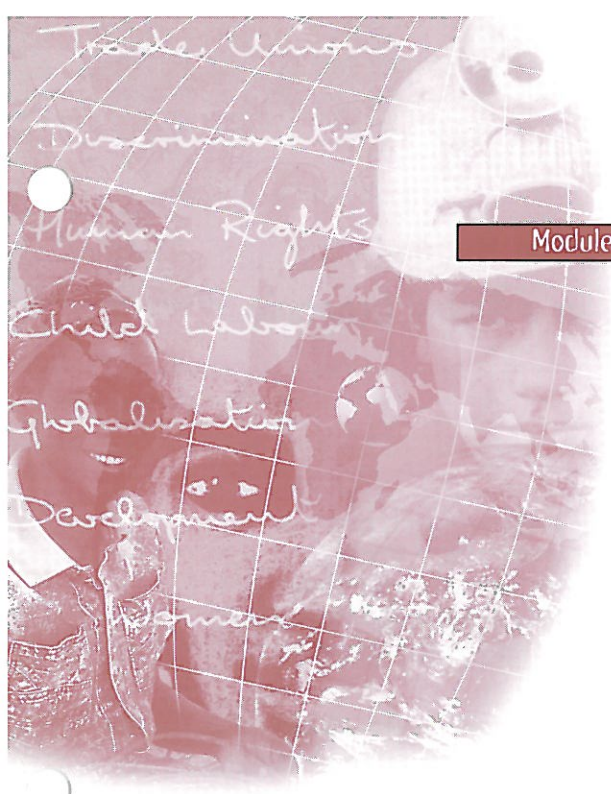


This module introduces participants to the concept of international instruments guaranteeing trade human rights; the concept of globalisation; the extent and the ways in which trade union rights are violated; and the trade union response to these.

Module One

Trade Union Rights
in a Global Economy



Module One

Trade Union Rights in a Global Economy

Activity One Trade Union Rights are Human Rights

Aims:

To increase participant's awareness of international instruments protecting trade union rights.

Timing:

30 Minutes

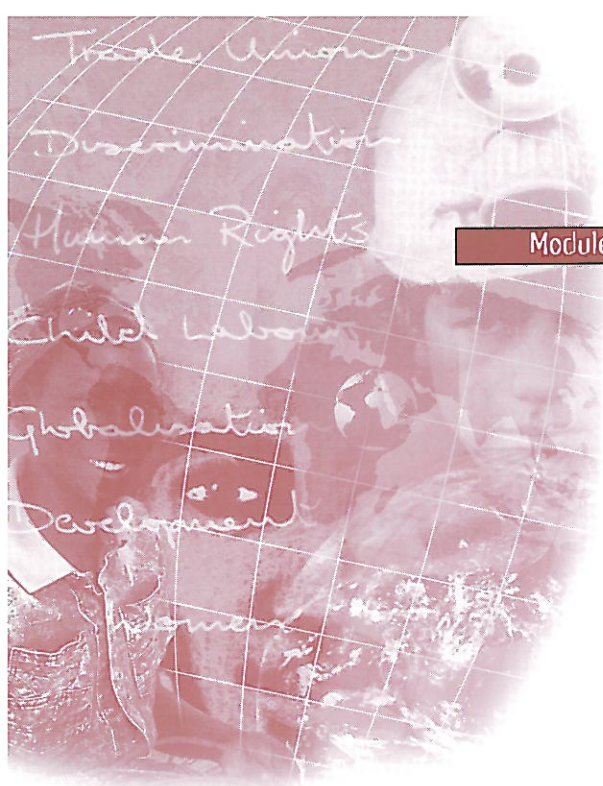
What you need:

overheads 1 - 6;

What you need to do:

In a large group discussion;

- Ask participants to suggest reasons why trade unions came into existence;
- Then ask if they are aware of any international instruments guaranteeing trade union or human rights? Follow with input using overheads 1 - 4.



Tutors Notes

The following are the main points for activity one:
Joining together to express united view to employer;
strengthens ability to influence terms of employment.
Many workers still face bitter struggles to both create and maintain their unions and to bargain collectively with employers.

Over the past century, increased public concern about exploitation and poor conditions faced by people at work lead countries to adopt protective legislation for workers. Pressure grew for the acceptance of international standards on labour matters and indeed for a wide range of human rights. Today trade union and human rights are guaranteed at international, regional and national levels in many places.

