



UNEP

Climate Change, its Consequences on Employment and Trade Union Action

A Training Manual for Workers and Trade Unions

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CLIMATE CHANGE, ITS CONSEQUENCES ON EMPLOYMENT AND TRADE UNION ACTION

A training manual for workers and trade unions



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Sustainlabour



As part of their joint project on

**“Strengthening trade union participation to international
environmental processes”**

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BACKGROUND

The Training Manual on “Climate Change, its Consequences on Employment and Trade Union Action” is developed under the framework of the project “Strengthening trade union participation in international environmental processes”, jointly implemented by the United Nations Environment programme (UNEP), the International Labour Foundation for Sustainable Development (Sustainlabour), in collaboration with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and its affiliates, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Government of Spain.

The overall objective of the project is to improve engagement of workers and trade unions in the development and implementation of environmental policy, as recommended by the Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment at its first meeting in January 2006. The main purpose of the training component of the project is to address a clear gap and lack of knowledge of the environmental issues at stake regionally and globally in the trade union movement. The training component of the project focuses on two topics:

- a. **Climate change**, its consequences on employment and trade union action, and the need for alternative methods of production and just transition;
- b. **Sound and sustainable management of chemicals** and how to integrate just employment into environmental policy design.

Manual objective

The purpose of this Manual is to enhance understanding of climate change and related mitigation and adaptation issues and their consequences on employment.

Trade Unions are uniquely placed to sensitize workers about the impact of climate change on employment patterns, to promote and demand that both public and private sectors develop programmes on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as to train workers to contribute and verify that these measures are adequately implemented.

In this regard, access to information and training are necessary to improve working conditions. The purpose of this Manual is to provide workers and trade unions with general information and guidance on how to deal with climate change.

Manual format and content

The Manual is designed in modular format and may be used integrally or partially in modules, depending on the purpose and duration of the training. The content is designed to be applicable at different spatial levels – from the national, sub-regional, regional, and global level. Modules can be studied not necessarily in a chronological order. It contains several case studies to illustrate the theoretical aspects of the manual.

The expected length of the training period is three days, however the Manual is designed in such a way that trainers may add or leave out sections for a specific training session to shorten or lengthen the suggested training.

The Manual targets mainly workers and trade unions, both from developing countries and countries with economies in transition from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The Manual is elaborated for women and men, workers, who are in industry, agriculture, government and other public or private sectors, to enable them carefully consider the potential risks and opportunities of climate change as regards employment, and take appropriate actions at the local, national or international levels.

The Manual targets experienced or inexperienced workers and trade unions in climate change issues. It attempts to combine different types and levels of information to suit the needs and interests of all; though, it targets mainly an inexperienced audience.

The first module provides a broad overview of the causes and consequences of climate change globally. It is a general introduction to key concepts such as adaptation and mitigation. It also gives a broad overview of the economics and the international governance of climate change.

The second module analyses in depth the potential consequences of climate change, and mitigation and adaptation measures on employment.

The last module explores the way trade unions can contribute to climate change action from the international to the workplace level. The objective is to introduce briefly the main mechanisms in place, but particularly to underline the importance of civil society's participation, namely workers and trade unions.

Course evaluation

At the end of the training, an evaluation is requested from the trainees. The evaluation allows trainees to highlight points that will assist trainers to improve their delivery of the course, and to facilitate the review and revision of the Manual over time.

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INTRODUCTION

The training manual is developed in the framework of the project titled “Strengthening trade union participation in international environmental processes”, jointly implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Labour Foundation for Sustainable Development (Sustainlabour), and in collaboration with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and its affiliates, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Government of Spain.

The overall objective of the project is to improve workers and trade union engagement in the development and implementation of environmental policy, as recommended by the Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment (15-17 January 2006) at its first meeting.

The Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment (Nairobi, Kenya, 15-17 January 2006)

The trade union participation was organized into two levels:

- Through five work groups: 1) climate change and energy policies; 2) chemical risk: dangerous substances in the workplace; 3) trade union activities for equitable, sustainable access to resources and services, access to water; 4) corporate social responsibility and accountability; 5) occupational health, environmental and public health: the campaigns to fight asbestos and HIV/AIDS. The written reports of the work groups were used to produce a manual of contributions: the Assembly work manual.
- Approximately twenty “case studies” were compiled, in which specific experiences were described.

The Trade Union Assembly brought together over 150 trade union representatives from developing and developed countries, along with environmental and sustainable development experts and representatives of Governments and the United Nations.

- It confirmed that the three relevant United Nations bodies (UNEP, ILO, WHO) were committed to supporting trade union engagement on sustainable development;
- It confirmed that unions were engaged in practical steps through their activities to advance sustainable development and that they were committed to extending that work as a priority;

The Assembly agreed:

- To strengthen the link between poverty reduction, environmental protection and decent work. Decent and secure jobs are essential for people to have a sustainable livelihood. Creating decent and secure jobs is only possible, however, if environmental sustainability is attained: hence the need to embrace the poverty reduction and sustainable development goals contained in the Millennium Declaration and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation through the promotion of decent employment and environmental responsibility. This must also include the mainstreaming of gender issues;

- To integrate the environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development with rights-based approach. Fundamental rights of workers such as freedom of association and collective bargaining must be respected if workers and their unions are to be able to engage in strategies for sustainable development. Moreover, human rights must include the universal, equitable, egalitarian and environmentally sound access to basic resources such as water and energy;
- To take urgent action on climate change in support of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol; to develop new and additional agreements for both developed and developing countries, taking account of common but differentiated responsibilities; to anticipate and minimize the negative effects and maximize the positive effects on employment of mitigation; and to ensure the participation of trade unions in decision-making on climate change strategies.

More information is available at:

http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/TUAIefinalresolution-ENG.pdf

The Training Manual on Climate Change for Workers and Trade Unions

Trade Unions are uniquely placed to sensitize workers about the impact of climate change and climate change policies on the world of work and production, as well as to train workers to assist and reinforce climate-friendly policies at all their levels of influence.

Climate change is the main environmental problem facing humanity. It is the cause of the multiplication of extreme weather events, such as draught, floods, heat and cold waves. Its consequences are aggravated desertification and erosion processes as well as irreversible changes in ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity.

Climate change and subsequent changes in the environment will affect all aspects of our lives: food and water supplies, the patterns and influence zones of diseases, and also the way we produce and consume, as far as these are at the origin of climate change. It will certainly also have effects on employment which we will analyze in the second module of this training manual.

Thus trade unions and workers need to understand the causes of these disruptions, in order to ensure a better participation in the discussions and propose measures that strengthen the fight against climate change by multiplying positive changes and avoiding the suffering inflicted by negative changes.

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