

Asia: Mapping of Trade Unions' Use of Digital Communication and Education Tools

When Covid-19 was Declared a Global Pandemic

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Executive Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has upended millions of lives since lockdowns or community quarantines were imposed in many countries in the world from March 2020. After more than half a year of restricted movement, social and physical distancing, and minimal face-to-face interaction, trade union work at the global and local levels has also been disrupted. This brief study maps out how global union federations (GUFs) in the Asia-Pacific region, and their national/local affiliates are responding to the pandemic and how they are using alternative online communication and education tools to continue their union work.

The nine global union federations and one international workers' organization included in this mapping, are:

1. ASEAN Services Employees Trade Union Council (ASETUC);
2. Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI Asia-Pacific);
3. Education International (EI);
4. International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF);
5. IndustriAll Global Union
6. International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF);
7. International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF);
8. Public Services International (PSI);
9. UNI Global Union; and
10. StreetNet International.

Given the global scope of the health crisis, this study focused on the GUFs considering their strong links with local/national affiliates and firm commitment to democratic and solidaristic traditions of the trade union movement. The global operational scope of the GUFs equipped them with broader capacities of online communication, making it relatively easy to access the GUF representatives for online interviews. In the process, their responses identified the challenges facing the world of work in this pandemic, how unions responded to the specific needs of their affiliates, and the forms of support needed to effectively use online tools and methods during the crisis period. Overall, this study intends to contribute to identifying and/or developing online tools and formats that can effectively contribute to building cross-border solidarity as well as engaging and empowering workers at the local/shop floor level.

This report details different experiences and contexts of workers in the Asia-Pacific region as affected by the pandemic, and their diverging yet converging efforts to maintain workers' power and solidarity among and within their communities. In the Asia-Pacific region, the coronavirus pandemic affects workers from different sectors or industries, in different countries, in varying ways.

Upon the declaration of a coronavirus pandemic in early March 2020, these nine global unions (left) immediately came to the forefront and proactively responded to their affiliates' needs during the pandemic. Some of these responses ranged from providing immediate humanitarian relief such as food and facemasks; signing international agreements on corporate guidelines on workers' health and safety; campaigns against 'wage-cuts' and 'wage thefts'; and using existing online tools as well as developing innovative online applications for communication, education, and organizing. In general, the GUFs underscored the different economic, political, and labour contexts of their affiliates, hence different issues arose. Covid deaths, infections, job losses, wage cuts, wage thefts, and other sector-specific challenges, confronted the local affiliates of GUFs in this pandemic.

It was not easy at first, but the situation has pushed workers towards using online tools to continue communication, dialogue and to do regular trade union work. For the millions of informal, migrant, and outsourced workers in the Asia-Pacific region, the global unions had difficulty in reaching their members, highlighting the digital divide among workers. Many GUF affiliates and members have decided not to do online learning just yet (i.e. IDWF, StreetNet, ITF), and are focused currently on



Some countries have high speed internet connectivity, such as in South Korea and Australia, while just outside the city centres of Bangladesh or Nepal, online connectivity vanishes.

building trade union resiliency, training members to use online tools, and organizing new essential workers. Other unions however, continue to develop their online education (i.e. EI, BWI, IUF, UNI) and maximize the available online tools to disseminate relevant information and guidance to their members during this pandemic. The global unions also planned to innovate and develop new online applications that could allow unions to do political mapping, negotiations, mobilizing, and organizing.

Using digital technology, the GUF affiliates and members in Asia-Pacific have conducted political mappings of actors in territories and sectors before launching campaigns of workers' issues during the pandemic (i.e. a campaign on safety at work, the Justice Against Wage Theft campaign, and many others). Some workplace-based trade unions were also able to negotiate Occupational Health and Safety protocols before returning to work; informal workers (domestic workers and street vendors) negotiated with local governments on work permits and relief packs; and formal workers negotiated for the recognition of Covid-19 as an occupational disease.

Other trade unions were also able to participate in official online inquiries on human and trade union rights violations with their respective governments (i.e. in India with the Commission on Human Rights; in the Philippines with the

Department of Labor on suspension of labour rights). Furthermore, local trade unions were also able to mobilize online protests; hold offline protests using online campaigning; and organize new essential workers such as Uber drivers, food delivery, and fast food workers.

There are different modes of usage of online tools in different countries and for different union organizations. Usage of online and software applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Zoom, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram varies across countries, across sectors, and across different levels of internet infrastructure and capacities to use them. Divergence in usage would mean more workers in India use WhatsApp, while more workers use Facebook in the Philippines. However, uneven digital capacity among countries exists and still persists.

Some countries have high speed internet connectivity, such as in South Korea and Australia, while just outside the city centres of Bangladesh or Nepal, online connectivity vanishes. Capacities of usage likewise vary, such as workers in rural areas have no smart phones, and workers in the informal sectors need funding for mobile data just to participate in Zoom meetings. Still, trade unions at the global and local levels use these online tools to communicate, provide information, build solidarity, and strengthen unions and connectivity among workers.

Introduction

As of the end of September 2020, the coronavirus pandemic had infected more than 30 million people globally, with around 970,000 deaths. The pandemic is far from over in the Asia-Pacific region. The region, the home of half of the world's population, has the country with the third highest cases of infections, namely India, as well as the country with the longest and strictest lockdown in the world, the Philippines. However, the Asia-Pacific region is also the home of the top nine countries, many of them low-income countries such as Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam that successfully suppressed the epidemic.



Many unique challenges have been recognised, including different levels of internet infrastructure, uneven digital capacity and limited access to resources such as smartphones, laptops and data.

This brief study maps out how Global Union Federations (GUFs) in the Asia-Pacific region, and their national/local affiliates, are responding to the pandemic using alternative online communication and education tools. In the process, their responses have identified the specific needs of their affiliates and the forms of support needed to effectively use online tools and methods during the crisis period. Many unique challenges have been recognised, including different levels of internet infrastructure, uneven digital capacity and limited access to resources such as smartphones, laptops and data. Overall, this study contributes to identifying and/or developing online tools and formats that can effectively contribute to building cross-border solidarity, as well as engaging and empowering workers at the local/shop floor level.

This report is based on 11 key informants (KI) from nine global unions and one international organization; nine KIs were interviewed online through video platforms, while two submitted written responses to the research questions. Given the global scope of the health crisis, this study focused on the perspectives of the

GUFs considering their strong links with local/national affiliates and firm commitment to democratic and solidaristic traditions of the trade union movement. The global operational scope of the GUFs equipped them with broader capacities of online communication, making it relatively easy to access the GUF representatives for online interviews.

The data-gathering and analysis methods of the study uphold a participatory and action-oriented approach to research in keeping with ethical research standards.

The structure of this report is as follows:

- a)** challenges to workers' conditions in the time of pandemic and the responses of GUFs and their affiliates;
- b)** the use of digital tools and methods for communication and the challenges encountered;
- c)** recommendations for supporting trade unions to use digital tools; and
- d)** concluding summary. There is a table at the end of the report providing more details of the inputs provided from GUF respondents.

Challenges to workers' conditions in the time of pandemic and the responses of GUFs and their affiliates

¹ The IUF global union in the Asia-Pacific region covers 21 countries and has staff teams working from home in seven different countries namely: Myanmar, Thailand, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh as well as project staff in Hong Kong and the Philippines.

The coronavirus pandemic has challenged and continues to challenge life as we know it and the world of work. In the Asia-Pacific region, the impact of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns has affected workers along economic, political and social aspects. Across industrial sectors, across formal or informal sectors, and across countries, the most prominent economic impact of the pandemic has been the massive loss of jobs. According to the ILO, 57% or 175 million of the expected 305 million workers to lose their jobs globally are located in Asia-Pacific. The region has a workforce of around 1.9 billion people, the majority of whom, at 1.3 billion people, are informally employed.

The manufacturing sector in the Asia-Pacific region has been severely affected, particularly in China, due to the fall in industrial production coupled with the shutdown of factories. The vast network of global supply chains in the region massively affected the industrial sectors in differentiated degrees per country, such as huge job losses in the manufacturing sectors in Bangladesh, the Philippines, Indonesia and Pakistan, including the collapse of the garment sector.