(Participants may have heard of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):
"Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of their interests".
(Article 23.4) overhead one

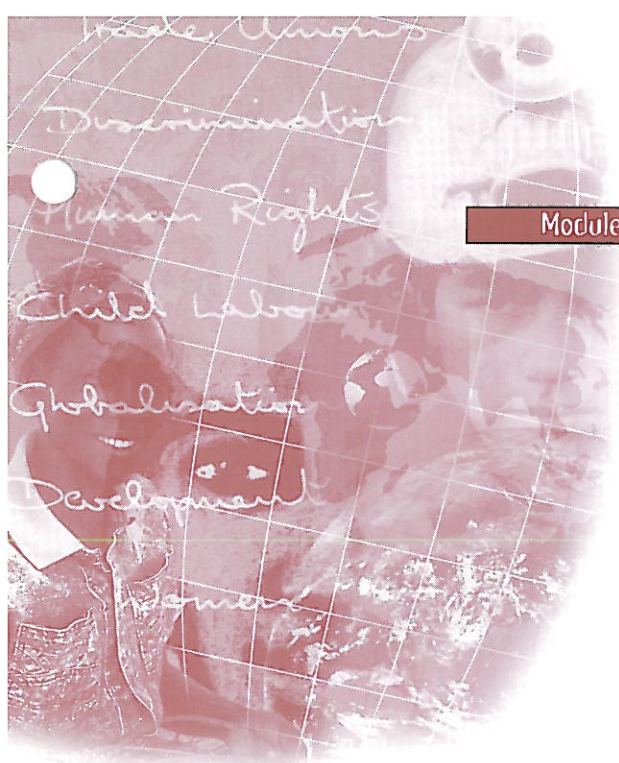
Specific rights for trade unions however are mainly contained in the Conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a tripartite UN body where Workers, Employers and Governments share in decision making on such matters. While there are now several hundred ILO Conventions, in effect two - numbers 87 (Freedom of Association) and 98 (Collective Bargaining and Right to Organise) - provide the pillars that protect trade union rights.
overhead 2,3 and 4

The International Labour Organisation

The ILO is the agency of the United Nations dealing with social and labour issues. Promoting peace and justice are its core objectives. Representatives of workers and employers sit with those of governments at all ILO meetings and share in decision making.

Its most important task is setting international labour standards in the form of conventions and recommendations. Since its creation in 1919, the ILO has adopted nearly 200 conventions. Once the ILO adopts a convention (at its annual International Labour Conference - ILC) each national government must decide whether or not to ratify it. This is a free choice but once ratified, the convention has the force of international law for the country concerned and its terms must be respected in law and practice.

Trade Union Rights were further boosted in June 1998 when the ILO passed a Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which includes Conventions 87 and 98. ILO members, by virtue of their membership - regardless of whether they have ratified 87 and 98, must now respect, promote and realise the principles concerning the fundamental rights.



Activity Two:
Violations of Trade Union Rights

Aims:

To increase participant's awareness of how, and the extent of, trade union rights violations.

Timing:

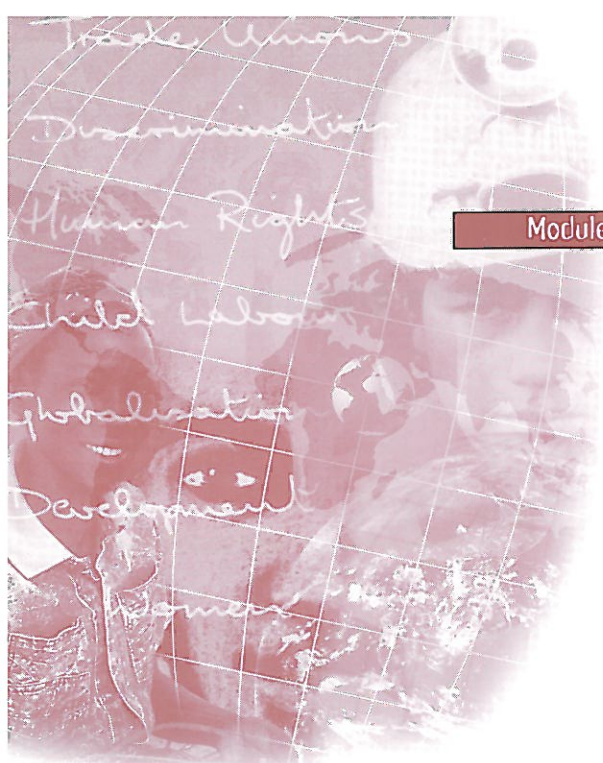
25 minutes

What you need:

Overheads 5 and 6

What you need to do:

- Ask participants to discuss what the experience/concerns of them and the members of their union as we approach the new millennium are? Are trade union rights fully protected here in Ireland, North and South? Do you know of violations abroad?
- Ask participants to draw up a list. Introduce overheads 5 and 6 and then ask if the extent of violations surprises them?



