

ZAMBIA'S labour movement

Durban's
COP17

and then there
were three...

editorial

After 2011 passed by at full throttle, 2012 seemed to begin in overdrive.

Usually a new year starts calmly with the finalising of reports, drafting contracts, etc., but within two weeks of opening we already found ourselves in the middle of a very vibrant "Big Food in Africa" Conference organised by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). However, details of the discussions held will have to wait until our next issue, as this time we still report on some of last year's highlights.

A major year-end occurrence was the Climate Conference COP17 held in Durban. Actually, there were two events, the "formal" one and a parallel programme organised by civic society. We have tried to give

an impression of what transpired both in words and pictures.

Of major importance to a number of unionists were, of course, the graduations which took place in November and December in Windhoek and Harare. Accredited courses have become a rather established feature with two of our partners, i.e. the Durban Workers College and LaRRI, the Labour Resources and Research Institute in Windhoek. We are proud to say that Zimbabwe has risen to the challenge as the Zimbabwe Labour Centre held its first graduation in December last year.

Next might be a Zambian institute, as RLS is carefully identifying possible areas of involvement in that country. You might remember that in the previous issue we sketched

a background picture of Zambia's history and political economy. In this issue we delve into its labour movement.

Enjoy the read!

Jos Martens

How can one evaluate or simply describe an event as diverse and complex as the Climate Conference COP17 which took place in Durban in December last year?

COP 17

Inside the International Conference Centre 12,480 delegates convened meetings within meetings within meetings, formed inner circles within inner circles within... A few kilometres away, at the University of KwaZulu Natal, but it could have been on another planet, the "People's Space", a colourful civic society contingent numbering thousands, enjoyed its own programme. In between and in contact with, but also divorced from both sides and often watched with misgivings, the "big, professional" NGOs could be found, commuting back and forth.

Every now and then the two worlds seemed to converge, when civic groups tried to put their messages across to the other side and to the world at large, either by way of a colourful march, like on the day of Global Action, or by less conventional or maverick (and clamped down upon) actions. But interests, language and culture remained incompatible.

It looked as though - perhaps with the exception of some Latin American countries - the divide between politicians and big business on one end and "the people" including scientists at the other is larger than ever, a chasm probably being a more accurate description. Of course, within the two worlds there are also differing opinions, convictions, strategies and positions, but generally, the divide between the two planets is a cosmic one.

The Conference of the Parties

Two central themes dominated the Durban summit. Firstly, the fate of the Kyoto Protocol which expires in 2012 and the will and ability of the delegates to continue and strengthen efforts of implementing still vastly inadequate, binding mechanisms to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Secondly, the functioning of the Green Climate Fund, which was approved at the previous summit in Cancun and which, in theory, is meant to support the poorest countries in facing the consequences of climate change through projects of mitigation and adaptation.

As far as the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol was concerned, the nod was given but it remained empty statements with the official Conference text stating that "Participating Nations of COP17 agreed to work on a Globally Binding Climate Change treaty and decide on its modalities by 2015. Implementation is planned from 2020 onwards". In other words: till 2020 it's a free for all as there will be no overall legally binding mechanisms until then apart from the minimal, deficient ones mentioned in the old Protocol. Moreover, the major polluter, the USA, refused to sign the Protocol and remains opposed to any binding mechanisms. To cap it all (no pun intended): under the second commitment, so-called flexible mechanisms like emissions (read carbon) trading and clean development mechanisms like carbon offsets and REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) can continue unhindered. Worse still, the COP17 agreement documents its intention to "develop a new market-based mechanism to assist developed countries in meeting part of their targets or commitments under the Convention".

With regard to the Green Climate Fund, rich countries pledged to contribute up to \$30 billion in 2012

COP 17

One million climate change jobs campaign
Colourful internationalism at the women's tent at G6 Gate



and 100 billion per year until 2020. While these amounts are ludicrously paltry and even insulting when compared to the amounts that time and again are unquestioningly committed for the bail out of banks or in answer to the EU's expanding crisis, no sources of public funding have been identified; the agreement speaks of a "variety of sources".