Rajendra Acharya of UNI argued that huge job losses are happening across sectors such as in Bangladesh, Philippines, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, where the manufacturing industry is heavily affected due to disruptions in supply. **"Even though the Covid cases in Sri Lanka and Myanmar are not that high, because of the supply chain disruptions, joblessness is massively**

happening from manufacturing to distribution," Rajendra Acharya said.

Globally, the Covid-19 pandemic raised concerns from automobile, chemical, electronics and aircraft manufacturers regarding the availability of raw material. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that the Covid-19 outbreak could cause global FDI to shrink by 5%-15%, due to the downfall in the manufacturing sector coupled with factory shutdowns. The report further adds that **"the electronics sector, smartphones and consumer electronics companies have commenced a reduction in production operations and postponed the introduction of new products coupled with the Covid-19 outbreak, which in turn has interrupted the supply of components"**.

Job losses are also high in the tourism sector, particularly in the gaming/casino industries, as well as in the media, entertainment, arts, and IT industries. According to the **International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)**¹ global union federation, the tourism and hotel industries have been hit the hardest in terms of economic impacts. Globally, this industry has lost 48 million jobs as workers in hotels and casino resorts were sent home. However, according to **Hidayat Green ield, IUF Regional Secretary in the Asia-Pacific:** **"Everyone is affected differently. There is no generic information for each sector."**

In the Philippines, all resort workers were sent home without pay but retained their jobs; whilst in Indonesia,

Challenges to workers' conditions in the time of pandemic and the responses of GUFs and their affiliates



Above fl:

Rajendra Acharya;
Hidayat Greenfield;
Kate Lappin

hotel workers were able to negotiate 50% - 100% basic pay before getting sent home. When many countries still did not open in July, hotel resort employers started terminating workers around August. Workers in the fast food and beverage, food delivery, agriculture and fisheries industries, have been greatly affected as well. **"The pandemic has shown the weaknesses in the global food system; the food production and processing sectors are working full time in the time of pandemic,"** Greenfield stressed.

For workers in the construction, and wood and forestry industries, **the Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI)** global union's approximate 76 million workers have been affected by the pandemic in Asia-Pacific. **"The pandemic, which has compelled businesses to shut down and workers to stay home, has raised the jobs problem to crisis proportions."** (BWI, 2020:3). The migrant and informal workers in these industries are among the most vulnerable and marginalized in the region with or without Covid-19. **"Wage cuts were also reported in the region particularly the migrant workers, informal and outsource workers."** (Rajendra Acharya, UNI Global Union, 2020).

UNI Global Union² and Public Services International (PSI)³ represent workers

in the private and public services. PSI's largest sector is health care where workers are considered 'frontline' or 'essential' workers in this pandemic. **PSI Regional Secretary Kate Lappin** asserted that, **"workers in the health sector have been significantly affected by the pandemic. They have faced exposure to serious health risks, and extended hours with little to no leave, and have experienced discrimination and harassment with some even being evicted from their homes"**.

The PSI in Asia-Pacific has been supporting the unions who organise community health care workers in Nepal, India and Pakistan who have higher risks due to the lack of PPE (personal protective equipment) and have been instrumental in the prevention and control of the virus and in primary care during the pandemic, yet are still not recognised as public health workers. PSI likewise monitors their members in health emergency services such as rescue and ambulance service workers, as well as municipal workers, who are often engaged in contact tracing. Other PSI affiliates and members are affected by issues such as job losses, workers not getting paid, and workers having to deliver public services during lockdowns without adequate PPE.

Similarly, many members of UNI's union affiliates in the private services sector are particularly affected with

² UNI Asia-Pacific represents workers in 172 unions and 25 countries in the services sector, including health care, retail, home care, postal and delivery, financial, media, the arts, cleaners and security providers, etc.

³ PSI globally comprises 700 union affiliates in 154 countries, representing 30 million workers who deliver public services including health care, utilities, local and regional government, public administration and public culture, the arts and media services.



Above fl:
Farizan Fajari;
Anand Singh



high exposure to the virus in terms of fatalities and infections. **“Some employers took advantage of the pandemic in laying-off workers in private hospitals, manufacturing, finance and in banking,”** according to Rajendra Acharya, UNI Global Union. UNI also forms part of the GUF network in Southeast Asia, ASETUC or the **ASEAN Service Employees Trade Union Council**.⁴

The impacts of the pandemic on workers in this region include unilateral dismissals; half wages; unpaid wages; lack of social protection; flexible working hours under WFH (‘work-from-home’) schemes; difficulties in negotiating new CBAs; and communication and organizing issues among others. According to **Farizan Fajari, then Executive Secretary of ASETUC**: **“Many of them have been ordered to stay at home without getting paid. They need food but they cannot work. The lockdown scheme made everything even worse. Our workers are afraid of what will happen next.”**

As countries around the globe implemented different forms of community quarantines, the shutdown of schools and suspension of public transportation were the most common forms of lockdown. **Chief Regional Coordinator Anand Singh of Education International (EI) global union** has been working since March 2020 for their member-teachers in the Asia-Pacific region.

“

As countries around the globe implemented different forms of community quarantines, the shutdown of schools and suspension of public transportation were the most common forms of lockdown.

“We are taking this seriously because the education of millions of children is being affected by the pandemic. In Asia-Pacific alone, more than 900 million children are out of school,” Anand Singh revealed. This would imply that millions of students have no access to regular teaching while millions of teachers need to upgrade their skills for online teaching just to reach their students.

For the transportation sector, the **International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF)**⁵ in South Asia monitored the conditions of workers in the formal and informal transport sectors such as those in the ports and railways, airports and transport delivery sectors, and those working as cab or bus drivers. As transport systems stopped, many workers were affected, particularly contract workers who have no bargaining power. Their salaries were cut and they suffered violations of their rights, as many governments suspended labour laws for one year in this pandemic.

⁴ The BWI, UNI and PSI Global Union Federations in the Asia-Pacific region formed ASETUC in 2007 to coordinate their actions within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN.

⁵ The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) global union covers workers in the ports and railways, airports, cab or bus drivers, and transport delivery sectors.

Challenges to workers' conditions in the time of pandemic and the responses of GUFs and their affiliates



Above fl: Sangam Tripathy; Fish Ip; Oksana Abboud

⁵ The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) global union covers workers in the ports and railways, airports, cab or bus drivers, and transport delivery sectors.

⁶ The IDWF covers two types of domestic workers, those who are living in a household (live-in), and those who are live-out.

⁷ StreetNet International is a global alliance which represents street vendors, market vendors, hawkers or mobile vendors and cross-border traders in 57 countries and 59 organizations found in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America.

In India, **"the worst hit were the migrant workers because they lost their jobs and they didn't know where to get their subsistence, they had no savings. They had to walk for 200 kilometres just to get home. During the pandemic, the government stopped their responsibility towards the workers,"** says **Sangam Tripathy, ITF Assistant Regional Secretary**.

The **International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)**⁶ immediately received many calls when the pandemic began in March. IDWF members, both local and migrant domestic workers, called, **"because they lost their jobs, they had no food, no money for rent, and many other problems. It was a serious crisis,"** says **Fish Ip, IDWF Asia-Pacific Regional Coordinator**. For the street and market vendors or traders, whose working space is the public space, life for people in this sector became very hard, particularly for women. **"So, when we communicated with our members, most of them were desperate, they didn't know what to do,**

how to manage, they were all complaining that they would die faster of hunger than from the coronavirus," says **Oksana Abboud, International Secretary for StreetNet International**⁷.

As massive job losses and hunger have been seen from India to the thousands of migrant workers repatriated to the Philippines, the global unions in the Asia-Pacific region have been battling to save jobs and to protect workers. Through all this, **"the unions have been instrumental in reaching out and extending relief to workers,"** says **Rajeev Sharma, BWI Regional Policy Officer-in-Charge**. **"We need to show solidarity to them, we need to convince them that we will all be okay, as long as we keep the solidarity and of course have a clear plan. Trade unions are the key – their connection to their members is essential, to understand the problems and to know the solutions,"** adds Farizan of ASETUC.



