



Flower workers' union
UHISPAWU blossoms

Change in Indonesian
clothing factories

Adressing abuses on
large construction sites

MONDIAAL FNV: WHAT WE DO AND WHY

Mondiaal FNV is the organisation for international solidarity and support affiliated with the Netherlands' largest trade union, the FNV. We believe that everyone has the right to a living wage, social security, decent working conditions, and collective bargaining. In other words, the right to decent work. We want prosperity to be achieved in a fair way, not through exploitation elsewhere in the world.

We support trade unions around the globe. Why? Because trade unions can improve work and life at the grassroots level for many people. We strengthen the capacity of our partners, conduct influential advocacy, and connect local trade unions with the international labour movement. Our focus is on global supply chains in the garment, agriculture, and palm oil sectors.

Cover photo

For ten years, Mondiaal FNV has been working together with UHISPAWU, a trade union in Uganda's flower sector. Together, we have built professionalism, trust, and social dialogue, which has led to much-needed improvements in working conditions. UHISPAWU is now a strong social partner for its members and for employers.

Photo: Jan Banning

DEAR READER,

"It was not until recently that I realised how much has changed for us"

These are the words of Janepher Nassali, a trade union leader in Uganda's flower sector, with whom we've worked for more than ten years. She started out as a member of the very young and inexperienced board of the flower workers' union UHISPAWU. Today, she is a strong partner for both workers and employers. Together with her union, she has achieved many improvements in working conditions in the flower farms. You can read her story in this edition of *Mondiaal Stories*.

Janepher captures the impact of our work perfectly: change does not happen overnight, but gradually, driven by people and organisations who stay the course. And we see this not only in Uganda.

DAVID AND GOLIATH

For example, read about the strength of women in clothing factories in Indonesia, who are improving their position step by step - both on the factory floors and within the union. Or read the David-and-Goliath-like story about how we, together with construction unions, succeeded in persuading large international financial institutions to respect labour rights when financing megaprojects in Africa and Asia. It was a slow and persistent process, but in the end it yielded tangible improvements, such as shaded areas for construction workers working in temperatures of up to 50 oC, or decent meals without maggots in the food (yes, really!).

AT THE HEART OF THE TEAM

As a member of the Mondiaal FNV Foundation Board, I have temporarily stepped into the role of director of Mondiaal FNV. As a board member, you primarily focus on the bigger picture. Now, as the interim director, I stand at the heart of the team and can see up close how our work brings about improvements, in the lives of people like Janepher and in sectors where workers often find themselves pitted against enormous interests. That is truly inspiring and confirms for me how valuable our work is.

SUPPORT US!

Soon, I will hand over the baton to a new director. But this is not a farewell: as a member of the Board, I will remain closely involved with Mondiaal FNV. We, too, have faced budget cuts and must pull out all the stops to keep this work going. That is why I warmly invite you to support us. How? You will find all the details on page 22.



Marieke Manschot
Interim Director
Mondiaal FNV



BLOOMING AFTER CRISIS

A DECADE OF UHISPAWU IN UGANDA'S FLOWER FARMS

Ten years ago, Uganda's flower sector union UHISPAWU was in crisis. Trust between employers and workers had hit rock-bottom. Dutch horticultural companies operate in the sector, and the Dutch embassy in Kampala asked FNV to mediate. Coaching, training and a fresh, young leadership helped the union grow into a strong social partner. This article gives the perspectives of various stakeholders on how UHISPAWU has evolved.

The collaboration between Mondiaal FNV and UHISPAWU began in 2015, after the Dutch embassy in Kampala asked FNV for help. At the time, corruption and mismanagement

within the union had caused turmoil in Uganda's flower sector. Trust between employers and workers had eroded, talks stalled, and conflicts spiralled.



You need to build the relationship first, before you can ask anything of one another.

René Kouwenhoven
FNV international industry
and agriculture officer



Mondiaal FNV's support has been essential in improving working conditions in the sector.

Janepher Nassali
general secretary
UHISPAWU



YOUNG MOTIVATED BOARD

The members voted out the old leadership, replacing it with a new board that was young and highly motivated, but lacked the expertise and experience needed for effective union organising. Mondiaal FNV and FNV union officer René Kouwenhoven supported the new leaders through training and coaching, focusing on strengthening skills in negotiation, social dialogue, organising, financial administration, developing a multi-year plan, and setting up a digital membership administration.



