



GENERAL SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT
DECEMBER 2021

Introduction

The ongoing impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic, the ramifications of which are felt most acutely by vulnerable workers, continues to bring an urgency to the work carried out by IFWEA'S global knowledge community of worker educators, reinforcing the importance of establishing solidarity and the sharing of ideas, information and resources.

An expanded capacity to deploy digital tools to build the knowledge base within democratic organisations of workers has assumed critical importance. In the process of building capacity in this regard around our key thematic issues, technological and communication barriers were acknowledged and in many cases improved. However, the digital divide, and the lack of access to technology and skills training remain very real issues. In recognising these challenges, and working in partnership with affiliates, the Secretariat successfully completed its planned 2021 programme of activities aimed at affiliates, their partner trade unions, and member-based associations in the broader global knowledge community.

As mentioned in our mid-year report earlier this year, the need to establish alternate ways of operating and communicating has led to creative ways of working. We were able to meet the increased demand for our services and support, including extending our online operations to new countries. The IFWEA Secretariat team dealt efficiently and successfully with a range of operational and educational requirements; from providing and facilitating technical courses, to administrative support to global networking, to media updates. Our study circles; online academy skills development leadership courses; trade union/NGO dialogue and network building sessions; media and communication; global youth programme and online educator support programme involved global participants from grassroots worker organisations, global and national trade unions, worker education units from unions, youth and civil society organisations.

This end-year Activity Report provides an overview of IFWEA activities conducted in 2021. It measures and reviews the activities and programmes against the identified strategic outcomes and indicators, and provides an outline of activities and programmes for 2022, based on the experiences and lessons of 2021. The key activities for 2021 are discussed under each of the three strategic objectives in the IFWEA Strategic Plan, alongside activities that ensure ongoing organisational sustainability and development.

2021 ACTIVITY REVIEW¹

We start this review of 2021 by situating it within our overall strategic plan for 2020 - 2024.

Our Vision

A world where all working people have access to lifelong learning opportunities which enable them to claim and exercise their inalienable rights, responsibilities and freedoms as global citizens.

¹ For a list of 2021 courses, please refer to the spreadsheet of 2021 courses in Appendix 1