Module One

Trade Union Rights in a Global Economy

Tutors Notes

At the 1996 International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) World Congress, delegates from all over the world spoke of the fears of working women and men over their jobs. Does this relate to your own experience and those of your union members? Then compare with list of points below:

Insecurity in employment;
Worries about pay levels;
Increased intensity of work;
Authoritarian management;
Union busting;
Discrimination;
Children at work when they should be at school;
Dangerous and unhealthy conditions;
and most of all, the difficulty in getting workers' views heard.

Other patterns reported in the world of work included:

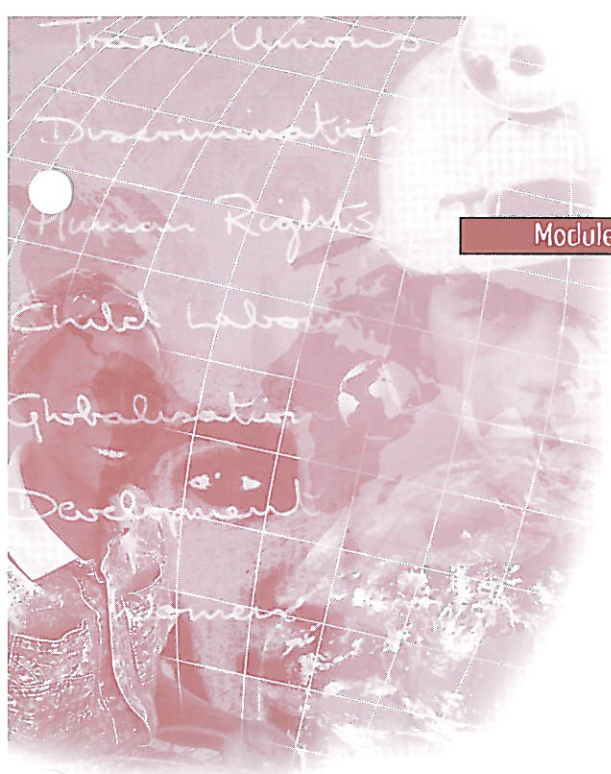
More workers in the informal sector;
More women workers;
Young workers and migrant workers more common and
More atypical jobs.

In recent years the number of workers organised into trade unions has declined relative to the entire workforce in most countries. The main causes of this decline are the loss of jobs in sectors where unionisation was high and the creation of new jobs where there are no unions. In many countries workers trying to form or join unions risk not only the loss of their job, but also their ability to earn a living. In some countries, workers face persecution by governments and acts of violence or other forms of intimidation by both governments and employers. In 1997 nearly 300 trade unionists were killed for standing up for their rights, 1681 were tortured or ill-treated, 2329 were detained, there were 3369 cases of intimidation and there was blatant interference in union affairs in 79 countries, according to the ICFTU Survey on the Violation of Trade Union Rights Survey. Standing up for workers' rights is a dangerous occupation in the global economy. (overhead 5)

Overhead six summarises the major ways in which trade union rights are violated.

In a world characterised by intense economic competition and dominated by TNC's, the need to defend working peoples' interests by collective action cannot be overstated.

Videos on trade union rights violations (eg. Toy Industry, Sports gear) are available on loan from Office.



Module One

Trade Union Rights in a Global Economy

Activity Three: The Context in which this is occurring

Aims:

To introduce the concept of globalisation

Timing:

25 minutes

What you need:

Put product and country list on Flipchart or overhead; Map of World (Peter's Projection); Blu-tak to mark the map.