Trust makes it possible to discuss difficult issues without them immediately escalating into conflict.

Joseph Balondemu
HR-manager
flower company

Read the full
story and the
interviews on
our website:





A GREATER IMPACT INTERNATIONALLY

Rosa van Wieringen, policy officer at Mondiaal FNV, is proud of how the union has developed. It is now also able to have a greater impact internationally. "Mondiaal FNV primarily focuses on supporting the union in exerting pressure on the international supply chain. In this way, we hope that more money will become available to start paying a liveable wage in Uganda and other flower-producing countries."



Our sector is now seen as a model for cooperation between employers and the union.

Esther Nekambi
director industry organisation



If we continue to invest in dialogue and cooperation, we will keep the sector stable and healthy. And that is in everyone's interest.

Sjoerd de Boer
director propagation company

PROFESSIONALIZATION

Step by step, trust began to return. UHISPAWU professionalised, employers re-engaged with the union, and social dialogue improved significantly. This led to concrete results: membership grew from 800 in 2015 to 5,000 today; the minimum wage in the cut-flower companies rose from 21 to 58 euros a month; a sector-wide directive to counter sexual intimidation was adopted; and companies started paying more attention to health and safety. In addition, a collective bargaining agreement was concluded for the flower and plant sector. UHISPAWU is now no longer a union in crisis, but a fully-fledged social partner that negotiates on behalf of workers and is taken seriously by employers. ■



Support for the union increased and in our company, we now have an exceptionally high union membership rate.

Stella
employee at a rose producer
and local union president



CLOTHING FACTORIES IN INDONESIA

**THROUGH HARD DATA, MAKIN TERANG HELPS
LABOUR UNIONS NEGOTIATE ON WAGES,
SAFETY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

The majority of workers in Indonesian clothing factories are women. They produce garments for international brands, but often lack basic security - temporary contracts, low wages, high targets and intimidation make it difficult for them to speak out. The Makin Terang project is changing this. By gathering and organising experiences from the factory floor, labour unions are gaining a stronger position at the negotiating table. This is already resulting in better collective bargaining agreements - and more women taking part in the negotiations themselves.

The garment sector is important to Indonesia, but the export figures hide the reality of precarious work. Many women spend years working under pressure, without any job security. Those who become pregnant, fall ill or report intimidation risk losing their jobs or income. And it is precisely women in insecure jobs who are least likely to join a labour union. As a result, their problems often remain invisible: wages that are too low, long working hours, unsafe workplaces, verbal abuse and unequal opportunities to take on leadership roles.

MAKIN TERANG BRINGS ISSUES TO LIGHT

Makin Terang means 'shedding light'. The programme operates in the garment industry and is run by Mondiaal FNV together with local union and labour rights organisations. Its core approach is simple: together with Wage indicator, unions gather information on what goes on inside the factories. They do this through questionnaires, conversations, trainings and short surveys among colleagues. This makes it possible to identify where the law is being broken, the collective

Many women work under pressure for years on end, without any job security.

agreement ignored, services are lacking, wage gaps occur or where violence and intimidation take place.

FACT-BASED NEGOTIATIONS

This information changes the way negotiations take place. Labour unions no longer come to the table with only stories or frustration, but with facts. In ten factories, improvements in labour conditions have already been achieved; eight factories are still negotiating. In the 56 factories that took part in collective bargaining workshops, issues relating to women's rights turned out to be the second priority, directly after wages. This means that matters such as breastfeeding rights, safe sanitary facilities and protection against sexual intimidation are no longer pushed to the margins but take centre stage in negotiations.



MORE SECURITY, EQUALITY AND AGENCY

This is clearly reflected in new or improved collective bargaining agreements. In several factories, provisions have been included for lactation rooms, better facilities for women, protection for pregnant workers and clear rules to prevent violence, intimidation and discrimination. Some collective agreements are also becoming less standard and more tailored to what workers actually need - turning them into a practical tool for security, equality and agency.