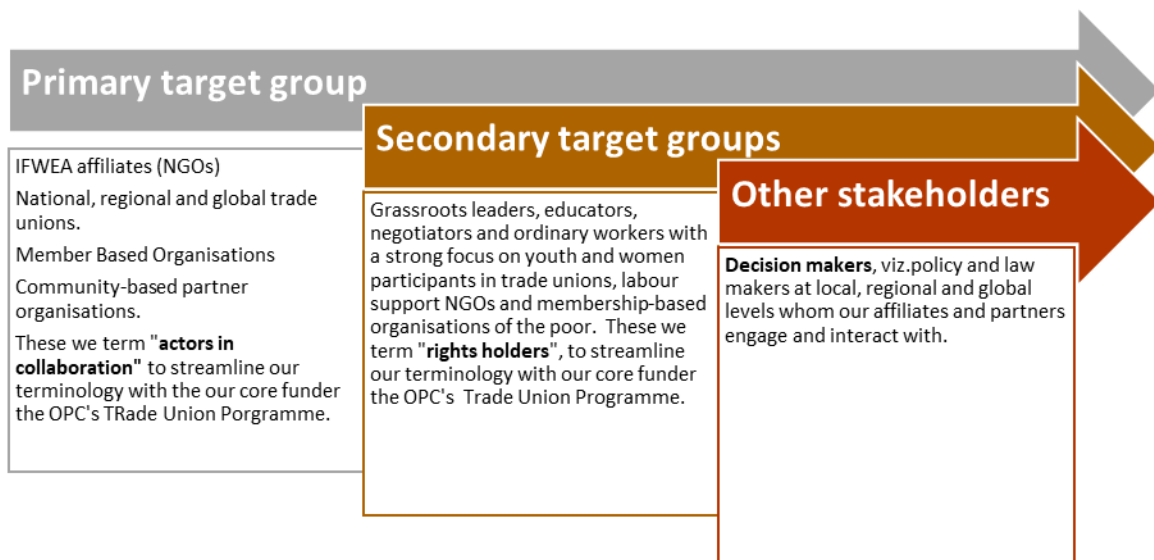
Mission Statement

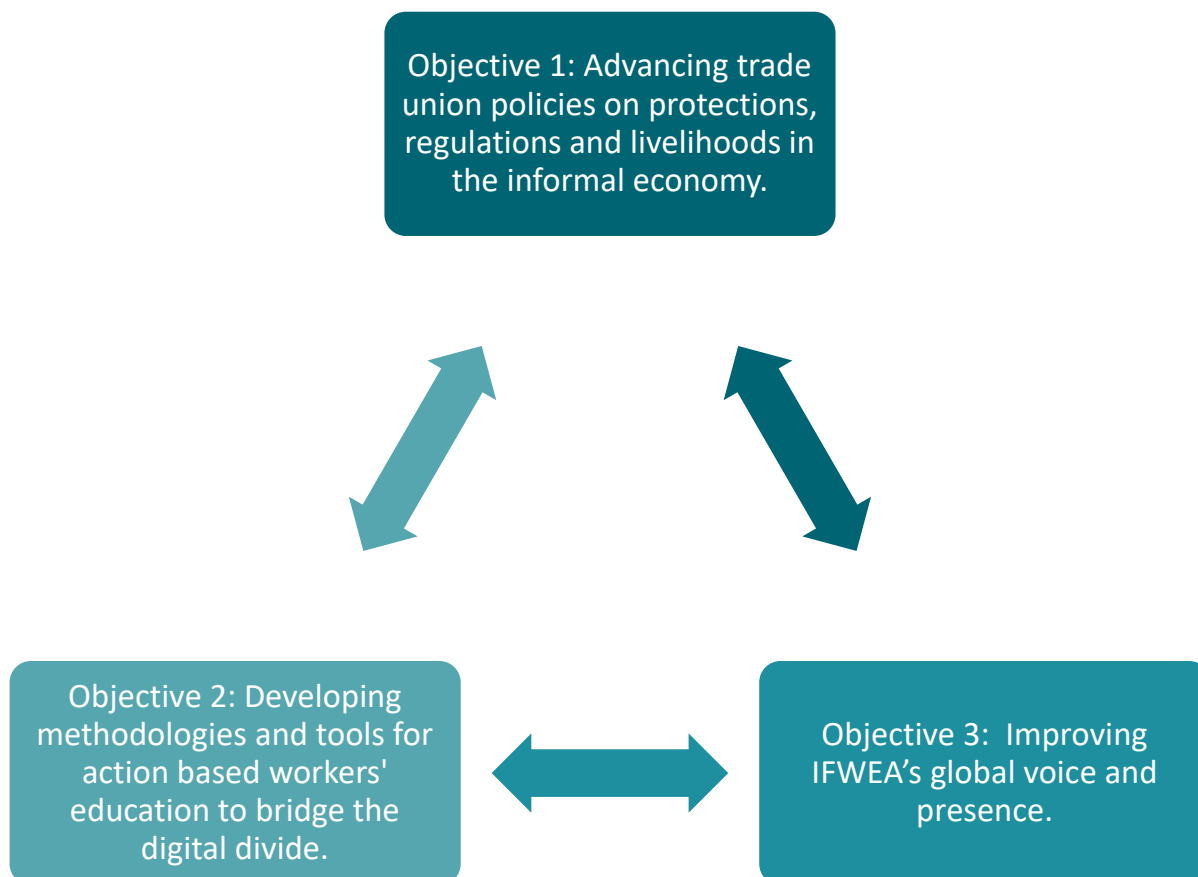
To build a global knowledge community which facilitates global cooperation between worker educators, so as to advance the frontiers of knowledge, education methodology and practices of democratic worker organisations promoting freedom, justice and equality for all.

Our theory of action

IFWEA works primarily with and through its affiliates. It maintains a small Secretariat, which has as its primary focus to enable affiliate collaboration, capacity building and support, through education, the efforts of grassroots leaders within trade unions and member based worker organisations to effect progressive social change. Thus, IFWEAs role is to support the change maker or “actor”.

Target Groups and Strategic Objectives 2020-2024





Objective One: Advancing Trade Union Policies on Protections, Regulations and Livelihoods in the informal Sector.