The doors are therefore wide open for the private sector to take some serious profits as investment banks and big corporations have already developed a range of instruments and strategies to capture their share of the green capitalism pie. No wonder COP17 has been dubbed the Conference of the Polluters.

The Meeting of the People

The atmosphere at the People's Space was reminiscent of World Social Forums: people milling about, parallel programmes to choose from, scheduled and spontaneous sessions, a certain measure of chaos, creativity, informality and, now and then, music and dance. The best organised and most vibrant was undisputedly the rural women's tent at UKZN's G6 Gate.

In its own way this get-together was unique because for the first time SA's broad and immensely diverse array of social and climate movements and organisations managed to overcome their

differences and, in 2010, form a joint committee, C17 to prepare for this parallel event. Internal and external hurdles had to be overcome including differences of opinion, disparate ideologies and strategies, severe financial constraints and last but not least consistent opposition, bordering on sabotage, by Durban's city manager Mike Sutcliffe. The resultant two week event was definitely enthusing and informative for all participants.

Whether such an event is effective in influencing the formal negotiations and in capturing the eyes and minds of the broader public is another matter entirely. A direct question mark can also be placed against the success of the march on the Global Day of Action, in particular, the handing over of a memorandum to the COP17 President, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane and UNFCCC Executive Secretary, Christiana Figueres. Especially when Nkoana-Mashabane, during her acceptance of the memorandum, tried and partially succeeded in coaxing the crowd into chanting her own, most apolitical slogan ever, "do more, do more", it became clear that the march was being emasculated and with one fell swoop even turned into a form of endorsement of COP17 by civil society.

Unauthorised protests, marches and short-lived occupations of

some buildings in the days before and after the march by some of the more radical groups showed a different picture, but did not manage to dent, let alone delegitimise, the Conference of the Polluters.

These and related matters are still being discussed and evaluated by the various civic groups. We will try to report on some of their findings in the next RoSAfrica issue.

RLS' climate support

While indeed many a question can be asked about the relevance and sense of mega events like COP17, it was definitely not all doom and gloom.

As the Johannesburg office of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung we supported and facilitated a number of initiatives that were of great value in their own right or may not have been initiated had COP17 not taken place, while the effect of others will be felt far beyond December 2011.

To reiterate, the fact that for the first time social and climate activists and movements managed to overcome their differences and together stage a major protest, is a significant step forward.

Although many disadvantages of such a broad coalition can be pointed out, the unique feat of such

dissimilar organisations getting to know each other in discussions and action will definitely affect future cooperation.

Similarly, had it not been for the RLS supporting C17 and the People's Space, through Earthlife Johannesburg with resources from the German Government's Climate Fund, - together with one or two other progressive supporters - all heroic efforts by the C17 secretariat would have been fruitless. This because along the way pledges by a number of donors failed to materialise and the whole event would have fallen through due to a total lack of funds.

Generally mainstream support for civic society's input in the process was conspicuously absent. Several embassies seconded extra personnel to their SA embassies to facilitate the formal COP17 event but failed to set aside one cent in support of the parallel civic input. Highest praise, therefore, for the C17 secretariat organisers who still managed to arrange an extraordinary space on a shoestring, bare-bones budget that was less than a quarter of what had been expected!

Apart from overall support to the People's Space, the local RLS

office assisted a number of specific initiatives before and during the conference, the most notable being:

- An international anti-capitalist strategy workshop in preparation of COP17 by our partner COPAC in cooperation with the Democratic Left Front, with major contributor, Bolivia's former ambassador to the UN, Pablo Solon.
- Research by the Human Science Research Council, HSRC, in SA's Limpopo Province on how indigenous knowledge systems could be harnessed to shrink the carbon footprint of agriculture. Findings have been presented at various forums within and outside COP17.
- An HSRC Seminar during COP17, entitled Social Sciences in a Changing Climate.
- Coinciding with COP17, CARES, a prominent partner in Mauritius produced and distributed booklets on climate change and explaining eco-socialist perspectives on the environment.
- The initiative which took South Africa, or at least the

People's Space by storm, was undoubtedly the One Million Climate Jobs campaign.

