provides research information on issues relevant to the labour movement via the Internet, publishes regular newsletters, organizes workshops and online conferences on selected topics and facilitates the development of union-related networks. In cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), the GURN provides a database with the option to download labour-oriented research articles.



The GURN is currently focusing on the following topics:

- Bilateral and regional trade agreements
- Corporate governance
- OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises
- Wages and collective bargaining
- Social security
- Economic alternatives and poverty eradication
- Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and International Financial Institutions (IFIs)
- Migration
- Global trade union strategies (union renewal)
- Sustainable development

The aim of the GURN and this book is to stimulate debate and discussion in trade unions about possible approaches to deal with globalization.

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## *Chapter 11*

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Having promised anonymity, the authors are unable to mention the names of all banana workers, union leaders, political activists, government officials, engineers, academics, businessmen and other community members in Urabá who shared their experiences, energy, time and interest during our field work. Field research support by Vanessa González and Juan Carlos Henao Mejia is gratefully acknowledged.