Study Circles on ILO Convention 190²

*"I really enjoyed the group discussions and the online meetings with my fellow participants."
- C190 study circle participant.*

The Convention C190 Study Circles project focuses on developing the educational capacity of study circles that promote the ratification of Convention 190 - ending violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work. This project runs over three years enabling participants to develop tools, methods, and skills to raise awareness, build alliances with others and dialogue with parliamentarians on this topic.

² See course videos:

C190 Study Circle videos 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpUDsZFYwDYge9J7-kA5K5M7ZdCUI90Rq>

Eight study circles involving grassroots leaders in eight countries have been involved from the start. The countries are Nepal, Cambodia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Peru, Bolivia and Venezuela and the organisations are CLASS Nepal, IDEA, FSPMI, ISD, ZCIEA, INAESIN, PLADES and CENAC.

62 participants took part in 2021 of which 41 were females.

This project is in the second year of its implementation phase. The aim of the study circles in 2021 was to build alliances based on ILO Convention 190 and the outcome was to host an event to support their alliance-building. Participatory research also contributed to the learnings of the study circle, where each study circle investigated the current work done on C190 in their countries and what alliances there are currently as well as new potential for alliances that could be formed.

The building of alliances looked different in each country. Some highlights include:

- A national call centre created by FSPMI together with their alliances for woman who experience violence and harassment in the workplace;
- The three Latin America organisations managed to host a joint online congress where parliamentarians and study circle facilitators discussed ratifying the convention in their countries;
- Two organisations managed to reach their local TV news with their events and the work they are doing in raising awareness on C190 (ISD in Sri Lanka, and CLASS Nepal in Nepal).
- ISD also released a nation-wide pamphlet amongst workers to raise awareness on c190 in collaboration with their alliances.
- Another highlight includes the sharing of resources and strategies of building alliances between facilitators from the eight countries.

The challenge of good and affordable internet connection remains in most countries, thus some organisations had some study circles online and some offline. This just emphasises the digital divide we are facing. Other digital platforms like Vaber, Tellecom and Whatsapp were also used for connecting study circle members and to continue education and communication throughout their study circles.

Despite these challenges facilitators are looking forward to expanding their reach in 2022.

Study Circles on Migrant Workers' Rights

“At first the platform was a bit difficult to learn online as it was my first time, but later after having learned, I was so motivated.” – Migrant Workers' Rights study circle participant.

The Study Circles on Migrant Workers' Rights began in August 2021 involving domestic workers in different countries. The project will run over three years, and the methods used will enable participants to independently and confidently pursue campaigns relying on each other and working as a collective.

New organisations that joined this initiative include the Kopanang Domestic Workers Association of Lesotho, Sandigan Kuwait, the Bangladesh Migrant Workers Forum (BMWF),

and IP2MI (Indonesian Migrant Domestic Workers 'Sisterhood') in Singapore, joining IDEA and PERTIMIG (Indonesian Migrant Domestic Workers Association) in Malaysia.

62 participants from six countries took part, of which 54 were females.

The learning objectives for participants included:

- Understanding different strategies for organising migrant workers;
- Online and digital tools for education;
- Communication skills (dialogue with organisations and stakeholders);
- Participatory learning and research methods.

IFWEA supported participants with an online study circle guide including discussion points and online activities for participants to complete. This was a new experience for participants and for many of them, their very first online education experience ever! Participants used their own smart phones, tablets, computers and internet, supported by the organisations through IFWEA. The organisations recruited participants who were active in their organisations and had an interest in the topic. Their study circles ran in participants' home languages, and were completed at the end of November 2021.

Study Circles on Climate Change and a Just Transition

"It became clear for us that climate change has affected many lives in Malawi, especially informal workers." – Climate Change study circle participant.

The Climate Change and a Just Transition Study Circle project started in May 2021 and will span three years, from 2021 to 2023.

In 2021, 33 participants from three organisations in three countries took part: the Malawi Union for Informal Sector (MUFIS), Alliance for Zambia Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA) and Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations (ZCIEA). Fourteen of the participants are females.

Participants in this group were mainly informal workers. Discussions looked at different elements of climate change and how it affected their work, such as river pollution, mechanisms and demands to organisations and companies, and recycling. Participants from two of these countries had never attended any form of online education. The divide in digital skills, online access and ability to navigate online platforms on devices affected the pace of developing the activities. Due to the following challenges the study circles met face-to-face more often than online:

- Initially access to the online OLA platform was not easy (but later improved);
- Low operating systems of gadgets used;
- Expensive data costs;

- Translating course material into local languages.