What you need to do:

"One day in your life":

(Adapted from "Off your Trolley", Development Education for Youth, 1997)

Ask participants to match the following products to the correct country in the list

Products:

Guinness
Tea
Barbie Dolls
Pop-up books
Cocoa
Chocolate
cigarettes
Runners
Footballs
Computers

Countries:

Ireland
Colombia
Ghana
India
China

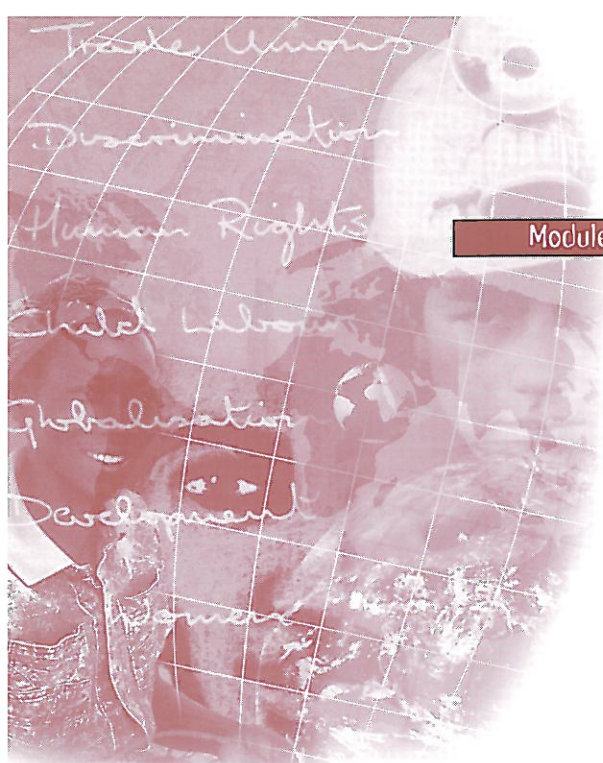
This serves as a warm up to asking each person to spend a couple of minutes visualising the products they use in their everyday life eg. food, drinks, work, leisure etc...

Ask people to list them to the group, get others to say where they think they are produced and mark the country on a map of the world. (If there is a debate on the origin, just guess and ask people to check the label later!)

The map should have marks on every continent illustrating clearly the extent of the interconnectedness of the world and the degree to which we are all dependent on trade.

Follow this with a brief input on Globalisation (See tutors notes)

Global Solidarity



Tutors Notes

Globalisation refers to the growth of economic activity across borders. Indicators of this include:

Trade has grown twice as fast as economic output over last decade.

Foreign Direct Investment has grown three times as fast as output.

Trade in shares has grown ten times as fast as output.

Major characteristics of this process:

Ideological and institutional shift towards "free market" policies of privatisation; removal of trade barriers; promotion of competition etc.. In the first world - Reagan and Thatcher / In the third world - structural adjustment programmes (governments obliged to introduce such policies to gain partial relief from debt repayments).

New information and communications technologies have allowed economic agents to more easily cross borders without the physical movement of capital. eg. Mobility of international finance capital : each day billions of dollars flow across the globe seeking speculative profits beyond the control of even the most powerful of governments. Globalisation has been powerfully stimulated by the deregulation of capital flows, restructuring of banks and investment regimes leading to integration of countries into a single global economy. Profit is the most powerful force governing global economic development.

Domination of transnational corporations: production is often spread right across the globe pitting workers against workers in the competition for jobs. Many remain immune from most forms of international regulation and have accumulated considerable political and cultural influence. TNC's can hold governments to ransom if they do not co-operate with the corporations. Governments can risk losing the jobs and income linked to the presence of TNC's.

Targeting of organised labour: reduction in numbers employed and more flexible labour; national collective bargaining undermined; relocation to poorer countries with less organised labour; two tier labour markets with the setting up of Export Processing Zones.



Module One

Trade Union Rights in a Global Economy

Activity Four: The Trade Union Response / International Solidarity

Aims:

To introduce the trade union response internationally and the role for Irish Trade Unions in International Solidarity.