DISMISSED, THEN RETURNED TO WORK

Enri Nurlaili's story clearly shows why this matters. In 2021, when she became pregnant and applied for maternity leave, she did not receive confirmation, but a letter of dismissal. Her health insurance was cancelled, and ten days later her

husband also lost his job. With support of her colleagues and the union, she fought back. After nearly seven months, she was allowed to return to work. Through Makin Terang she later learned how to gather information, check her rights and then make a plan. She now shares this knowledge with colleagues, including on pregnancy rights and intimidation.

National advocacy ensures women's experiences on the factory floor become part of policy.



UNIONS GROW AND WOMEN GAIN AGENCY

Makin Terang is not only about data, but also about leadership. In 2024, 57 percent of participants in trainings on gender-focused advocacy and collective bargaining were women. A year earlier, this was 36 percent. Across the programme as a whole, women's participation rose from 35 to 49 percent. The unions also grew: in 2024, 5,374 workers joined, over 65 percent of them were women. Thirteen new unions were founded.

In factories lacking a union, learning circles have emerged: safe groups where workers learn about labour rights, collective agreements and the power of organising. Here, change begins small - with conversations after shifts or during breaks. But these conversations build trust. And trust creates the strength to make demands together.

Unions not only bring stories or frustration, but facts.

PART OF POLICY

In addition, the information collected does not remain within the factory. Workers' real-life experiences are also used in national advocacy for better protection against violence and intimidation at work. In this way, women's experiences on the factory floor become part of policy. Making Terang shows that a collective agreement can be more than words on paper. When women are able to share their experiences, when unions substantiate these experiences, and when workers negotiate collectively, space is created for safer work, fairer wages and greater agency. ■

MAKIN TERANG IN BRIEF

The literal translation of Makin Terang is 'shedding light'. The project aims to improve labour conditions and worker representation in the Indonesian garment sector through greater transparency, increased participation of workers and stronger social dialogue. Trade unions learn to interpret current data and use these in collective bargaining on wages, labour rights, workplace safety and women's rights. Learning circles are also set up in factories without a union. In addition, the project focuses on increasing the number of female participants and leaders, so that women are not only the subject of improvements but actively take part in negotiating better collective agreements and safer workplaces.

Curious to see what this looks like in practice on Indonesian factory floors?

Watch the video:





MOVING INTERNATIONAL FUNDERS TO TAKE ACTION

**EMPOWERING LABOUR UNIONS TO TACKLE
ABUSES AT MAJOR CONSTRUCTION SITES**

International financial institutions are far removed from construction sites. Yet their decisions have major consequences for the workers building railways, roads, metros or power plants. Mondiaal FNV and the international construction union BWI support labour unions in exposing abuses and holding funders to account. This leads to inspections, complaint procedures and concrete improvements for the people doing the hard work: access for labour unions, safer workplaces, shaded rest areas, toilets, and one day off each week.

At major construction sites across Asia and Africa, roads are being built, power plants constructed, railways extended, and metro systems developed. These are projects of great significance for a country or region. But behind this progress lies a harsh reality for the people carrying out the work. Construction workers operate at great heights without proper safety equipment. They continue working even when temperatures approach 50 °C. Sometimes they have no days off, no protection, no toilets, and no access to decent meals. And those who stand up for their rights risk dismissal, intimidation, or abuse.

MAJOR INVESTMENTS

These projects are financed in part by international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank or the African Development Bank. These are not ordinary commercial banks, but institutions that specialise in funding infrastructure and development projects in countries where such investments are

Unions provide the bridge between on-site abuses and accountability at the highest levels.

urgently needed. On paper, they require compliance with labour standards, but in practice this often falls short. That is where labour unions step in. For many years, Mondiaal FNV has supported the international construction union BWI in strengthening unions involved in these construction developments. Unions learn how to better monitor, record, and document workplace abuses. They raise workers' awareness of their rights and engage in dialogue with employers. When results fall short, they push the issue up the chain to the institutions financing the project.



MONDIAAL FNV'S ROLE IN THE NETHERLANDS

In recent years, alongside its support for BWI, Mondiaal FNV has engaged in intensive lobbying of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This has increased awareness of the negative impact of the restructuring measures that the IMF and the World Bank impose as conditions for financing. Mondiaal FNV highlighted how privatisation of public services - such as health care, water and electricity - affects both workers and consumers. Mondiaal FNV was also an active member of the Tuesday Group, where unions and NGOs provided input for the Dutch positions at international shareholders' meetings of the international financial institutions. In this way, experiences from the work floor gained greater influence on decision-making.



