



TRANSPORT WORKERS FIGHTING BACK

ORGANISING GLOBALLY

Labour Rights for Informal Transport Workers!

Only a small minority of the world's transport workers are in secure jobs. More and more transport workers are working in informal employment or precarious work without secure employment contracts, worker benefits and union organisation.

While we can do our best to resist the erosion of decent work, we will never win without organising those transport workers who are already in precarious and informal work.

In road transport, many professional drivers have been forced to work as 'owner drivers' when in reality it is disguised 'bogus' self-employment. In passenger transport, many public transport services have been privatized and fragmented into small owner-operator businesses. There are many thousands of motorcycle-taxi drivers, mini-bus drivers and conductors, informal truck drivers and cargo handlers, and thousands more women and men employed in service occupations in and around key informal transport hubs, such as bus stations, railway stations and airports, taxi ranks, and motor-cycle taxi stages.

It is necessary to widen the scope of union organisation beyond those who are in formal employment. The aim is to include not only the millions of transport workers in the informal economy, but also those in the formal transport economy, whose security and employment rights are being undermined through outsourcing, temporary contracts, fake self-employment and other ways of making employment more precarious.

ITF affiliates from Africa, Asia and Latin America organising and representing informal workers have drawn up an ***Informal Transport Workers Charter***. This includes demands for workers' rights, union recognition, social protection, an end to violence against informal women workers, as well as ending harassment, exploitation and corruption in the informal transport industry as a whole. These unions have been participating in the ITF's Informal Transport Workers' Project, which has had some spectacular results. In Uganda alone, for example, the Amalgamated Transport & General Workers' Union has successfully affiliated associations of informal transport workers, boosting membership from less than 5,000 to more than 80,000 in just three years. Where these workers have been organised, the impact has been immediate – dramatically reducing extortion and harassment by the police or gaining bargaining recognition with government for example.

The Action Week provides an opportunity to publicise and campaign around the charter – demanding equal rights with workers in the formal economy, building solidarity with workers in formal employment, reaching out and demonstrating the power of union organisation with mass membership among informal workers.

... Can your union campaign around the Charter, and demand that your government recognises the rights of informal transport workers?

... Can your union organise meetings with informal workers' representatives to understand their issues, build alliances and overcome barriers to union organisation?

... Can your union discuss the Charter and add your name to the list of supporting unions?

There are a number of ITF resource materials specific to precarious workers that can assist your activities. To receive a copy of the *Informal Transport Workers' Charter* or the ITF guide: 'Organising precarious transport workers', please contact the Secretariat (inlandtransport@itf.org.uk).

Read and post to the ITF informal workers' blog: www.informalworkersblog.org which contains news and even more resources about the practical aspects of research and organising, as well as information about the ITF informal workers' project.

Please keep in touch! ... Let the ITF Inland Transport Sections know what activities you are organising so we can share with others and learn from our experiences.