Timing:

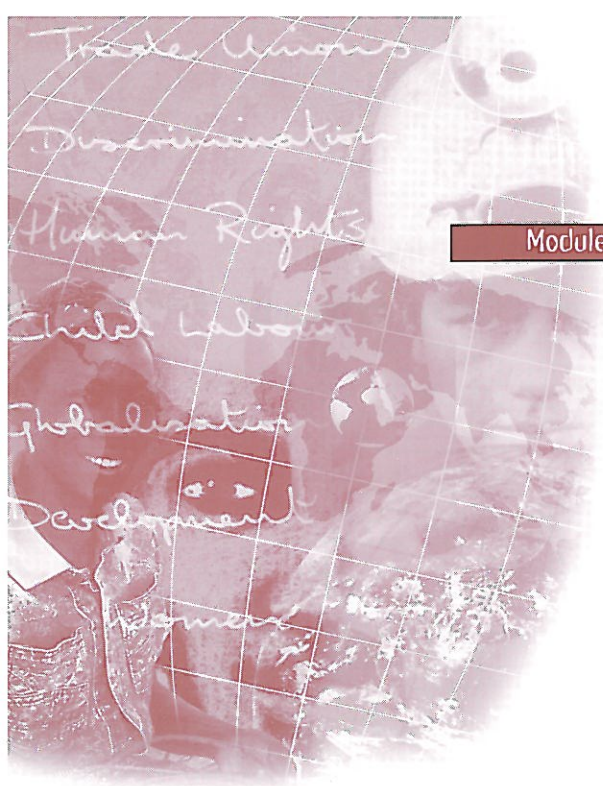
30 minutes

What you need:

Overhead 8

What you need to do:

Go through overhead Number 8 using tutor's notes below. If you have a series of courses you might give number one as a task to be completed.



Tutors Notes

1. Is your union organising internationally ?

The trade union movement is potentially one of the most dynamic movements that can organise internationally to tackle the problems discussed above. Despite the crisis faced by workers everywhere and the resultant tendency to retreat into national shells trade unions have been busy organising across borders.

Exercise:

Get the following information from your union:

Which international trade secretariat is it affiliated to ?

What does the ITS do for the union and how is the union involved in its work ?

Is the union affiliated to any other international bodies ? If so, what do they do ?

Congress is affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which represents 125 million trade unionists world wide through its 200 affiliated organisations in 141 countries and territories. It campaigns internationally for the inclusion of workers rights in trade agreements.

2. Education

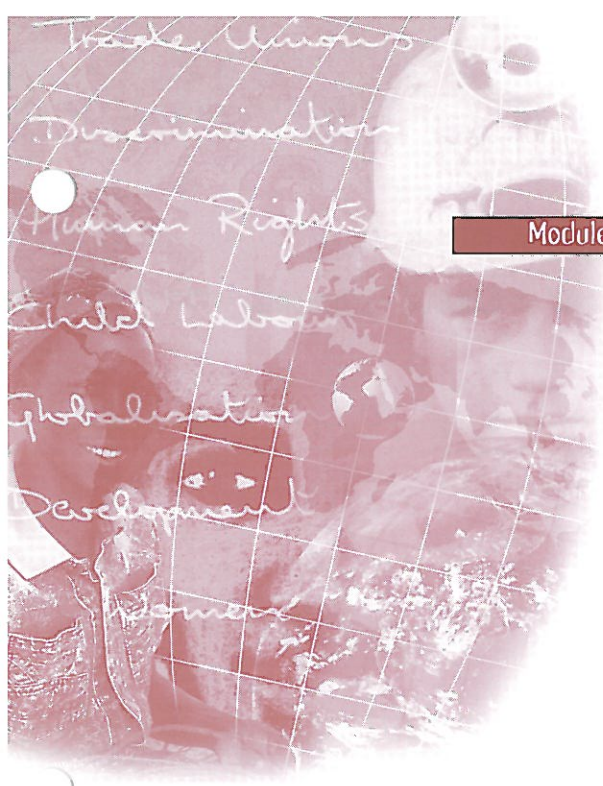
Education is a crucial part of organising for international solidarity. Ensure that your union continues to make courses on international issues link in with the situation of workers here in Ireland an integral part of trade union training. There is support available from Congress Development Education Programme.

3. Campaigns

Why not get involved in campaigns aimed at improving the working conditions of people involved in the production of materials that we use frequently ?

Campaigns based on urging multinationals and large retailers to adopt codes of conduct have had successes. The clothes we wear; the shoes on our feet; the petrol we fill our cars with; the toys we buy for our children; where we spend our holidays; the brand of banana we put in our shopping trolley are all opportunities to "vote as we shop". The multinationals which govern world trade can only remain rich and powerful as long as consumers opt for their products. Increasingly campaigns are not calling for boycotts but for consumers to use their power to influence the way products are produced and sourced around the world. These campaigns often attract media interest also and so lead to a greater awareness of these issues amongst the general public.

