

# **Trade Unions** & **Child Labour**

**Booklet 3**

**Fact Finding  
and Information  
About Child Labour**

*Developing National and International Trade Union Strategies to Combat Child Labour  
Project INT/96/M06/NOR*

*Bureau for Workers' Activities  
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE*

This booklet is one of seven booklets in the series “Trade Unions and Child Labour”. The booklets were produced in the year 2000 as part of the ILO/ACTRAV project, Developing National and International Trade Union Strategies to Combat Child Labour (INT/96/M06/NOR), sponsored by the Government of Norway.

The series of booklets comprises:

- 1** Guide to the Booklets
- 2** Union Policies and Action Plans to Combat Child Labour
- 3** Fact Finding and Information about Child Labour
- 4** Campaigning Against Child Labour
- 5** Collective Bargaining to Combat Child Labour
- 6** Using ILO Standards to Combat Child Labour
- 7** The Tripartite Structure to Combat Child Labour

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## Preface

The ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), has been involved in issues concerning environmentally sustainable development and child labour for many years - through supporting trade unionists to develop and to implement their own policies and action plans.

Child labour is a vast and complex area, and many different groups are engaged in the elimination of child labour and therefore a large number of publications have been produced on this subject.

So, why do we need more?

Just as with the question of environmentally sustainable development, trade unions have asked for materials dealing with the issue of child labour from the specific point of view of workers and their organizations.

This series of booklets is designed as an introductory "one stop" guide for trade union activists who have decided that they want to get involved in child labour and want information to get them on the track.

You, the reader, may be involved in trade union work at many levels: at a national centre; in a national trade union; in the regional or local structure of a national centre or national union; or as an activist in an enterprise or a public service such as a school or hospital.

It does not matter which level you work at, or what position you hold, whether you are a full time paid staff member of a trade union or a voluntary activist like a shop steward or a branch secretary. At any level, in any trade union position, you can make a contribution to the fight against child labour. The struggle is worthwhile. It is a struggle for basic human rights - the rights of the child to education and childhood. It is a trade union issue because it is a question of adult employment.

You can use the materials as working papers. Often, you will think of things that you need to do. Record these points and then take the appropriate action.

Above all, the materials are tools to be used.

There are checklists, action points, quotations, case studies, and different references throughout the booklets.

The booklets were produced through a collective process by trade unionists themselves. Draft booklets were prepared and were then sent out for comments to many trade union organizations and tested in several workshops in Africa and Asia. They were then revised in the light of feedback from previous activities, at a workshop in Geneva. Further revision and editing took place before it was finally printed for publishing.

Geneva, 2000



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Photo ILO/ACTRAV/Child Labour Project



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## Why Trade Unions Need Information about Child Labour

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Why do trade unions need information about child labour? You may well ask that question. To develop appropriate policies and effective plans to take effective action against child labour, trade unions need to gather detailed and credible information on the incidence of child labour. Through its direct contact with labour markets and its widespread network of members and officials, the trade union movement is in a unique position to go to the very source of the problem of child labour and find out the facts.



Finding out the facts about child labour will assist both the union movement and national authorities in devising policies and plans and, most important, in taking appropriate and effective action to eliminate the problem of child labour.



Information is fundamental to the development of any trade union campaign. This is particularly true when it comes to the exploitation of children in the labour market. Child labour is not one thing, it exists in many forms – some of these are difficult to identify and hidden from public view. Without a clear understanding of what constitutes child labour, where, how and why child labour occurs, it will remain impossible to deal with effectively.