Initiated by the Alternative Information Development Centre (AIDC), some forty civil society organisations including trade unions, produced technical papers and a popular booklet, showing how in SA – with political will – 3.000.000 climate jobs can be created.

There was overwhelming interest at the People's Space at the launch and at all sessions at which the creation of Climate Jobs was discussed by activists and experts from SA and elsewhere. Production of the booklet was only the beginning, as an ambitious awareness campaign and lobby is being mounted to turn the ideas and proposals from the studies into reality (see www.climatejobs.org.za).

- Production and distribution of two climate books: "Durban's Climate Gamble" and "Politics of Climate Justice", published by the University of South Africa, UNISA and the University of KwaZulu Natal respectively.

After COP17, the climate ball kept rolling as SA's labour movement also stepped into the climate change fray. During the first week of February, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, NUMSA, with support from RLS-Southern Africa, organised an "International Conference on Building a Socially-Owned Renewable Energy Sector in South Africa". The Conference debated strategies to promote structural changes and concrete interventions in South Africa's energy sector, informed by experiences of countries as diverse as Mali, Cuba, Germany, Philippines, Denmark, Mexico, Spain, Tunisia and China.



Again with support from the RLS Johannesburg office, COSATU will hold an international conference on Energy, the Green Economy and Industrialisation" from 16-18 May.