As trade unionists we also have a role in responding to urgent appeals from our brothers and sisters abroad. Is your union on the list to receive urgent appeals from international bodies to which you are affiliated ? Does your union and you as an individual receive and act upon urgent action appeals from bodies such as Amnesty and indeed Congress. There is a network of people to which Congress Development Education circulates campaign appeals on trade union rights. Make sure you are on it. With new communications technology messages of support can be sent and received within hours of a violation occurring.



Tutor Notes Continued

Motions

Motions at union conferences help to raise your own members awareness about issues and can result in your union adopting progressive positions which translate to positive action in solidarity with workers worldwide.

Solidarity Network

There is a group of trade unionists around Ireland active and interested in these issues. They receive regular updates and mailings from Congress Development Education Office which can also run workshops on particular issues identified by the network. Make sure you are included.

Congress Solidarity Committees (North and South)

Has your union nominated two people to sit on the committees? If not maybe you could initiate discussion on nominations from your branch? The committee is responsible for advising Congress on these issues and works closely with the development education programme. They also produce a newsletter "Solidarity" which is distributed to affiliates three times a year. Does your branch receive copies? Why not include articles from this in Union publications and Newsletters.

Third World / Solidarity Fund

Many unions have a third world fund which is used to support trade unions who don't have the resources to organise adequately. The resultant relationships are beneficial to both partners who can each learn from the strategies and activities of their respective unions. Some go on to develop into formal twinning arrangements. Does your union have a fund? Does your union contribute to the Congress Fund?

Fair trade products

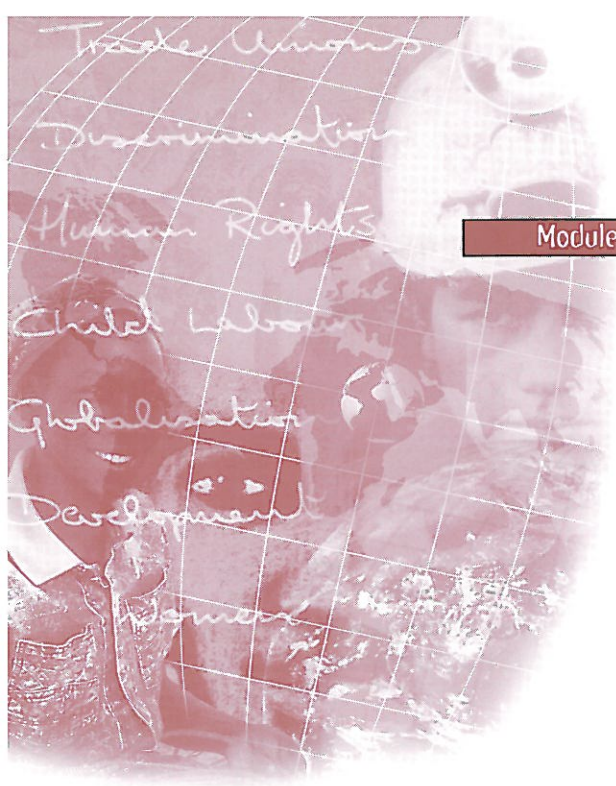
Does your union headquarters/workplace use fair trade products such as teas and coffees? These are readily available, taste great and more importantly guarantee a fair deal for producers. They are widely available from a range of suppliers.

Imagine Alternatives

Economies are man made and so can be changed. Encourage discussion, research and debate on different ways to organise the economy at local, national regional and international level.

In summary:

International
Solidarity.