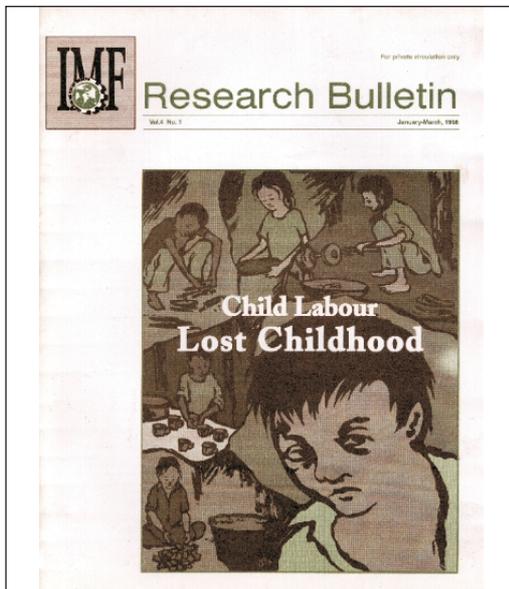
## What Information We Need

Before taking any action to collect information or carry out any survey on child labour, it is important to know what kind of information would be useful. Here is a list of the basic information required:

### Sources of information

The first step is to identify what institutions or organizations have factual information available on the child labour situation in your country or region. These sources would include:

- ✓ International organizations - ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank.
- ✓ National Government - Ministry of Labour, other ministries or a national statistical office.
- ✓ Workers' and employers' organizations - national, local or international.
- ✓ Teachers' organizations.
- ✓ Academic institutions.
- ✓ Local, national and international NGOs.



**Data Bank**

State-wise distribution of child workers (0-14) age group according to 1971, 1981 and 1991 census

S.No. State/Union Territories	Child workers in the age group 0-14 (in lakhs)			
	1971	1981	1991	Male/Female ratio
1. Andhra Pradesh	1,037,643	1,361,212	1,577,219	122,004
2. Assam	593,349	**	479,514	57,445
3. Bihar	8,071,519	11,011,344	774,444	1,66,481
4. Gujarat	538,861	436,513	375,827	1,80,354
5. Haryana	1,81,826	174,181	89,830	79,045
6. Jharkhand	75,384	79,024	80,771	27,657
7. Kerala and Puducherry	30,469	27,847	0	0
8. Karnataka	688,219	1,131,582	838,738	158,884
9. Kerala	111,811	12,874	24,590	4,259
10. Madhya Pradesh	1,312,819	1,618,967	971,880	156,623
11. Maharashtra	1,88,357	1,537,291	409,412	252,371
12. Madhya Pradesh	85,869	78,217	114,718	5,051
13. Madhya Pradesh	30,449	44,115	62,730	3,383
14. Orissa	492,477	702,293	325,239	127,511
15. Punjab	629,771	216,539	1,331,414	18,454
16. Punjab	1,81,889	818,695	395,222	289,627
17. Rajasthan	15,681	8,561	5,214	361
18. Tamil Nadu	214,295	873,042	324,125	55,764
19. Uttar Pradesh	17,490	24,256	13,556	2,372
20. Uttar Pradesh	1,342,545	1,614,075	1,819,867	249,899
21. West Bengal	1,11,843	468,203	398,547	114,364
22. Andhra Pradesh	872	5,280	768	907
23. Andhra Pradesh	17,825	17,930	11,432	763
24. Chandigarh	1,065	1,046	1,899	34
25. Chandigarh	2,383	3,485	1,627	1,758
26. Chandigarh	12,821	25,787	26,028	886
27. Chandigarh	2,281	9,578	841	488
28. Chandigarh	3,038	788	4,156	12
29. Chandigarh	957	1,046	17	24
30. Chandigarh	**	4,514	4,911	18,020
31. Chandigarh	8,127	1,046	3,165	1,115
32. Chandigarh	10,713,585	11,840,870	8,842,118	2,001,200