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The use of digital tools and methods for communication and the challenges encountered

⁸ The Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI) is present in 21 countries in the Asia-Pacific region in the construction and forestry and wood industries.

Amidst the new pandemic realities of community quarantines, lockdowns, and social distancing, trade unionists had to consider how to continue union work, particularly organizing work, and how to manage the continuous and effective flow of communication. Particularly crucial for GUFs was how to co-ordinate solidarity and actions between the global and the local during the pandemic.

As can be seen in the quick and continuing trade union responses to the pandemic, trade unionists adapted rapidly to the changing times; as **Education International (EI) Chief Regional Coordinator, Anand Singh**, said: “**The tools have changed but the work has not stopped.**” All the global unions’ first responses to the pandemic have been how to maintain communication with

their leaders and members in different countries. Sensing the importance of good communication systems, the majority of the global unions provided funds for their affiliates to establish online communication systems, such as **Education International’s** Covid-19 Response Fund from the donations of development partners and 7% of EI’s annual budget. The economic burden placed on workers using mobile data prompted the **International Transport Workers’ Federation** to provide data packs worth 100 rupees to join Zoom meetings and to continue **organizing using digital technology**. For the street vendors and traders

harshly affected by the lockdowns, **StreetNet International** immediately responded by providing emergency funds for communication. “**We introduced funds for our affiliates to establish good communication systems, such as an option for them to buy equipment, buy airtime for their phones, or to buy internet data,**” says **Oksana Abboud of StreetNet International**.

BWI affiliates and members had no option but to quickly adapt to the use of technology upon the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. Even though it was not easy for many, the BWI trade unionists have to “**discuss and deliberate on key issues and also undertake lobby and advocacy efforts with key stakeholders,**” says **Rajeev Sharma of BWI**.

The global union classified their online meetings according to two different platforms:

- (a) **internal meetings and online deliberations** – union level meetings with office bearers; and
- (b) **external meetings** – union affiliates organizing webinars and dialogues with employer organizations and other stakeholders.

However, some challenges in using online tools for BWI were the limitations of online platforms to reach out and build contacts with members on the ground, who had limited familiarity and access to digital technology. This revealed the need for workers to have access to regular training and continued exposure to online platforms in order for unions to use these tools effectively.

Similarly, the **IDWF** tried all forms of communication available and possible,

Below:

Rajeev Sharma;
Apoorva Kaiwar



The use of digital tools and methods for communication and the challenges encountered

mostly through SMS, telephone calls, WhatsApp, Zoom, Twitter and Messenger, and to a lesser extent via email and Viber. However, many domestic workers and leaders have difficulty using Zoom, email and other online tools. **“I tried teaching our leaders in Cambodia to use Zoom, because two thirds of their members don’t have Android phones. So, the communication was a challenge for them. I thought Zoom would be helpful because you can use it through landlines or telephones, or online using mobile data, and some can dial in. It took me two hours to teach the leaders, but not all were successful,”** explains **Fish Ip, IDWF International Coordinator**. Given the uneven capacity of members to use online tools, the IDWF is conducting half-day trainings on how to use Zoom.

The majority of the GUFs have used established online platforms for communication during the pandemic. But other GUFs are planning to go beyond the mainstream in digital technology.

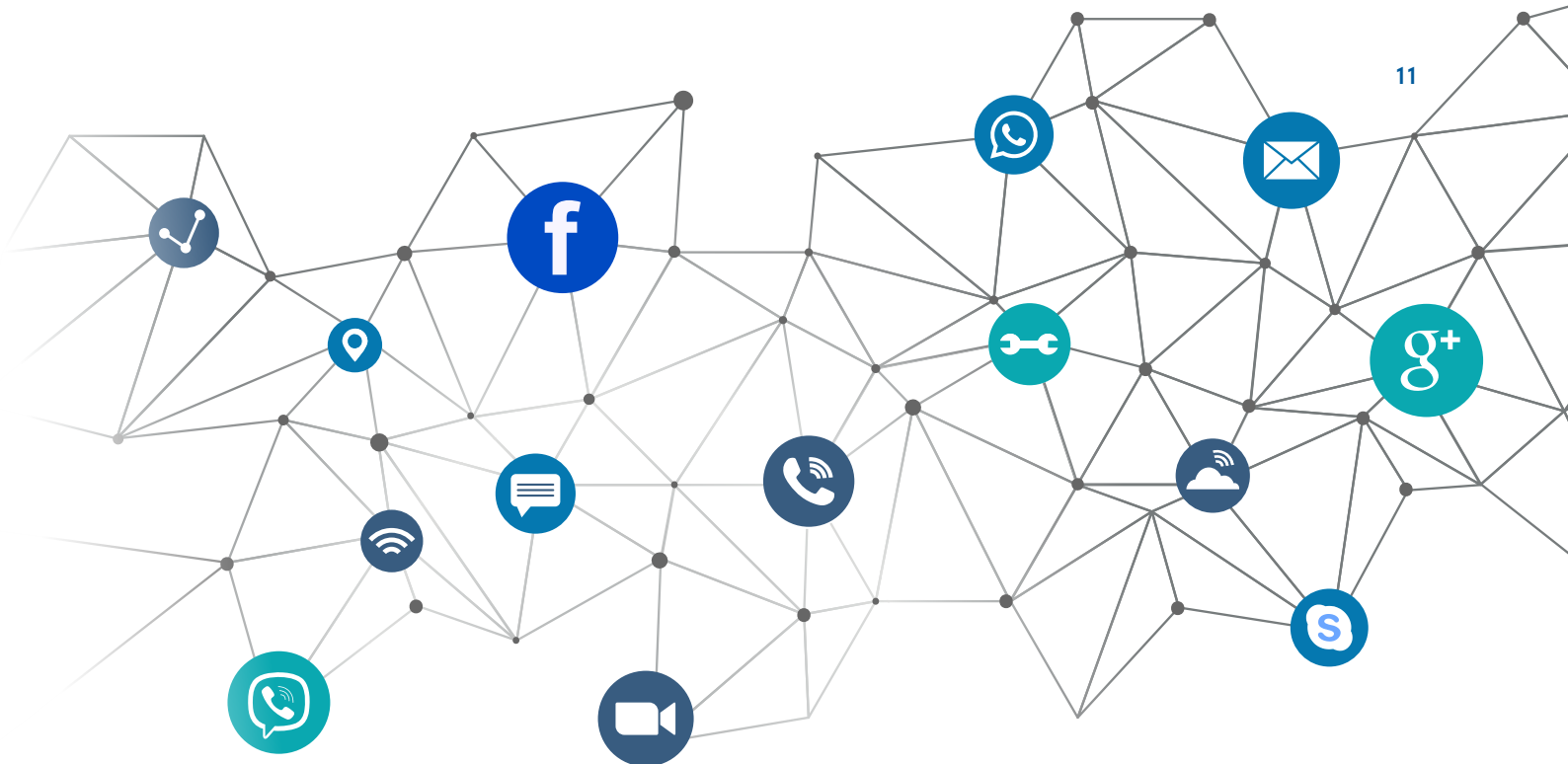
For UNI Global Union, **“our initial response to the pandemic has been to use available online and offline platforms and methods to continue union work despite the pandemic”**, says **Rajendra Acharya**. PSI is planning to go beyond the typical online tools and platforms in conducting their meetings, webinars and press conferences, because **“after a while, people got tired of that method. We are trying to change our webinar formats”**, says **Kate Lappin, PSI Asia-Pacific Regional Secretary**. Education International (EI) likewise observed increasing Zoom meeting fatigue among users, as well as different levels of capacity in using technology, and poor internet connectivity or digital infrastructure which can hinder the flow of communication among members.