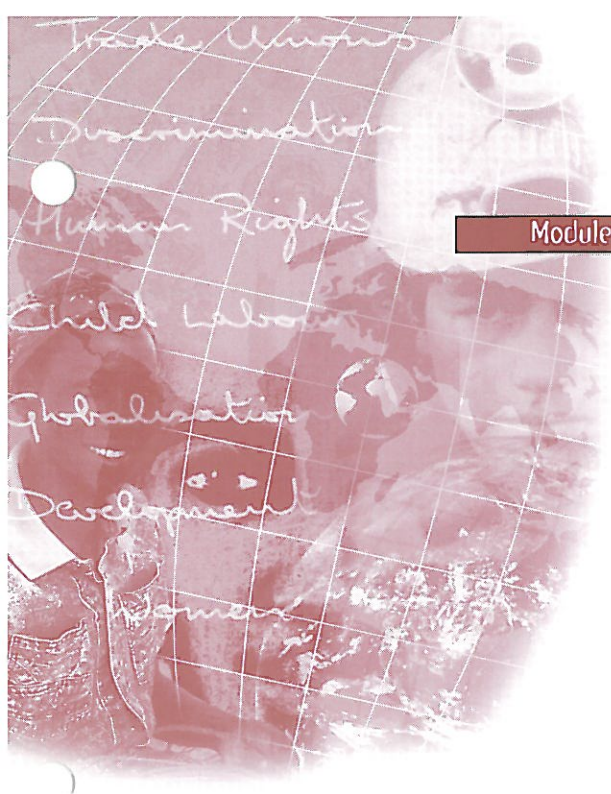


Module One

Trade Union Rights
in a Global Economy

Overhead One

“Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of their interests” (Article 23.4 from Universal Declaration on Human Rights)



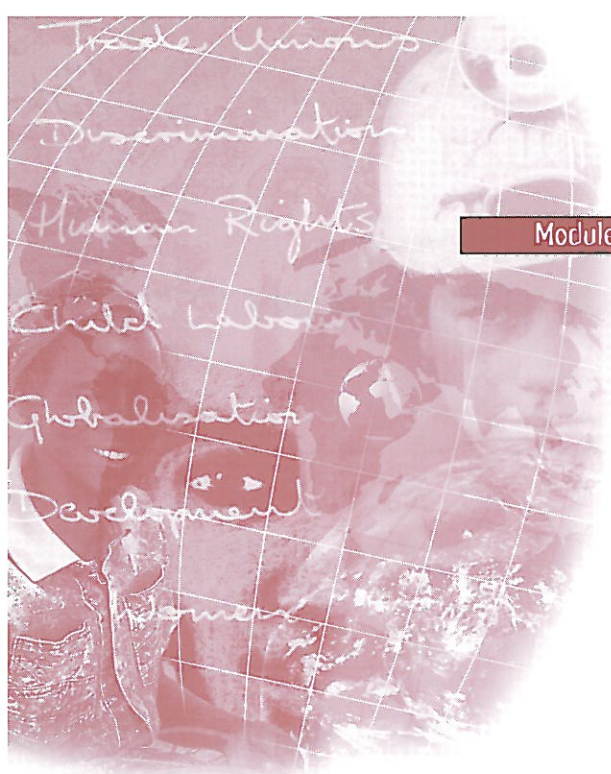
Module One

Trade Union Rights
in a Global Economy

Overhead Two

Trade Union Rights
Convention 87
Freedom of Association

Trade Union Rights
Convention 98
Right to Collective Bargaining



Overhead Three

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

CONVENTION No. 87: CONVENTION CONCERNING FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

17 June 1948;

Part I. Freedom of Association

Workers and employers, without distinction whatsoever, shall have the right to establish and, subject only to the rules of the organisation concerned, to join organisations of their own choosing without previous authorisation.

Workers' and employers' organisations shall have the right to establish and join federations and confederations and any such organisation, federation or confederation shall have the right to affiliate with international organisations of workers and employers.

Part II. Protection of the Right to Organise

Article 11

Each Member of the International Labour Organisation for which this Convention is in force undertakes to take all necessary and appropriate measures to ensure that workers and employers may exercise freely the right to organise.

More than 120 countries have ratified it.