BREAKTHROUGH

This often proves difficult. In many countries, the space for independent unions is limited. Unions face political pressure or are denied access to construction sites. Employers sometimes respond aggressively to union activity. Union leaders and members risk dismissal or intimidation. That is why access to the complaints mechanisms of international financial institutions is so important. If unions can adequately demonstrate what is going wrong, they can compel funders to take responsibility. gevraagd en betrokken bij nieuwe audits.

In South-Asia, this led to a major breakthrough. BWI concluded a Memorandum of Understanding with the Asian Development Bank. Such a high-level agreement with an international financial institution had never been achieved before. It was agreed that work would begin on a labour-rights policy and that joint inspections would be carried out.

These inspections indeed took place at, among other sites, the construction of a hydropower plant in Nepal and a power plant in Bangladesh. BWI participated in the inspection teams and subsequently discussed with the relevant ministries which improvements were needed. In Bangladesh, one of these inspections made it possible to open a union office on the construction site. In Nepal, unions were consulted more frequently and involved in new audits.

Behind many large construction projects with great social value are workers facing unacceptable working conditions.

Workers refuse to remain invisible in major development projects and are standing up for their rights.

SEVEN-DAY WORKING WEEK

More successes followed. In Kenya, a group of construction workers was employed on a road project financed by the World Bank. They worked seven days a week, putting in fourteen-hour days. One woman asked for a second overall so she could wash the first one. Because of the long hours, she could only rinse her work clothes at night, but they would not dry by morning. She did not know she was entitled to one day off per week. Once she learned this, she became a strong advocate for a six-day working week. In the end, the union succeeded in introducing a rotation system, ensuring that all workers received a weekly day off.

BUILDING BRIDGES

In this way, an abstract topic becomes tangible. Decisions made by international financial institutions are taken far from the construction site. But when unions succeed in holding these institutions to account, things change for the people doing the work. An office at the construction site. Access for the union. An inspection. Protective clothing. A toilet. Shade. A day off. This is the power of international labour-union cooperation: connecting abuses on the work floor to those who hold power and responsibility at the top. Mondiaal FNV helps unions build

those bridges. So that workers do not remain invisible in major development projects but are empowered to claim their rights where it matters most: their workplace. ■

UGANDA

In East-Africa, it is the World Bank that plays the biggest role. In Uganda, a union independently lodged a complaint with the World Bank regarding a road project. Workers were forced to work seven days a week, the union was denied access, there were incidents of sexual abuse, and a manager had beaten an employee. The World Bank launched an investigation, wrote to the Minister, and initiated a remediation programme. Not everything changed at once, but improvements on the work floor began to materialise.

KENIA

A Kenyan road project was plagued by serious problems. Workers operated at great heights without protection, without safety equipment, without decent toilets, and without shaded rest areas. The food provided was unhygienic. Here, too, the union was initially denied access to the workplace. Thanks to union advocacy and intervention by the World Bank, these abuses were resolved.



SUPPORT OUR WORK AND MAKE A DONATION TODAY!

Your donation helps us to continue and expand the work you've read about in this edition of **Mondiaal Stories**. In Uganda, in Indonesia, and in many other countries where labour rights are under pressure, your support leads to stronger unions, safer workplaces, fairer agreements, and increased protection for workers worldwide.

Can we count on your indispensable support? Thank you so much!

You can donate to Mondiaal FNV with a one-time contribution, but you can also choose to give automatically each month or annually. Want to make an even bigger impact? With a periodic donation (fixed for at least 5 years), you benefit from additional tax advantages, without it costing you more in net terms.

Prefer to donate by bank transfer? Send your contribution to NL87 INGB 0000 1360 00 (Stichting Mondiaal FNV), using 'donation' as the reference.

All information can be found here:



Mondiaal FNV is registered as an ANBI public-benefit organisation



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Photography: Jan Banning, BWI, Samuel Kuteesa and
Jacob Kabunga - Focus Images, Shutterstock,
iStock/Pradeep Gaur, Jeroen van Loon (Compass Media)
Design: René Mohrmann, Sanne Groot
Production: Global Village Media
Printing: Opmeer bv

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