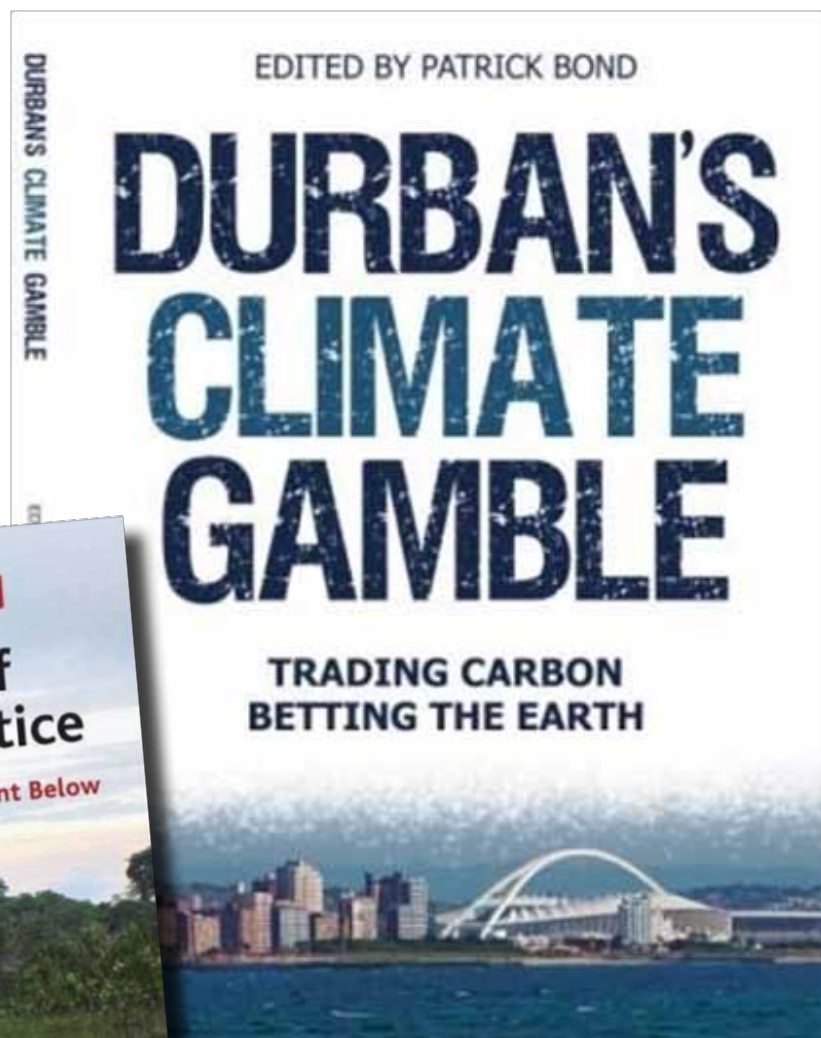
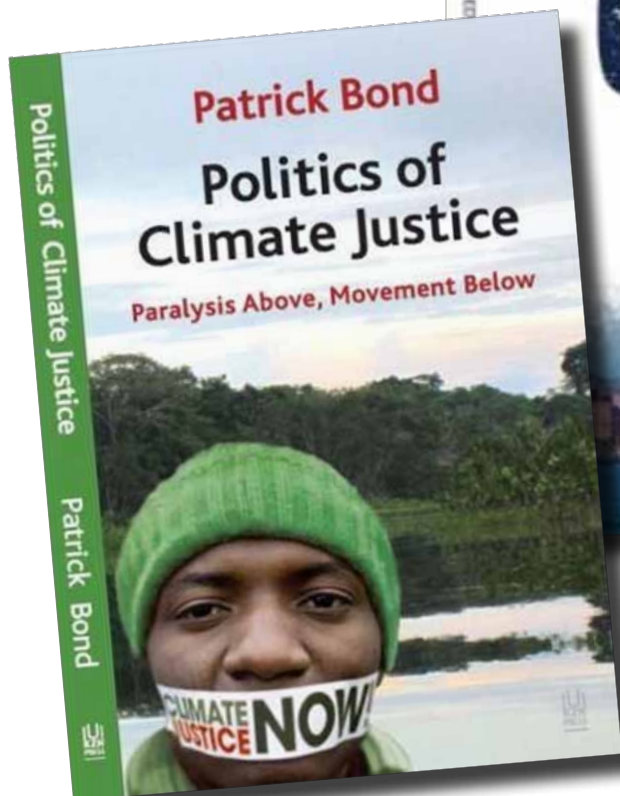
Both conferences will aid COSATU's input to the ANC's Elective Conference, already dubbed Polokwane 2 scheduled for June this year.

Our office is taking the lead to initiate a unique angle to the climate debate in Zimbabwe. At the beginning of March, we will organise, in close cooperation with our partners there, our annual Rosa Luxemburg Seminar, which will focus on The Solidarity Economy, Rural Development and Climate Change. Participants from the rural areas, climate and agricultural experts, civil servants, NGOs and activists will bring together an interesting blend of expertise and experience to explore how a solidarity economy can concretely enhance rural development in Zimbabwe's

post-land reform era, taking into consideration imminent climate changes which will dramatically affect Zimbabwe's rural areas and its inhabitants.

Big changes are often brought about piecemeal and RLS-Johannesburg is in a position to sometimes initiate, sometimes support or sometimes shape a number of these pieces into a meaningful climate programme.

An opportunity not to be wasted!



COP 17

Newly released publications revealing how politics clouds climate change efforts



Top: LaRRI's eighth graduation ceremony held in Windhoek on 11 November 2011

Bottom left: Mike Sambo sitting for his ZLC exam

Bottom right: ZLC's graduation ceremony in Harare on 10 December 2011

and then there were **three** ...

For quite some years the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation supported a variety of courses and programmes for trade unionists within the Southern African region. Over the years this type of tuition gained wide acceptance and recognition with some courses attracting university accreditation. The Durban Workers College was the first organisation with courses recognised by the University of KwaZulu Natal.

The second was the Labour Resources and Research Institute, LaRRI, in Windhoek. For years these two institutions have been shaping unionists to diploma and certificate

level which enabled them to continue their studies at university if they wished to do so.