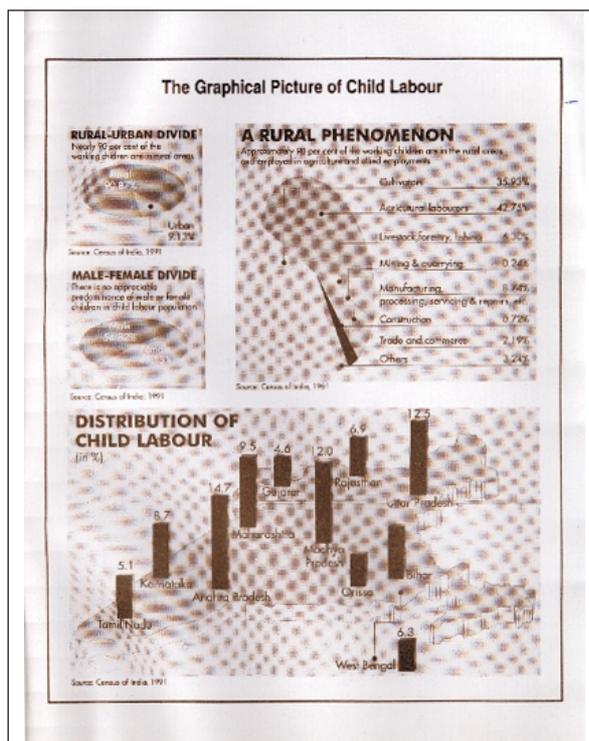


Photo: F. Molerés



## The existence and nature of the child labour problem

- ✓ Where is child labour located geographically?
- ✓ In which industries is it prevalent?
- ✓ Are working children from certain ethnic groups?
- ✓ What is the general economic level and income of the parents?
- ✓ Are girls more affected than boys or vice versa?
- ✓ What are working conditions like?

## The extent of the child labour problem

Many countries do not have any estimates at all, and those figures that exist do not always include all working children. Traditional methods of collecting labour statistics rely upon employers making returns, and there are employers, especially in the informal sector, who do not make such returns.

It is very important to have national and local statistics in order to understand the specific national and local problem. It is this specific problem which the community has to tackle, and when the problem is quantified, then it is easier to perceive changes and improvements over time.

## The attitude to the child labour problem

Attitudes play a significant role in the existence of child labour. You will therefore need to know about the attitudes of different groups to child labour. These groups include:

- ✓ parents;
- ✓ employers;
- ✓ trade union members;
- ✓ teachers;
- ✓ government;
- ✓ society as a whole.



Photo ILO/ACTRAV/Child Labour Project

## The reasons why children work

Attitudes in the community may allow children to work, but attitudes are not the only factor you will have to take into account. You will need to find out what are the specific reasons why the children are working. This will help you to know what problem needs solving.

## The legislation

You will need to find out about the laws which impact on, or regulate child labour.

- ✓ Find out about existing legislation on child labour, both local and national.
- ✓ Find out about existing legislation on education and school attendance.

### The actions already taken to combat child labour

- ✓ Obtain copies of national policies on child labour.
- ✓ Find out which international instruments deal with child labour.
- ✓ Check which international instruments have been ratified by your country.

In order to plan any activities and strategies to combat child labour, it is useful to find out what actions have already been carried out, and to know what kind of results these actions have had. As well as government activities, you could check with ILO/ACTRAV, ILO/IPEC, UNICEF, the development agencies of different countries, and the national and international NGOs working with child labourers. The lessons of these earlier activities should be taken into account when trade union activities and strategies are being planned so that we avoid earlier mistakes and learn from the strategies which have given the desired results.

### The existence of human and financial resources to tackle the child labour problem

Activities to combat the child labour problem do not have to be very expensive. However, you must ensure that you have the persons and the money to implement your activity. So some of the questions you need to ask are:

- ✓ Does your union have the staff to implement the particular activity?
- ✓ If not, do you need to recruit activists to help? Or do you need to cooperate with other partners? If so, then with whom?
- ✓ Does the union have all the resources it needs to tackle the problem?
- ✓ Are additional resources needed? If so, where are they to be found?

## How to Collect Information

Information can be sought at different levels and from different sources using different methods. So we need to determine which methods are most appropriate for obtaining what we need to know.

### Fact finding or fact gathering

When a union investigates child labour, it seeks to find out the facts, gather existing information and in general build up its documentation on the child labour problem so that it has a bank of data which it can use as the basis of its action.

### Identifying the sources of information

The first step is to identify if there is any information available on the overall situation in the country or on the specific area or region where the union is interested in working. Obtaining information on the overall situation gives the union a context to work in, it helps the union in determining what still needs to be documented as well as giving an insight into the institutions or organizations which may be helpful in the union's future information gathering exercise.

### Using union structures

The union can get workers in local communities to document their observations and personal experience of child labour and report back to union structures so as to build up a body of facts which can identify areas where child labour is prevalent. The union may also gather and compile visual documentation in the form of photographs and video footage. These, along with the individual stories of child labourers, can be very effective for a general mobilization.