Capacity building in IT skills will be an introductory course in 2022 as the project continues. Social media awareness raising is also a new skill which will be introduced to the participating organisations. Despite the challenges, more than 50% of participants managed to engage via the IFWEA OLA course activities. In 2022, organisations will explore the idea of creating smaller study circle groups, including designing a climate change training course for team members to use in communities where data access is non-existent at this stage.

Participatory research done in each of the countries served to raise participant awareness. One participant said, “it became clear for us that climate change has affected many lives in Malawi, especially informal workers.” Participants from the other two countries had the same experience and agreed that there is a major lack of education on climate change in their countries. Each study circle then came up with popular education materials such as short video clips, poems and articles to use as awareness raising tools.

Study circles will extend their awareness raising campaigns into 2022.

Objective Two: Developing Methodologies and Tools for Action Based Workers’ Education to Bridge the Digital Divide.

Digital Tools and Methods Training of Trainers Course: How to conduct online trade union activities.³

This course started in July 2021, supported by DGB BW, with a focus on supporting Global Union Federations IndustriALL, PSI and IDWF. The course introduced participatory online methods for trade union activities related to meetings, study circles, forums, workshops and designing online courses. 34 participants from 17 countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America developed basic skills and knowledge of various online education tools. They shared the importance and use of such activities in their organisational work, and designed and conducted their own courses.

The Global Women’s Leadership Course

*“We enjoyed the course because we interacted with so many people in different countries.”
- Women’s Leadership Course participant.*

The Global Women’s Leadership Course drew on the lived experience of participants to develop an understanding of patriarchy and share valuable lessons on organising strategies which promote the emergence and sustainability of women’s leadership. The online course

³ See course videos:

Introduction video: <https://youtu.be/EYF70D0x7AM>

Course commentary and graduation ceremony: <https://youtu.be/A2LXTT1N5Kk>

was facilitated by Namrata Bali from the Indian Academy of Self Employed Women (IASEW) and it is also available online for use in offline study circles or individual study. The course ran from 1 May to 30 June 2021.

26 female participants from eight countries participated in this course of which 18 participants managed to attend the weekly meetings on Zoom, indicating that the level of digital literacy and access to fast, reliable technology seemed to be a bigger challenge this year than in previous years.

Multiple small group discussions flowing from this and previous year's women's leadership courses indicated that there is a growing need to support women in collectively crafting their own roles within the labour movement. As an extension of the Woman's Leadership course, in 2022, participants will be invited to a GEDF (Global Educators Development Forum) to dialogue on this as the basis for a study circle curriculum in 2023, where they will learn to develop a women's leadership activity themselves.

Online Education Service Provision, Support and Advice

Consultations and support services were provided to several international organisations, some of which are IFWEA affiliates. These include STREETNET, BWI, WIEGO, UNI, ITUC, and IDWF. As in previous years, support was also provided to educators in the Nigeria Labour Congress. Maira Vanucchi from STREETNET was supported in the design of a negotiator's course. The pilot course is set to run in November 2021. Secretariat staff also presented in online education events organized by the SOLIDAR Foundation, UAIE, UNI, ITAF and ITF.

Support was provided to UNI Africa and IDWF, to set up their own independent online academy/learning management systems. Conceptualisation has begun for an initial framework of a foundation OLA course for BWI on "Organising Workers in a New Target Group: From Research to Strategic Plan" towards their Global Organising Academy (GOA), and the pilot is planned to run early 2022.

An important lesson the Secretariat team wants to hold and emphasise in 2022 to facilitators of global courses, is the need for awareness of and respect for the contexts of participants. This is extremely important when conducting participatory learning. Online courses can easily become directive and non-participatory when we don't include activities conforming to the pedagogy of workers' education. This means that facilitators need effective training to be equipped to host online course sessions and to support participants with technical challenges, and not make any assumptions.

Objective Three: Improving IFWEA's Global Voice and Presence

Media and Communication

The new IFWEA website was completed at the end of May 2021. New content is added to the website every month, ranging from new “Champions of Worker Education”, information on and from our global knowledge community in the form of original interviews, calls to action, new resources (eg publications) and uploaded e-bulletins.