Then in 2011, a third institute, the independent Zimbabwe Labour Centre joined in.

On 10 December, the ZLC produced its first graduates, exactly one month after LaRRI held its eighth graduation ceremony in Windhoek.

The photographs above are indicative of the importance of such events in the lives of unionists.

In October 2011 the RLS Johannesburg office embarked on an exploratory visit to Zambia. In RoSAfrica's previous issue (2011, issue 3) we summarised Zambia's history and economy. In this issue we home in on Zambia's labour movement. Clearly a five-day visit is insufficient to gain an in-depth insight into all relevant developments and actors in a foreign country. Additional time and effort is needed to form a more complete picture of Zambia and a deeper understanding of its socio-political economy.

Zambia's labour force

Of Zambia's population of 12.8 million (2007), 4.9 million constitute its active labour force or 84% of the total labour force, reflecting an unemployment rate of 16%.

Employment

Of the active labour force, 84.3% are under- and 90% informally employed

There is a large rural-urban divide in population and employment rates: about two-third of the population live in rural areas where both formal and informal unemployment are higher. This results in the following picture:

- In the rural areas there are 3.234.000 informally and 66.000 formally employed workers
- In the urban areas there are 1.040.000 informally employed workers and 560.000 with formal employment

In 2008, 73% of Zambians aged 15 years and above worked in agriculture, forestry and fishing; 8.8% in wholesale and trade; 7.3% in community, social and personal services; 3.2% in manufacturing; 1.9% in transportation and storage and 1.8% in mining & quarrying (CSO Zambia, 2008 Labourforce Survey Report; Sep 2010).

As is the norm, unemployment is higher amongst women and wages are lower. Monthly remuneration (2005 figures) is highest in the financial sector (US\$ 260), followed by mining (US\$ 210) and lowest in

Zambia's labour movement



the agricultural sector with workers earning as little as US\$ 20 per month.

The labour movement

While in 1990 the total number of Zambia's unionised workers still hovered around 477,000, by the end of 2006 total trade union membership had decreased to 281,554. However, as in the same year the active formal labour force totalled some 626,000 this still represented an average unionisation rate in the formal sector of around 45%.

Though accurate figures per sector are difficult to come by, it is likely that the unionisation rates are highest in the urban areas and in the formal sector; unions are indeed predominantly formal sector based with an urban-based location.

Within the formal sector, however, neoliberal tendencies and policies also pose serious challenges to unionisation as foreign investors (Pepsi being one of them) often try and succeed in keeping unions out of newly established enterprises. In his August 2011 report to the ZCTU General Council, Secretary General Roy E. Mwaba, even speaks about union busting practices by both government and employers.

Federations and affiliates

The Zambia Congress of Trade Unions, ZCTU with 32 affiliates is by far the largest union body in Zambia, while the Federation of Free Trade Unions of Zambia (FFTUZ) claims to have 11 affiliated unions. There are two non-affiliated unions: the Press Association of Zambia and the Zambia Union of Nurses Organisation, ZUNO, which has attracted 5,352 nurses and midwives out of a potential membership of 13,000. As the FFTUZ has a membership of around 40,000 to 45,000, the total membership of the ZCTU might be around 230,000. Again, reliable figures are difficult to find and are often contradictory. Both ZCTU and FFTUZ are affiliated to the regional federation SATUCC.

According to the 2009 directory of the Zambia Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the ZCTU affiliated Mine Workers Union of Zambia, MUZ, has 21,000 members; the National Union of Commercial and Industrial Workers has 18,000 members; the Workers National Union of Building, Engineering and General 10,550; and the National Union of Plantations, Agriculture and Allied Workers, NUPAAW, 19,500. Most other affiliates have between 500 and 5,000 members.

The FFTUZ affiliated National Union of Miners and Allied Workers, NUMAW has 11,000 members and the Agriculture Technical and Professional Staff Union of Zambia, ATPSUZ, has 2,852 subscribers. UHDWUZ, the United Home and Domestic Workers' Union of Zambia which is also related to FFTUZ has 2,000 members.