### Qualitative studies

Small-scale surveys can be carried out by unions alone or in cooperation with NGOs or local researchers. When trade union activists work alongside professional researchers, both sides can benefit. The trade unionist is trained in research methodology and the researcher gains access to more workplaces. Below we give two examples: a survey carried out by the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF), and a study carried out by the Yemeni Trade Union Centre in cooperation with a research institute.

## The ITGLWF survey



Photo F. Moleiras

As part of its campaigning work against child labour, the ITGLWF has carried out a survey on the health and safety of children working in the textile, garment and leather industries. The programme of this work was conducted in cooperation with the ILO/ACTRAV project “Developing National and International Trade Union Strategies to Combat Child Labour” (INT/96/M06/NOR).

The ITGLWF started with a survey of the conditions of child labour in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand, with support from the ILO.

The questionnaire that was developed focussed in particular on aspects related to children’s working conditions and occupational health and safety. The survey involved a total of 537 children (120 in three different regions of India, 186 in different areas of Bangladesh, 78 in the Philippines, 120 in Pakistan, 33 in nine regions of Thailand). The answers received were very simple and direct in their structure. They provided useful information such as school attendance, hours of work, illnesses and accidents, descriptions of harmful working environments, harassment by adult workers, home work, repetitive tasks, specific problems related to the textile, garment and leather industries, and what children themselves thought about their work.

The survey varied enormously in terms of the numbers involved, and it did not attempt to be a fully “scientific” survey. It did reveal some of the work hazards experienced by children working in the sectors. Following the survey the ITGLWF produced a report based on the findings.

The ITGLWF plans to produce a handbook as the final product. It will use the information generated from the survey and report, along with a range of other sources, to provide a tool for active members of ITGLWF affiliates to use in the campaign against child labour.

## Yemen, a case study

Photo ILO/ACTRAV/Child Labour Project



This example takes a brief look at the design of a child labour study carried out in Yemen and commissioned by ACTRAV. Its purpose was to explore how children are engaged in various forms of work in Yemen. The design took into account such factors as school attendance, socialization, personal development and general health.

The structure of the study, and some of the factors taken into consideration in undertaking it, included:

- ✓ First, group discussions or “focus groups” were held to establish a list of economic sectors that should be explored for child labour activity.
- ✓ Second, the same focus groups helped elaborate the criteria for selection of children to be interviewed so that the study would cover the relevant varieties of work.

- ✓ Third, for each case, a set of interviews was designed in order to obtain views and information from the children themselves, from their parents, and eventual employers and teachers (or former teachers). The interview with the working child would first be completed before any of the other groups related to the child would be interviewed.
- ✓ Interviewers first took part in an in-depth discussion on what child labour is and is not, using the ILO Convention No. 138 as a yardstick. They were also trained in the use of the questionnaire.
- ✓ Persons with local knowledge and trust were drawn from trade unions to carry out the interviews. Female interviewers were used to interview girls and their mothers.
- ✓ Interviewers took time to explain questions over again to try to get the most accurate answers.



- ✓ Traditional reluctance to give family income figures meant that the interviewers were armed with a back-up question, asking the head of the household to compare the family income with the average income in the area instead.
- ✓ Interviews took place both during school hours and in the afternoon, making it possible to include children who attend school but work afterwards.
- ✓ The sectors were decided ahead of the field work. Interviewers selected the child when in the field with the aim of identifying and interviewing those believed to be the best respondents.
- ✓ The only criterion for selecting a child for an interview was that the child worked. No additional criteria were given. This was done in order to pick up types of child work that in more traditional surveys are sometimes excluded.



## Important Parameters for Purposes of Analysis

Irrespective of what method is used to gather information, it is important to ensure that certain parameters are included for the purposes of the analysis so as to know what needs to be changed and hence be able to develop an appropriate strategy. These parameters include:

- ✓ Are schools available? Are they relevant? And what does schooling cost?
- ✓ What are the children's average income and contribution to the family?
- ✓ Is there adult unemployment in the area? Or is there underemployment of adult workers?
- ✓ What is the role of women? Do they have access to the labour market? And if so, does this factor contribute to whether the child works or not?