“Many leaders and members of our affiliate unions rely heavily on social media and WhatsApp for information and communication. Very few consult information from reliable sources”, opines **Hidayat Greenfield, IUF Regional Secretary in Asia-Pacific**. Due to this, IUF has to be the reliable source of information about Covid-19, its implications for workers, and on how to continue union work during the pandemic. IUF regularly provides guidance on collective bargaining using their own selected online platforms.

Some GUFs innovated to develop their own online platforms to conduct a whole range of trade union work, such as union meetings; planning and strategizing; campaigns and advocacy; negotiations; mobilizing; and internal or external organizing. Still in the works, ITF and PSI are planning to develop their own software applications to assist their work in organizing and political strategizing. ITF has noted the software applications designed in Africa to organize cab drivers and intends to adapt a similar technology to organize Uber drivers in South Asia. **Sangam Tripathy of ITF** says: **“If I talk with an Uber driver about trade unionism, he quickly loses interest after 10 minutes. But when he doesn’t have any passengers for two to three hours, he will be constantly looking at his mobile phone. We have to make the content of online tools more interesting.”** The organizing app will be useful for drivers if they can listen to music, watch videos, or see WhatsApp messages while waiting for the next passenger. Using online games or quizzes and converting technical data to infographics will bring digital communication to a more interesting level. PSI reveals that lately they’ve been using another online tool that will allow them to strategize and do political mapping useful in mounting online campaigns,



Among the changes in the use of online tools for PSI are developing podcasts in multiple languages; making webinars more interactive; and more virtual press conferences.



by analyzing or understanding political actors in certain areas. Among the changes in the use of online tools for PSI are developing podcasts in multiple languages; making webinars more interactive; and more virtual press conferences.

The **UNI** Global Union pandemic response likewise highlights support for online organizing, also called remote organizing or digital organizing. According to **UNI's Rajendra Acharya**: **"We have been doing this in the finance, IT, postal, and care sectors. Best practices involve the UNI SCORE (Strategic Campaign, Organizing and Research) Department which is about strategic organizing plans in different contexts. We are also encouraging affiliates to sign up for training in how to use digital organizing tools."**

For **PSI Asia-Pacific, Regional Secretary Kate Lappin** mentions the importance of responding to the issues of workers and supporting workers' demands, particularly those unions resorting to online strikes, protests and virtual organizing activities. Lappin argues that **"for the workers and unions, when the option for physical collective action is taken away, we need to support other forms of organising and expressing solidarity. Physical collective action has been reduced in this pandemic but there are also other times when it's not possible**

or safe to hold mass protests. Finding creative methods for solidarity can help in the long term". PSI is further expanding the gains made in the usage of online tools that can be used beyond communication and education, and towards organizing, strategizing, planning, negotiations and political mapping.

IUF global union is also using online tools to organize workers as the pandemic highlights specific challenges facing certain job categories, namely the fast food, food processing, food delivery and cleaning services sectors. Workers are organizing in these sectors during the pandemic as they face health and safety issues, being at the frontline. For example, Burger King workers in Indonesia organized for the first time, based on these issues. **"As lockdowns increased demands for fast food deliveries and digital food deliveries like Grab Food, workers are organizing due to the immense stress and the lack of accident insurance policies,"** says **IUF Regional Secretary Hidayat Greenfield**. He further stressed that as IUF trade unions survived war, genocide and famine in the last 100 years, **"we need resilient unions, not necessarily strong ones, to survive the challenges. If we build unions like bricks, they will be easy to smash; but if we build them like bamboo that sways and bends to survive, then they are resilient unions"**.

The use of digital tools and methods for communication and the challenges encountered

Similarly, **ASETUC** in Southeast Asia is developing an online application for organizing which can establish, track and offer union services (i.e. decent work, social protection) for non-standard workers in the services sectors. **“Even though the online tools that have been used during the pandemic are very influential in replacing the conventional ways, for us, it is important to have a balance between physical activities and online activities,”** Farizan clarified. Cooperating during joint campaigns such as identifying urgent issues in the pandemic, strengthens collaboration and communication among the GUFs. One example would be the initiatives of the tri-GUF alliance under ASETUC, which has waged campaigns with GUF members on the issues of Transitional Justice Mechanism Campaigns to raise awareness about wage theft in the region; and the campaign to recognize Covid-19 as an occupational disease. For BWI, in between the different strategies used to respond to their members’ needs, BWI regularly monitors, collects, and disseminates information on actions and campaigns, such as joining the Justice Against Wage Theft campaign.

Upon establishing online communication among their affiliates, the GUFs were able to provide an immediate humanitarian response in the first months of the pandemic, such as donations of food and fund relief for those who needed them most. **“We provided immediate relief, we raised some funding and sent it to our affiliates to do humanitarian work. It was also like organizing - how to keep the human touch in the time of social distancing, to keep track, know how the members are doing and offer some help,”** says **Fish Ip** on **IDWF’s** emergency responses to their members in Asia. There were also many stories of local trade unions building solidarity with other trade unions to support immediate

relief to many distressed workers in this pandemic.

For transport workers in India, the solidarity campaigns took place by posting short video clips on WhatsApp of railway workers donating face masks and PPE to other workers; transport workers raising funds for community kitchens to feed hungry migrant workers on the road; and Uber drivers in eight Indian cities pooling resources to support other cab drivers. **“In this pandemic, there are so many sad stories such as workers losing jobs, migrants walking for miles to their homes, parents withdrawing their children from schools, etc. But we cannot help by sending money. So, we thought about how the workers can help,”** explained **Sangam Tripathy of ITF**.

In addition, democratic challenges to the **organizational structures** of unions across the countries have shaped how workers respond to the pandemic. For IUF and BWI, some of their members are located in plantations, rural areas, and agricultural fields mostly out of range of the current online networks. For IUF, **Hidayat Greenfield** recounted one of their Zoom calls with women members in Pakistan who didn’t have good internet connection: **“Some have no videos, some have had to drop out, but we do not allow this to disrupt our calls, even if there are children screaming in the background, or there’s a lot of background noise. I say this is fine because this is the real world.”**

Greenfield further explained that it would be digital discrimination to limit the meetings to only those people with good connections, **“with some bad connectivity and a lot of background noise, we cannot expect perfect studio silence. We even had Zoom calls with members who were in the banana fields. I saw the bananas in the background, and it was great!”** he added.