Although Zambia's government shed many jobs in its liberalisation and privatisation drive (the central government labour force decreased from 132,000 in 1996 to about 101,000 in 2000) civil servants still make up the bulk of unionised workers. According to the Global Union Directory, the ZCTU's Civil Servants and Allied Workers Union (CSAWUZ) has almost 35,000 members and the Zambia United Local Authorities Union 15,000.

More than 60,000 of Zambia's 71,000 teachers and lecturers are unionised: ZCTU affiliated ZNUT, the Zambia National Union of Teachers, claims to have 38,000 members; it was established in 1953. BETUZ, the Basic Education Teacher's Union of Zambia, which was formed in 1997 and is affiliated to ZCTU, claims to have 22,000 members.

There is a third teachers' union, i.e. the Secondary School Teachers Union of Zambia, SESTUZ, which is affiliated to FFTUZ and has 6,000 members.

Informal sector unionisation

Casual workers and workers in the informal sectors are seldom unionised while the two Federations have insufficient resources to meaningfully penetrate those areas. It should also be noted that more than half of the people active in the informal sector are self-employed.

Only 2,000 domestic workers are unionised under the FFTUZ in the United Home and Domestic Workers' Union of Zambia. The union has little available funds to organise its members or expand its reach. The ZCTU has no affiliate in the domestic sector.

AZIEA, the Alliance for Zambia Informal Economy Associations, AZIEA, is associated to the ZCTU (without voting rights) and is affiliated to StreetNet International. Some of the founding associations are the Zambia National Marketeers Association, the Cross Border Traders Association, the Vendors Association of Ndola and the Tin Smith Association of Zambia. Amongst its member organisations are two unions: the Zambia Fisheries and Marketeers Union and the bus drivers. In 2006 AZIEA reported an active membership of about 50,000.

With only two staff members operating from a single office in Kitwe (though it has volunteer organisers in Zambia's 73 districts) and virtually no funds (activities are almost solely financed by donors on a project basis), AZIEA can hardly be expected to render structural support to the almost 4.5 million informal workers throughout the country. It can nonetheless boast some local victories such as the issue of the collection and use by the municipality of stand rentals from street vendors.

Zambia's neoliberalism and trade unionism

Neoliberalism, Structural Adjustment Programmes and the huge privatisation drive, including public sector reform programmes introduced by Chiluba's MMD in

the nineties, weakened the labour movement considerably.

In the first instance due to the enormous increase in unemployment and later by the outsourcing, informalisation and increased precariousness of work.

Automation of processes, especially in the mining sector, also added to job losses. Overall union membership decreased between 1990 and 1995 from 477,000 to 274,000. This trend continued unabated evidenced, for example, by a drop in the membership of the Mineworkers Union of Zimbabwe from 38,000 in 1998 to 24,245 in 2002.

Simultaneously legislation under neoliberalism also became a direct threat to labour's power. Under Kaunda's regime the ZCTU had been the only union federation in the country, guided by the one industry, one union principle and this gave the union much needed strength. In 1996 when Chiluba's government ratified ILO Convention 87 and its principle of Freedom of Association, it amended Zambia's labour laws accordingly and offered the possibility for workers to join and form trade unions at will.

This gave rise to the birth of splinter unions, some of them later forming the FFTUZ. Interestingly, the biggest split in ZCTU was caused by disagreement about whether or not to privatise Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines.

Splits within the union and the formation of new unions resulted in a further weakening of the labour movement as it came at a time when membership was already dwindling due to growing unemployment. There seem to be some yellow unions according to MUZ's president, Steven Mulenga, who recently accused the United Mine Workers of Zambia, UMUZ, of being one. However, detailed information about such unions, their numbers and backing is scarce.

The legal framework as laid down in the Industrial and Labour Relations Act (CAP 269) is not conducive to Unions either as some provisions give government an undue influence over union matters, while procedural requirements frustrate holding legal strikes.