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Photo ILO/AC TRAV/Child Labour Project



Photo Tor Monsen/ILO info, Norway

## Research

The statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC) was created within the ILO to improve the information base and data collection methodology on child labour. SIMPOC was launched in 1998 as an inter-departmental programme, managed by IPEC with technical assistance from the ILO's Bureau of Statistics, to assist member countries in establishing the following:

- ✓ a programme for the collection and use of quantitative and qualitative data on the scale, distribution, characteristics, causes and consequences of child labour;
- ✓ a basis for child labour data analysis which would be used in planning, formulating and implementing interventions, monitoring their implementation and assessing the impact of policies and programmes;
- ✓ a database on child labour consisting of information on institutions and organizations active in this field, child labour projects and programmes, industry-level actions, and national legislation and indicators; as well as
- ✓ data which could be compared across countries.

In many countries where IPEC is working, SIMPOC is collaborating with national statistical services and Ministries of Labour to develop a data collection methodology and, through that, proper statistics on child labour. If SIMPOC has been operating in your country, it may be that a national survey exists.

## Methods

SIMPOC uses three methods to obtain data on child labour, namely national child labour surveys, rapid assessment method and baseline surveys. The national child labour survey is used to determine the general situation in the country, whereas the rapid assessment method and baseline surveys are more focussed studies to be used in areas where child labour is concentrated.

### *National child labour surveys*

National Child Labour Surveys are country-wide inquiries intended to provide information on the activities of children aged 5 to 17 years. The survey is household based for the main reason that the decision whether a child will work or go to school, or combine both, has a lot to do with the composition and the circumstances of the households where they live. Information collected includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- ✓ The demographic, social and economic characteristics, e.g. levels of education and training, enrolments and attendance, occupation, skill levels, hours of work, wages and other working and living conditions, health and safety issues as well as the risks faced at work.
- ✓ Characteristics of the sectors where children are working; public or private sector. While public sector establishments are formal, private sector establishments are either informal or formal.
- ✓ Where and how long the children have been working; the factors that lead children to work or make families put their children to work; the views of different involved groups, e.g. parents, guardians, children and employers, about child labour.

## Rapid assessment method

Rapid assessment method is used for gathering information in a quick and simplified way in small, clearly defined geographical areas (e.g. small communities, towns, and villages). The information gathered is on the working and life circumstances of children. The rapid assessment method uses a number of different tools. These include:

- ✓ Use of existing information (survey findings, reports, case studies).
- ✓ Structured in-depth interviews of individuals selected because of their knowledge of the economic activities of children.
- ✓ Mapping – drawings of the areas being studied which show major physical features and layout of the area and indicate the age, sex and occupation of the child workers as observed in each location within the area.
- ✓ Direct observation – the systematic observation of child workers to obtain information on their activities, working conditions and a number count of children in each sector.
- ✓ Individual child interviews – to get an understanding of the children's view of work and school, the exact nature of their work, details about wages, schedules and work experiences.
- ✓ Group interviews – in-depth discussions with a group of adults or children.
- ✓ Semi-structured questionnaires.

This method is generally used in areas, which are suspected or known to have substantial concentrations of children involved in occupations difficult to identify and quantify. This information gathered by the rapid assessment method are useful for raising awareness, programming, planning and in-depth research, as well as complement national surveys, which fail to capture illegal or immoral activities.

SIMPOC has used this method to study specific types of the worst forms of child labour, such as child labour in selected commercial agriculture, child domestic workers, hazardous fishing, mining, some small workshops in an urban environment, child soldiers, children in bondage and child trafficking.



Photo G. Palazzo

## Baseline surveys

Baseline surveys are used to identify target groups and to establish underlying information to monitor and evaluate project interventions. The work undertaken in baseline surveys includes:

- Identification and listing of target groups (usually workplace using or suspected of using children in its workforce).
- Mapping the workplaces under investigation showing their major physical features and layout, and the locations of child workers.
- Selection of the workplaces to be surveyed. If the list established at (a) is small, all the workplaces on the list may be investigated. Otherwise a sample should be designed according to (b) and the main objectives of the programme.
- Finalization of the survey questionnaires and the interviewers' manual according to the national circumstances and collection, analysis and publication of the results.