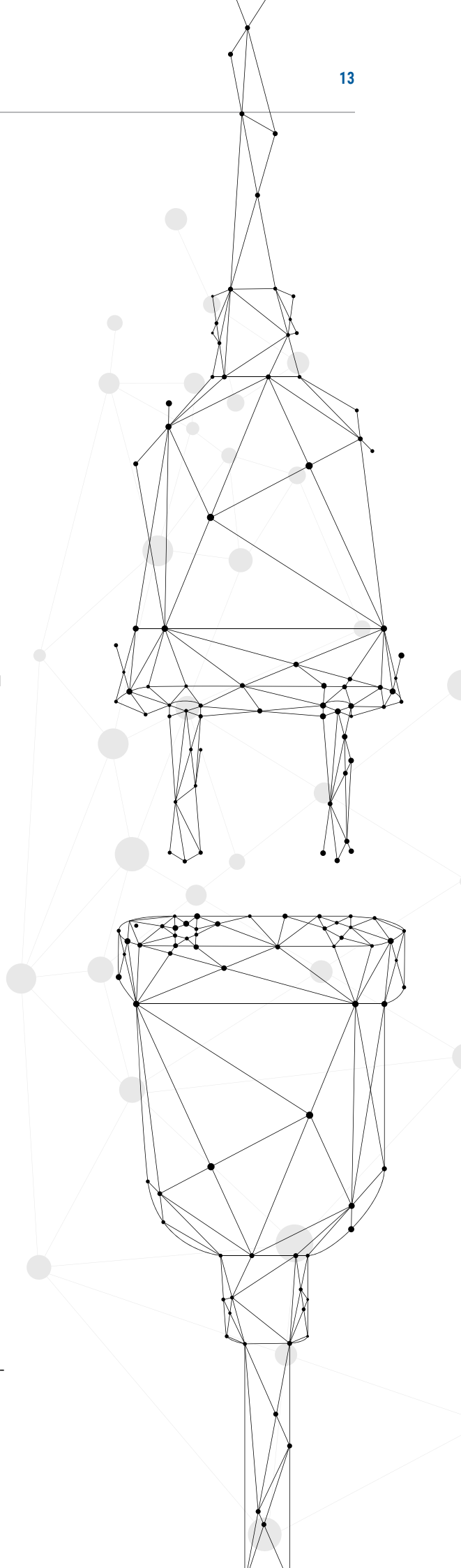


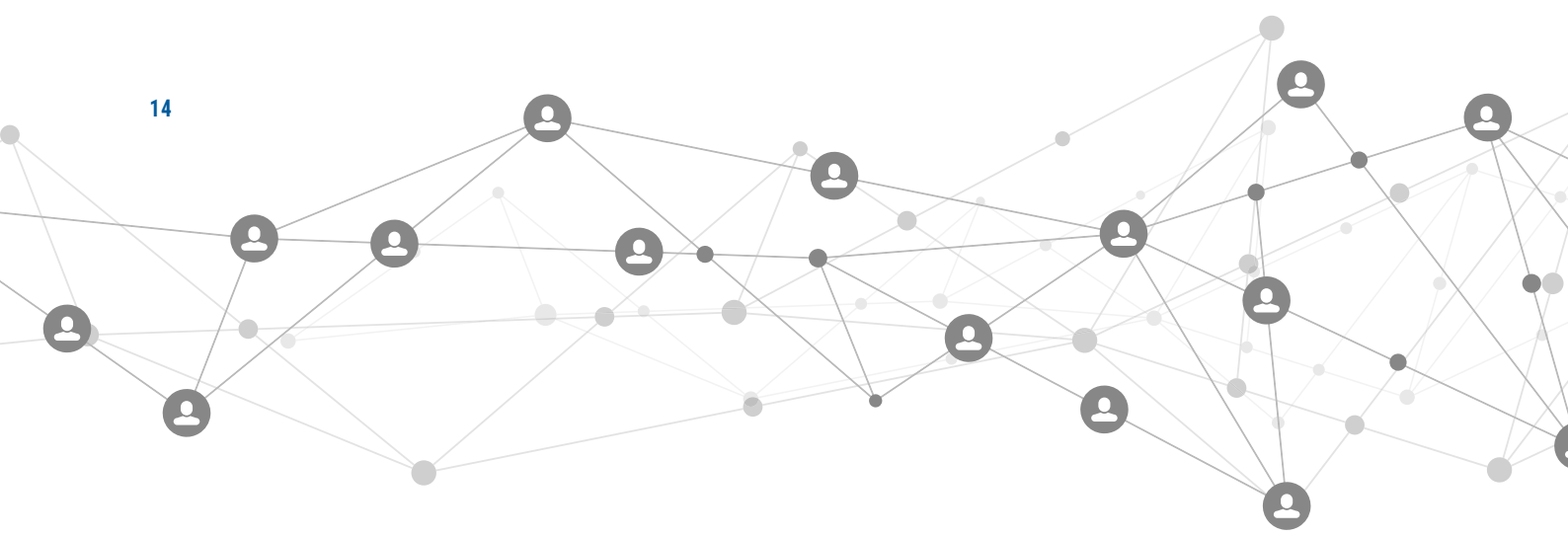
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Given these contexts, trade unions and workers were thrust into the digital world as the pandemic situation forced everyone to use digital options. The trade union movement had to use online tools to continue their union work in communication; information dissemination; campaigns and advocacy; building solidarity; mobilizing; collective negotiations; and organizing.

However, differentiated contexts and capacities characterize the uneven IT infrastructures among countries and economic sectors in the Asia-Pacific region. **“The virus does not discriminate whether you are rich or poor, man or woman. Whatever race or gender you have, the virus doesn’t discriminate. But it discriminates in terms of our capacities to respond and our approaches,”** says **UNI Global Union Asia-Pacific Secretary-General Rajendra Acharya**. Some countries have high-speed connectivity, especially richer countries (i.e. South Korea, Japan, Australia), while others have medium or low internet connectivity and no connectivity at all in rural areas (i.e. Nepal, India, Bangladesh) or in agricultural sectors. **“Not everyone has access and is trained enough to engage with the digital tools, compounding the issues of connectivity and accessibility, which is not a problem for people in developed countries,”** further adds UNI’s Rajendra Acharya.

In general, all the affiliates and members of the global unions have had to rely on different online tools to communicate, update and share information during the pandemic. WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Messenger, Zoom, YouTube and other online platforms were used by different organizations based in different countries with different con-





The use of digital tools and methods for communication and the challenges encountered



How to safely use online platforms, and the need to develop critical thinking to identify harmful and unreliable information in social media, are issues that were raised by some GUFs.

texts, capacities and preferences. For example, GUF affiliates in India widely use WhatsApp, while many members in the Philippines use Facebook. However, uneven capacities of members include lack of equipment and gadgets for members in rural areas; some have difficulty using online/email applications in certain sectors (i.e. domestic workers); and still some prefer actual physical interaction to online interaction.

Examples of uneven capacities and access to online tools can be seen with EI affiliates in South Asia, where many teachers were not trained to use online tools. **“The capacity of teachers in primary public schools, upon the announcement of the government to shift to online teaching, was such that they could only reach 30% to 40% of students,”** states **El’s Anand Singh**. **“However, if you look at Hong Kong, South Korea and Australia, our affiliates there reported that the government provided support to shift from physical teaching to online teaching, the tools were available, and the capacities of teachers were there.”** Despite different levels of capacity and poor internet connectivity or digital infrastructure, EI believes that technology should support the work of educators and trade unionists. However, it should not replace them.

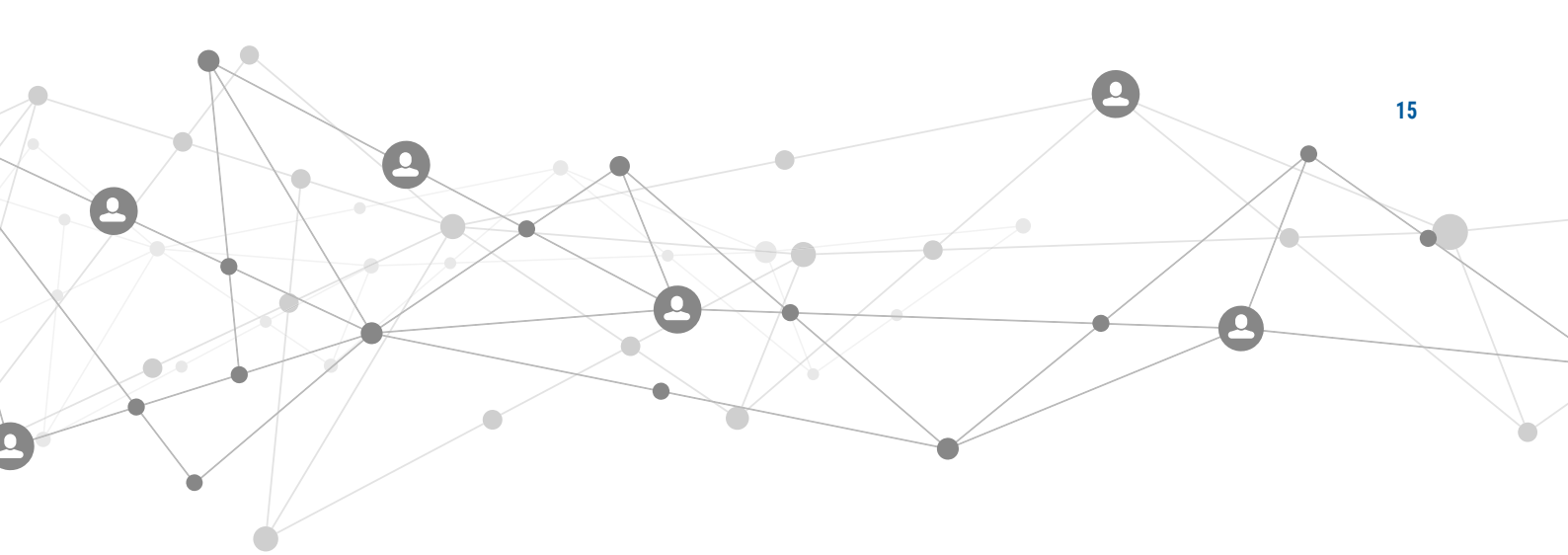
For transport workers in India, the main challenges are the lack of smart phones among workers, the lack of a stable electrical infrastructure and unstable internet connectivity, making it necessary to

prepare for technical back-ups in case of brown-outs.