Amendments made to the act in 1997 also diminished the unions' bargaining power as it gave the employers the freedom to choose whether they wanted to engage in collective bargaining at industry or at company level.

Lastly, and partly as a result of all the above factors, more sensitive and difficult to prove contentions have arisen both inside and outside union spheres about internal management and governance problems as well as the alleged lack of political independence of some union leaders. Encouragingly, in 2011 adversaries met in closed session in an attempt to iron out their differences.

Conclusion

The labour movement in Zambia has, especially since the introduction of MMD's unfettered neoliberal policies, been fighting an uphill battle. The labour environment has become increasingly worker unfriendly, while organised labour has lost many of its members, is more divided than before and is understaffed and under-resourced.

It is no overstatement that the movement has to be rebuilt to successfully face the completely new labour environment that has arisen in Zambia over the past 20 years.

At the same time, as previously mentioned, existing unions and federations seem too poor and under-resourced to pull themselves by their bootstraps out of the morass. In the words of some of ZCTU's leadership and senior staff: "district committees are dormant; staff development has stopped; due to resource constraints, activities and research are issue-based and,

while in principle appreciated, often donor driven; both the federations and affiliates are understaffed (at ZCTU head office the post of chief economist stood vacant for more than 2 years, FFTUZ has only six staff members); not enough paralegal support can be given; leadership turnover is high, while there is hardly money to give new leaders a proper induction...". Unions which seem relatively better endowed are the Mineworkers Union of Zimbabwe which owns some properties and the independent Zambia Union of Nurses Organisation with a secretariat of 16 staff.

The way forward

The Zambian labour movement seems in dire straits: unions are generally weak, understaffed and under-resourced with extremely limited budgets. As a result, often only the most elementary services are offered while hardly any resources are left for research and training - the basic ingredients needed for the rebuilding of the unions.

The challenges for labour are huge as they operate in a labour-hostile neoliberal environment with ever increasing casualisation, outsourcing, contract work (brokerage seems to be minor) and union busting. It is apparent that unions are predominantly formal sector based and located in the urban centres, while the greatest part of the workforce and those most in need of support, are informally employed and live mostly in the rural areas working predominantly in agriculture.

In addition, there seems to be a lack of comprehensive data and research, information which is needed as a basis for any programme of action. Unions have a dire shortage of qualified staff especially in research and training. Zambia also appears to be suffering an absolute shortage of labour-specialised, qualified researchers and sufficiently equipped research and training institutes.



Headquarters of the Mineworkers Union of Zambia (MUZ) in Kitwe, Zambia

Organisations like INESOR, the Institute for Social and Economic Research of the University of Zambia and the JCTR, the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection are small and few and far between. Studies on labour issues often commissioned by the ILO and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung offices in Lusaka seemed compelled to rely on a handful of researchers. As far back as 2007, the ZCTU endorsed a motion to establish an independent Zambia Institute of Labour Research and Development, ZILARD, but due to lack of funds this has never taken off.

Maybe under the new PF government of Michael Sata and its progressive Minister of Labour, Fackson Shamenda, who, as a former ZCTU President knows and understands the problems of Zambia's unions from the inside, the labour movement might get a bit more breathing space. Nevertheless, much more is needed and a long road travelled to get workers' interests prominent on the agenda again in both the formal and informal sectors.

Initially, unions, union-related and union-supporting organisations could sit together to discuss how, given the limited means and human resources available, a concerted and coordinated effort might turn the tide.

Unfortunately for labour, in January this year Shamenda was reassigned to the Ministry of Information and Tourism as President Sata needed a man of his calibre for that post.

events calendar

FEBRUARY

20 Roundtable: ANC 100 years and the future of South Africa
RLS offices, Johannesburg

MARCH

08
09 Rosa Luxemburg Seminar: *The Solidarity Economy, Rural
Development and Climate Change in Zimbabwe*
University of Zimbabwe, Harare

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