**Statistics on Child Labour**

**Table-1**  
Economically Active Child Population in the South Asian Countries

Country	Age Group	All Children		Male			Female		
		Active Population	Activity Rate	Total Population	Active Population	Activity Rate	Total Population	Active Population	Activity Rate
Bangladesh	10-14	56,677,000	33.3	9,064,000	3,430,000	37.8	7,992,000	2,247,000	28.1
India	5-14	11,285,349	5.4	109,366,794	6,189,834	5.7	100,619,836	5,095,515	5.1
Indonesia	10-14	1,922,810	8.0	12,162,317	1,130,221	9.3	11,790,943	792,589	6.7
Nepal	10-14	551,835	22.9	1,209,803	218,979	18.1	1,117,483	312,856	28.0
Pakistan	10-14	1,906,000	11.6	8,866,000	1,467,000	16.5	7,633,000	439,000	5.8
Sri Lanka	10-14	28,615	1.8	831,248	18,628	2.2	802,989	9,987	1.2

Source: ILO, Yearbook of Labour Statistics (1997)

**Table-2**  
Child Labour in India

Industry	Location	Total Workers	Child Workers	Percentage of Child Workers to Total Workers
Slate pencil	Mandsaur, Madhya Pradesh	12,000	1000	8.3
Slate	Markapur, Andhra Pradesh	15,000	app. 3750	25
Diamond-cutting	Surat, Gujarat	1,00,000	15,000	15
Agate-cutting	Cambay, Gujarat	30,000	not known	—
Gem Polishing	Jaipur, Rajasthan	60,000	13,600	22.6
Powerloom	Bhiwandi, Maharashtra	3,00,000	15,000	5
Cotton hosiery	Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu	30,000	8,000	33.3
Carpet weaving	Mirzapur-Bhadohi, Uttar Pradesh	2,00,000	1,50,000	75
Carpet weaving	Jammu & Kashmir	app. 4,00,000	1,00,000	25
Carpet weaving	Rajasthan	30,000	12,000	40
Lock-making	Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh	80,000	7,000	8.7
Pottery	Khurja, Uttar Pradesh	90,000	10,000	11.1
Brass Ware	Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh	20,000	5,000	25
	Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh	1,50,000	40,000	20.6
	Uttar Pradesh	—	45,000	30.0
Match	Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu	not known	45,000	—
	Tamil Nadu	—	—	—

Contd. . . .

# What Trade Unions Can Do with Information about Child Labour

Information gathered can be used as a basis to plan and implement different strategies to combat child labour. Some of these are:

- ✓ drawing up trade union policies and action plans to combat child labour;
- ✓ informing union members as part of awareness raising campaigns about child labour;
- ✓ mobilizing members and networking with others in the labour movement and other relevant groups;
- ✓ developing model agreements with employers on an industry-wide basis and building child labour prohibition into collective agreements at local level;
- ✓ approaching employers to take joint action against child labour;
- ✓ supporting the ratification and implementation of international standards to combat child labour, as well as approaching Government and other authorities to improve and enforce national legislation;
- ✓ reporting child labour abuses to appropriate national or local authorities;
- ✓ contributing to national reports and complaints to the ILO, or reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child;
- ✓ using the information as case studies in workers' education.



- 1** What information on child labour does your union need to enable it to draw up effective action plans to combat child labour?
- 2** Discuss and draw up a list of steps you would take:
  - ◆ to find out about the information available on child labour, and
  - ◆ to document the situation in a local area where child labour exists.Give reasons for choosing these steps.
- 3** Draw up a questionnaire which could be used by your union to collect data on the local child labour situation.
- 4** Examine the list of parameters, and discuss why you think it would be important for the union to have this information when the union is designing action to remove children from the workplace.
- 5** Look at the possible trade union actions listed. Can you think of any other activities that trade unions could undertake? Make a list and give reasons why you consider these relevant trade union actions.