“Workers are interested and they can learn even using the new technologies. It is not a barrier for workers. The workers know that we can use technology to communicate even though it was initially forced on us because of this pandemic,” opines **Sangam Tripathy of ITF**. In response to the problem of uneven digital infrastructure in many countries, **Apoorva Kaiwar, IndustriAll Regional Secretary** said that this is the responsibility of the governments. Thus, the IndustriAll Global Union shall **“make a case for cheap, accessible internet services everywhere, whether it’s in rural or urban areas. This is the responsibility of each country, to provide good internet services available to everyone. Internet infrastructure should be seen as a public utility service, like water or electricity,”** adds Apoorva Kaiwar.

Most importantly, how to safely use online platforms, and the need to develop critical thinking to identify harmful and unreliable information in social media, are issues that were raised by some GUFs. For IDWF, there is a need to provide social media literacy for their members. **“We are already used to Facebook and other online tools, but how do we develop the ability to distinguish between real or fake news?”** asks **Fish Ip**.

Other concerns for domestic workers are how to broaden access to telecommunications for their members due to



the economic burden it may pose; and developing online education platforms that are interesting with new messages, and with skills-upgrading mechanisms.

Likewise, for public and private services workers, the need for advanced skills and knowledge in this digital world, such as knowing the legal implications of using digital signatures in the workplace, would be useful. Particularly needed as well, are advanced skills on how to motivate and organize people as well as being updated on changing labour laws in some countries. **“The world of work we want is no longer the future world of work because we are now in a changed new world of work. The future of work and digitization is impacting all sectors, not only in private or public services, it is impacting manufacturing, transportation, education and all aspects of life,”** says **Rajendra Acharya of UNI Asia-Pacific.**

In sum, despite the difficulties during the pandemic, the global unions have responded quickly and have continued trade union work. The trade union responses, aside from the emergency humanitarian response, were replete with union organizing work, namely:

- (a) **building solidarity** among workers to support other workers across sectors and across countries;
- (b) **providing reliable information** and sharing of information internally and externally;
- (c) **launching campaigns** to protect workers against wage cuts and terminations;
- (d) **negotiating guidelines** with governments and corporations on how

to respond to the pandemic within their sectors;

- (e) **campaigning** for workers' safety before going back to work;
- (f) **educational webinars** on Covid-19, its impacts, and labour policies affecting workers; and
- (g) **training members** on negotiation skills and organizing skills using online platforms.

However, informal workers from the transport sector and street vendors were particularly challenged as they were the most negatively affected when lockdowns closed off public spaces, which are their workplaces. Negotiating with local governments for safe public work spaces and relief support were the first actions they had to undertake.

'Stay-in' or 'live-in' domestic workers were 'locked-in' inside their household workspaces during the pandemic, making it difficult for them to take days off and join union activities. Millions of migrant workers were massively dislocated, retrenched and repatriated in the region. Images of migrant workers walking on the Indian highways, and plane- and boatloads of Filipino migrant workers returning to Asian air and sea-ports, filled the first weeks and months of the pandemic.

Many governments have been taken by surprise resulting in inadequate economic responses, and many workers have been left behind resulting in massive social and humanitarian crises, particularly in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The governments should have immediately activated social dialogue or the tripartite-plus social partners in the

The use of digital tools and methods for communication and the challenges encountered

world of work, to respond to the health crisis which has become an economic and humanitarian crisis.

During the pandemic, workers and their trade unions have had to contend with assaults on democratic rights as political repression heightened in some countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Political and trade union rights, such as freedom of association and collective bargaining, have been affected and have become a formidable challenge during this pandemic. **“The right to freedom of association and collective bargaining has always been difficult in Asia-Pacific. These rights have been suspended or compromised during the pandemic. In the Philippines, an Anti-Terror Law has been enacted during the pandemic which endangers the rights of activists such as trade unionists,”** states **Rajendra Acharya of UNI**. The lockdowns became opportunities for some countries to impose policy reforms such as in India and Indonesia, where governments pushed for privatization of electricity and other utilities in a time of difficulty for workers. In some countries, **“governments are using the pandemic to strengthen their control over society and reduce democratic spaces. Some restrictions are necessary but others are used to further their power and the interests of corporations”**, adds **Kate Lappin, PSI Regional Secretary**. IndustriAll affiliates in Asia-Pacific also tell stories of union-busting in many factories, particularly in the RMG (ready-made garment) sector. **“Employers have used the pandemic and the excuse of excess capacity to target unionised factories for closure, and union members for retrenchment,”** says **Apoorva Kaiwar of IndustriAll Global Union**.

The labor rights of teachers were also sacrificed in this pandemic. In India, the government suspended labour laws

in two states and deducted one-day salaries from teachers without consultations. In Nepal, teachers protested on the streets for a month for their basic salaries, while in Sri Lanka, teachers were not paid. Even in Australia, the jobs of tenured and contract teachers are at risk. And in the Philippines, trade unionists criticizing the government were attacked, targeted and even killed. **“Yes, these are challenging times, but the rights and benefits of workers must not be taken for granted. This is not a good time for trade union rights. People are scared of reporting trade union rights violations, but international solidarity is strengthening,”** insists **Anand Singh of Education International**.

PSI was able to use online tools innovatively to participate in a digital inquiry in India with the Commission on Human Rights to look at human rights violations during the pandemic. PSI followed it up with a longer online consultation with the Commission bringing in presentations from workers. Other examples of using online tools to push back against anti-democratic practices include online protests in the Philippines, collaborative actions between street vendors and transport workers, and educational webinars on how to protect labor rights in the middle of lockdowns. These initiatives may be ad hoc collaborations at this time, emerging out of the pandemic; however GUF representatives (i.e. PSI, ITF, IUF, UNI) have underscored the need to continue dialogue and communication with other GUFs in the region.

According to **Rajendra Acharya of UNI Asia Pacific**, **“Further challenges for some countries are on how to use digital platforms to push back against trade union repression and the anti-democratic practices of some governments in Asia-Pacific”**.

Recommendations for supporting trade unions to use digital tools

From the results of the trade union mapping relating to the use of online tools for communication and education, this report advances the recommendations from the GUFs as key informants and the recommendations from the research:

A. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE GUFs

- **Content of online communication and education to be more interesting for workers.** The training materials could be in different innovative forms, such as audio, visual, and print which are compatible with online / digital platforms, presented in a simple and innovative format. The topics could include how to organize online training; trainers' training; thematic training; etc. The content of online training should also be developed to cover how workers can undertake online campaigns, dialogues, and capacity building.
- **Digital literacy and critical/responsible use of online tools and platforms.** The deluge of information available online can be confusing; users need to develop critical thinking to distinguish between what is useful or harmful information, and what is real and fake data, and develop knowledge on data privacy in the cyber world. Training for members to familiarize themselves with the various online tools useful for their unions, such as how to join or host Zoom meetings, how to use emails, and how to use online applications would be relevant for workers.
- **Develop digital tools and applications that can serve unions.** Even in the time of pandemic, the tools have changed but union work remains the same. However, whilst online tools provide more opportunities for GUFs to connect with rank-and-file members, not only union leaders, it is important for some GUFs to go beyond the commercial-based and mainstream online applications (i.e. social media apps) to do their union work. Online tools need to support union work such as negotiations, political mapping, organizing, advocacy/campaigning and many other union tasks. For this important union work, data security and privacy are necessary elements that should be present in their online platforms.
- **For GUFs** - Campaign at policy level and legal framework, data centres and data protections, and capacity development of affiliate unions. "The usage of online meeting tools should be coupled with improved maintenance / sharing of records and in collecting as well as addressing grievances of workers," Rajeev Sharma explains.