Overhead Four

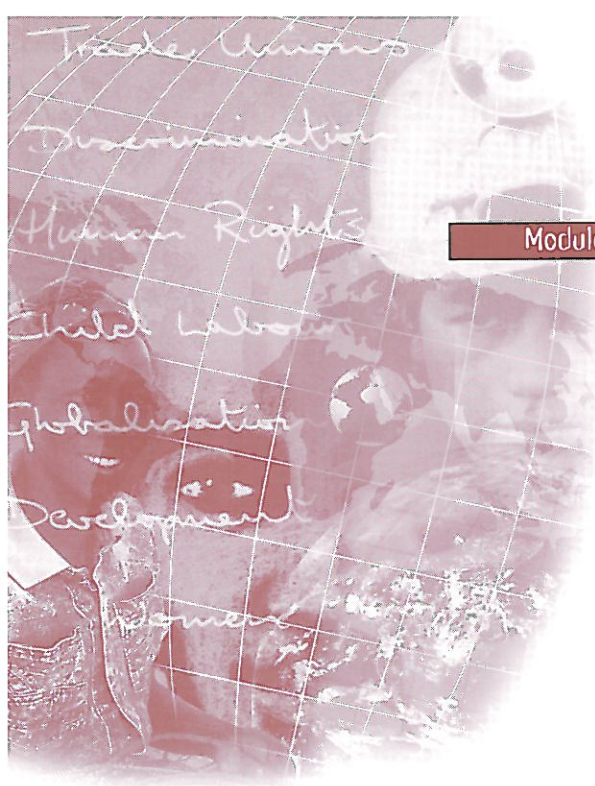
Convention No. 98 on The right to Organise and Collective Bargaining (1949):

Extends worker protection against acts of anti-union discrimination

Encourages and protects the process of voluntary negotiation between worker and employer organisations to regulate terms and conditions of employment by means of collective agreements

Over 135 countries have ratified it

Public servants are covered separately in Convention 151 (1978).



Module One

Trade Union Rights in a Global Economy

Overhead Five Trade Union Rights - The Reality

In 1997 - 299 trade unionists were killed / 350 1992-96 average

Cases of violence - 1,681 / 1,300 92-96 average

Nearly 2,400 were arrested and detained for their trade union activities / 4,450 92-96 average

Over 50,000 people lost their jobs for the same reason / 92,000 - 92-96 average

290 received death threats

Over 80 countries have placed legal obstacles in the way of the freedom of association.

(ICFTU annual survey 1998).



Module One

Trade Union Rights in a Global Economy

Overhead Six

How trade Union Rights are violated

Restrictions on organising by governments

Imposed Trade Union Monopolies

Employer Anti-Union tactics: Union busting; In house unions

Violations in Export Processing Zones - law not enforced

Restrictions on collective bargaining - employers not obliged

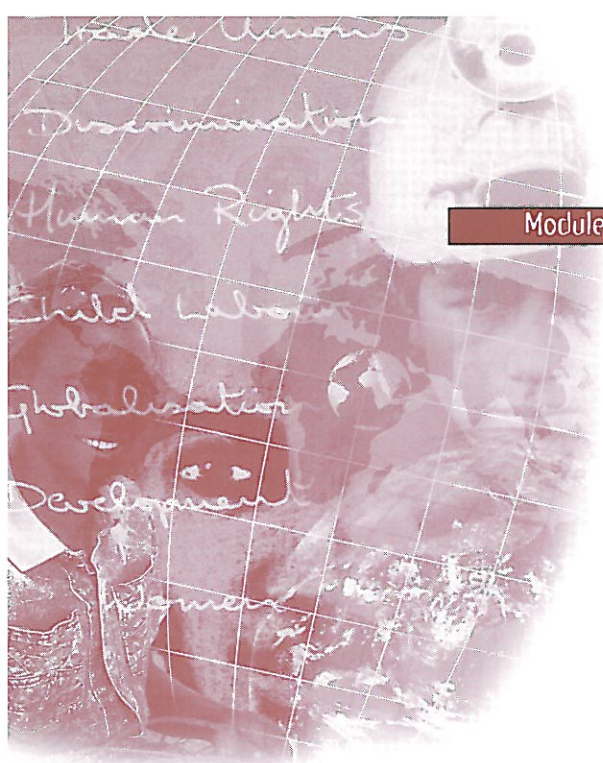
Anti union discrimination

Interfering in union functioning and administration

Preventing strikes

Imposing grievance resolution mechanisms

(ICTFU)



Overhead Seven

Globalisation

Growth of economic activity across borders.

Indicators of this include:

Trade has grown twice as fast as economic output over last decade

Foreign Direct Investment has grown three times as fast as output

trade in shares has grown ten times as fast as output

Major characteristics of this process:

“free market “ policies

Mobility of international finance capital : - stimulated by the deregulation of capital flows,

Multinational companies are more important than ever before.

Targeting of organised labour



Module One

Trade Union Rights
in a Global Economy

Overhead Eight

Is your union organising internationally ?

Education

Campaigns

Motions

Solidarity Network

Congress Solidarity Committee

Third World / Solidarity Fund

Fair trade products

In summary:

International
Solidarity.