Recommendations for supporting trade unions to use digital tools

A. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE GUFs (CONTINUED)

- **For union federations, national centers, and their leadership** it is recommended to train the rank-and-file leadership on use of digital platforms, use of electronic media to manage effective communication via online tools and run online campaigns.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

- **Develop digital information and education management systems** within organizations that have the capacity to gather, secure and store data. These online platforms could also house and host the online education systems of the unions. The digital information platforms should also have the capacity to disseminate information and data for the purposes of the trade unions. Such trade union purposes include guidance in collective bargaining negotiations to provide secure and reliable information, especially in the time of the pandemic. Digital management systems or online platforms for the organization can be developed by IT companies based on the needs and specifications of the organization. The GUFs can develop and manage their own online platforms to house their databases, learning systems and information systems. This requires a focused IT staff to manage and operate the online platform.
- **Innovate digital communications systems** that go beyond online meetings and webinars and are more interactive and participative. This platform should include effective use of social media and complement the existence of the online platform. Two examples from the GUFs include the internal blogs of IUFG which are used to disseminate credible information, and PSI's own online tool that allows them to strategize and do political mapping. The implication of this recommendation requires the coordination of communications / media and IT staff to manage the communications system of the organization.
- **Recognize the digital divide** in terms of technological infrastructure and capacity to use digital tools across sectors and across countries or locations (i.e. rural vs. urban areas):
 - It is imperative to improve digital infrastructure across countries and locations. A concrete call from IndustriAll is for governments to provide digital infrastructure as a public service or a public good, like water or electricity.
 - Improve the capacity of workers who are the end users and beneficiaries of these online tools.
 - Increase capacity not by adding new technological tools but expanding on what can be done with the digital tools that workers are already familiar with. For example, if most of them use mobile phones more than computers, expand the online tools that their mobile phones can access (i.e. podcasts, short video clips, etc.)

Concluding Summary

In summary, the GUFS and their affiliates and local union members in the Asia-Pacific were proactive and quick to respond to the needs of their constituents as soon as the coronavirus pandemic was declared. After the initial shock, the unions were able to quickly provide humanitarian assistance to their members in the form of food, funds, face masks or PPE.

The various forms of lockdowns and restrictions in many countries to arrest the spread of the coronavirus has devastated many economies and crushed millions of jobs. Different economic sectors confronted the diverse effects of the pandemic in different countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Workers in the public and private services, such as in the health and cleaning sectors, were mostly called to the frontlines, exposing them to higher health risks. This was also the case for workers in the food processing and food delivery sectors, who were deemed 'essential workers' during the pandemic. The greatest job losses happened in the garment, transportation, education, manufacturing, hotel and tourism sectors, when schools were shut down and public transportation was suspended during lockdowns. Informal sector workers as well as migrant workers in the construction and domestic work sectors suffered the most as their livelihoods were put at risk as economies closed down.

Due to the widespread difficulties, the global unions reached out to their affiliates and members, communicating that they were in this together and collectively they could overcome the challenges. They were thrust into the digital world and compelled to use different online platforms and tools to update and inform, build solidarity, and strengthen trade unions, despite the pandemic.

Among the challenges encountered were:

- (a) the inability to reach members** due to lack of internet connectivity, particularly in rural areas or outside city centres without internet infrastructure (i.e. IUF, BWI);
- (b) the lack of smart phones**, computers, and other gadgets necessary for online communication and learning (i.e. StreetNet International);
- (c) economic difficulties** due to the increased expenses required for digital communication (i.e. IDWF, ITF); and
- (d) the uneven capacity** of union members to use digital / online tools.

The uneven digital infrastructure among the countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and differing technological capacities among union members, hindered the effective use of online tools for communication and education. However, global unions and their affiliates managed to utilize innovative methodologies and strategies to maximize what digital technology could offer in these desperate times. There is a need for further support in expanding the gains made in the usage of online tools that can be used beyond communication and education, but also towards organizing, strategizing, planning, negotiations and political mapping.

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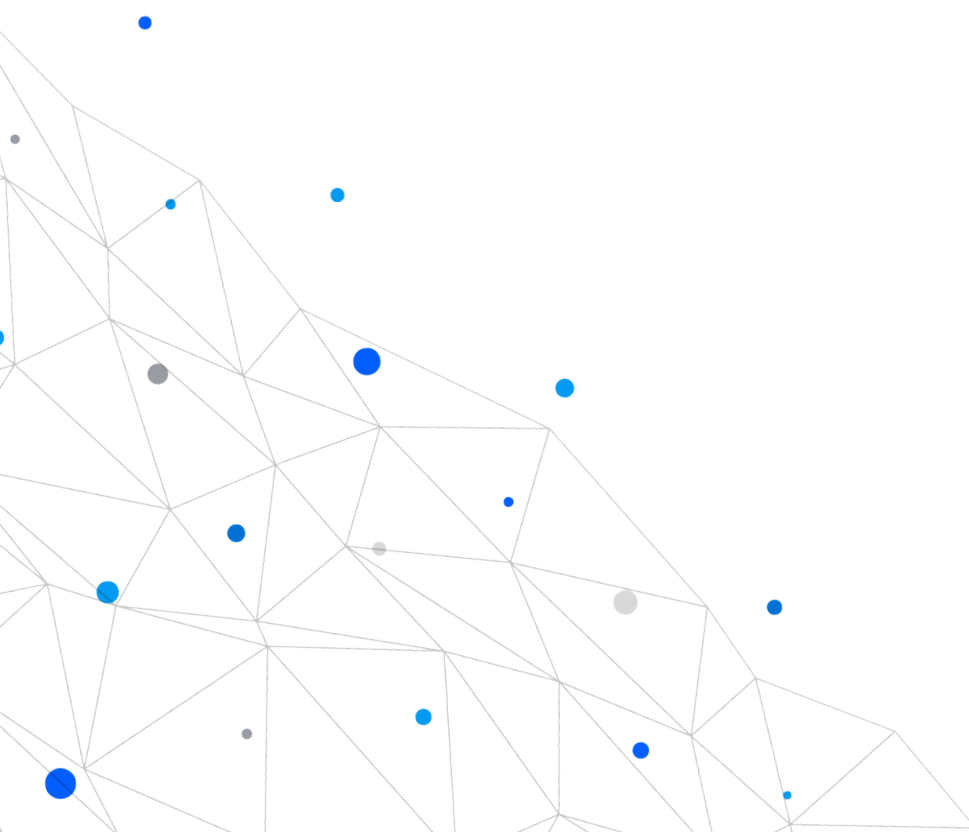
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Annex A:

List of interviewed key informants from GUFs

	Name	GUF	Region	Designation	Meeting date
1	Apolinar Z. Tolentino, Jr.	BWI	Asia/Pacific	Regional Representative	17-Aug-20
2	Apoorva Kaiwar	IndustriALL	South Asia	Regional Secretary	18-Aug-20
3	Kate Lappin	PSI	Asia/Pacific	Regional Secretary	21-Aug-20
4	Dr Hidayat Greenfield	IUF	Asia/Pacific	Regional Secretary	21-Aug-20
5	Rajendra Acharya	UNI Global Union	Asia/Pacific	Regional Secretary	01-Sep-20
6	Sangam Tripathy	ITF	South Asia Asst.	Regional Secretary	10-Sep-20
7	Dr Rajeev Sharma	BWI	Asia/Pacific	Regional Policy Officer in-charge	12-Sep-20
8	Anand Singh	EI	Asia/Pacific	Chief Regional Coordinator	14-Sep-20
9	Fish Ip	IDWF	Asia/Pacific	Regional Coordinator	04-Sep-20
10	Farizan Fajari	ASETUC	Asia/Pacific	Executive Secretary	15-Sep-20
11	Oksana Abboud	StreetNet	International	International Coordinator	01-Oct-20

Annex B:

Summary of issues, challenges, and coping strategies

Organizations	Issues as impacted by the pandemic	Challenges in maintaining communications and solidarity	Coping strategies and responses particularly in using online tools
UNI Global Union (services sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job losses (tourism, gaming / casino, media, entertainment, arts, IT industries, private hospitals, manufacturing, finance and banking; • Wage cuts (wage thefts) for migrant workers, informal and outsource workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety of workers in the workplace; Covid-19 is not recognized as an occupational disease; • Challenges in trade union rights, right to freedom of association, and collective bargaining; • Uneven access (lack of gadgets and budget), capacity (knowledge to use online tools), and infrastructure (internet connectivity) of membership and leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First responses: sign MOUs and joint statements with employers' groups at the global level; joint guidelines on how to respond to the pandemic; • Second, sharing of cases, conditions, knowledge and skills through the online platforms; and to maximise the guidelines with the employers; • Third, online organizing, digital organizing in the finance, IT, postal, and care sectors; and • Lastly, using the online platforms to organize support and solidarity among affiliates.
ASETUC ASEAN Service Employees Trade Union Council; composed of BWI, UNI, and PSI in Asia-Pacific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unilateral dismissals; • Half wages; • Unpaid wages; • No social protection; • Flexible working hours in WFH mechanisms; • Hard for CBAs; • Communication with members and management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in communicating clearly with members; • Internet problems; • Adaptation process in using new technologies. 	<p>Affiliate GUFs were doing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voicing campaigns through social media (i.e. Justiceforwagetheft); • Online training for members on how to use Zoom to mobilise new members and strengthen communication and solidarity; • Knowledge and information dissemination through webinars on relevant issues (i.e. how the pandemic has affected the world of work).


Organizations	Issues as impacted by the pandemic	Challenges in maintaining communications and solidarity	Coping strategies and responses particularly in using online tools
International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job losses; • Lack of food; • Lack of money for rent, etc.; • Excess workload during lockdown with no days off. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in communication due to challenges in access, infrastructure, and capacity to use online tools; • Postponement of education activities; no online equivalent; • Increased expenditure in communications; • Social media literacy to develop critical thinking when using information from the internet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, provided immediate relief such as food and expenses for communications; • Second, local organizations negotiate with local government units for assistance (non-monetary and financial); • Third, developing knowledge and skills to access/use information technologies and social media.
International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF-South Asia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsafe workplaces and spaces for transport workers; Loss of livelihood during lockdowns; • Lack of bargaining power; • No savings among informal workers, migrant workers, and outsourced workers; • Salaries and allowances were cut for regular transport workers (i.e. railway workers). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of budget for online communications (i.e. gadgets, data), lack of access to internet, and lack of capacity or interest to use new online tools; • Labour reforms instituted to shortcut labour rights; • OSH not assured for transport workers especially in airports and railways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of online tools to gain support for other workers (i.e. short videos uploaded in WhatsApp groups on the plight of workers); • Transport workers supporting migrant workers and home based workers (i.e. soup kitchens, selling facemasks); • Developing online tools for organizing, campaigns and advocacies.
Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job losses estimated at 76 million in Asia Pacific; migrant and informal workers; • Wage cuts or wage thefts among informal, migrant, and outsource workers; • Safety of workers when they return to work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly adapted to online communication upon the onset of the pandemic; • Limitations of online platforms to reach members and build contacts; • Members have limited familiarity and access to digital technology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out important campaigns through social media and online tools (i.e. disseminate protocols to ensure safety at workplaces); • Regular strategizing and planning using online tools; • Use digital technology for social dialogues, campaigns and capacity building.

Organizations	Issues as impacted by the pandemic	Challenges in maintaining communications and solidarity	Coping strategies and responses particularly in using online tools
International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated loss of jobs at 48 million globally in food, tourism and hotel industries based on ILO report for tourism industry in Asia-Pacific; • Safety of workers in hotels, fast food, and delivery services; • Campaigns for health insurance policies, PPE, and financial support for workers in food processing, hotels, and food delivery services; • OSH issues, safety protocols at work, and adjusting production systems to the new normal; • Shrinking democratic space for some countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to sift through massive amounts of information online and how to identify what is relevant and reliable; • Using online tools for organizing, negotiating, and collective bargaining; • Uneven network coverage, such as weak signals in rural areas; • Digital divide and digital discrimination; • Develop education training with its own platform to provide online security. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiate with global companies to develop safety protocols in the workplace (i.e. hotels, etc.); • Campaigns to save jobs – 'Workers on Stand-by' for hotel workers; 'Safe for workers, safe for everyone'; • Recognize Covid-19 as an occupational disease (i.e. it can be contracted in the workplace); • Use online tools to disseminate reliable information from unions; • Provide guidance on CB negotiations for affiliates and on global compacts on safety protocols during the pandemic.
Public Services International (PSI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affiliates in public services including the health sector, are on the frontlines; • Exposure to health risks, extended work hours, and experiencing discrimination; • Some governments are using the pandemic to reduce democratic spaces, introduce negative labour reforms, and strengthen control over the society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uneven access to technologies among different countries with differentiated economic development; • How to ensure participation of members in online activities (i.e. webinars, trainings); • Some affiliates or public servants are not allowed to speak negatively about their governments online; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using online platforms to continue union work such as planning, strategizing and political mapping; • Easier online press conferences, campaigns, and interactive education and information dissemination online; • Online consultations, dialogue, and negotiations with other tripartite social partners.
IndustriAll Global Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job losses in manufacturing particularly in automobile, chemical, electronics, and aircraft industries due to availability of raw materials; • Global supply chains have been disrupted during the pandemic affecting industrial production in many parts of the world; • Electronics sector slows down production in smartphones and consumer electronics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Asia, not many members have laptops, smart phones, or other facility for online tools; • Internet coverage becomes a problem in some areas; • In India, internet penetration is roughly 10-15% and in Nepal, not many have smart phones; • Limited capacity to use digital technology for some members such as emails, Zoom, etc.; • Language translation absent in some online platforms; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign for cheap, accessible internet services everywhere, rural or urban areas; • Give online communication and computer skills trainings; • Trade unionists using online tools to connect with leaders, members, and shop stewards (or workers' representatives in the workplace); • Train members on technology use, how to organize new unions online, and how unions can better communicate online.

Organizations	Issues as impacted by the pandemic	Challenges in maintaining communications and solidarity	Coping strategies and responses particularly in using online tools
Education International (EI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The closure of schools affected students and teachers; • Teachers training how to shift to online education received no support and compensation from their governments for extra efforts; • Deduction of one-day salaries without consultation in India; • Safety protocols such as PPE not provided; • Trade union rights violations during the pandemic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences of Zoom fatigue; • Uneven levels of capacity in using online tools; • Poor internet connectivity or phone lines not working adding to difficulties in communication; • Over-reliance on online tools have opened opportunities for profit-oriented corporations to offer online tools for free, then charge fees later. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issued statements and guidelines to governments relating to the education sector and for teachers; • Raised Covid-19 Response Fund to support unions to ensure their safety and health, build capacities, support negotiation skills and upgrade skills through online tools; • Develop an information hub to provide reliable and credible information for affiliates and members.
StreetNet International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of livelihood when lockdowns imposed closing public spaces, which are workspaces for vendors, traders and other informal workers; • Physical distancing difficult in informal settlements, exposure to health risks; • Loss of income, as workers live on a daily basis without savings, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in reaching members if they have no budget for online communication; • Lack of smart phones for some members to access social media and other online tools; Training programmes designed for offline courses, had to be recalibrated for online education; • Lack of capacity/human resource issue to focus on education and online communication; • Increasing gender based violence during the pandemic affecting women workers in the informal sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affiliates negotiated with local governments on how to continue with their livelihoods, at the same time providing information on safety protocols to the public and their members; • Issued statements to governments to take into account vulnerable categories of workers – informal workers and traders; Request to suspend payments of utilities and rents, provide relief packs, cash grants, etc.; • Use these statements as guides to negotiate with governments on loans for traders, informal workers, etc.; • Provided funds for communication to members who need it.


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