The IFWEA Facebook page is updated every day from Monday to Friday. In analysing the IFWEA Facebook page in terms of traffic and content, it appears obvious that the Facebook page appeals to a like-minded community of those either working directly in the field of worker education, or associated with it. Posts about affiliates and their activities are the most popular, as are original interviews with individuals in the global worker educator community.

From 1 January to 9 November 2021, the IFWEA Facebook page has reached 14, 785 views – up 64.4% from last year. The top performing posts were an interview with Linnéa Wennberg, ABF Sweden and YGAP coordinator (4,200), an interview with Khalid Mahmood, Director of LEF and IFWEA Executive Committee member (2,400), a post on YGAP 2021 (1,100) and an interview with Milla Leppänen concerning YGAP (982).

1,337 people follow the page. Women make up 57.5% of the IFWEA Facebook followers, and men make up 47.5%. The most amount of followers come from Sweden, followed by South Africa, Finland, United States, Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

Continuing what was begun in 2020, the IFWEA e-bulletin continued to be a monthly bulletin for the year 2021, and was also translated into Spanish each month. The e-bulletin is sent to 864 subscribers each month. Content includes updates on IFWEA courses, study circles and other activities, updates on affiliate activities, information on study opportunities, information about webinars and other online events, general trade union and worker information, links to educational material and links to original interviews.

The Spanish e-bulletin is opened on average by 20% of readers. The English e-bulletin is opened on average by 24% of readers. While this may seem low, the global average open rate is 22% - so the IFWEA e-bulletin is actually doing alright.

Youth Globalisation Awareness Programme (YGAP):⁴

Coinciding with The COP 26 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, the focus of the 2021 YGAP was on how participants could design positive messaging of the global impact of climate change to activate youth in labour organisations. The ABF and IFWEA Secretariat coordinating team designed a seven day programme which included two days of orientation and five days of daily webinars and homework activities. On the second day of orientation participants participated in a virtual Amazing Race where they had to uncover clues at iconic

⁴ See course video:

YGAP 2021 Postcards: <https://vimeo.com/646085477/664ab0595f>

landmarks across South Africa. This event was well received as a fun virtual teambuilding exercise opportunity for participants to get to know each other and the landscape of South Africa. Seventeen participants (eight females and nine males) from fifteen different organisations in fourteen countries participated from Europe, Asia, Africa, UK and Latin America. Of these fifteen organisations twelve are IFWEA affiliates.

The programme was set up as a course on OLA. Opportunities during the daily sessions were given to participants to dialogue on the impact of climate change today and in the future. Group activities focussed on providing suggestions on taking action towards a just transition in their own countries. YGAP participants were actively involved with on average between twelve and fifteen attending the daily sessions.

This was the second YGAP conducted online and slight difficulties were encountered which resulted in some of the participants not being able to attend some of the sessions. By the end of the programme postcards were developed in the form of a video clip, poster, PowerPoint presentation or infographic to distribute positive messaging to the youth in their organisations on dealing with the impact of climate change in their respective countries.

Support for Global Unions

IFWEA values good relationships with several Global Union Federations and their affiliates from different countries participated in some of our courses and workshops.

IFWEA programme manager Saliem Patel is an active participant in the Africa GUFs Forum and trade union alliances established by GUFs. In UNI Africa we facilitate sessions to strengthen three different cross-border MNC-based trade union alliances composed of unions from 12 different African countries. UNI Africa also provided us with a session to introduce YGAP to their Africa Youth Conference which has resulted in a conference motion to work with IFWEA to establish their youth leadership education using our YGAP model.

Through support from DGB Bildungswerk we were able to draw affiliates from PSI and IndustriALL to our Digital Skills and Methods programme, as well as three National Federation Centres in Latin America. The IFWEA programme manager also attended the DGB Bildungswerk partner's conference titled "Trade Union Education" in November. A number of common or shared issues emerged, focussing on digital transformation and the challenges confronting trade unions. Our presentation in one of the sessions drew out issues that many are grappling with in their union education: values, methods, materials and approaches to action-oriented education. Saliem Patel has also had four consultations with various senior programme officers of the ILO and specialists working for or related to ACTRAV in 2021.

Review

When reviewing the 2021 programme activities against our five year plan's strategic objectives, behavioural outcome indicators and target groups, our assessment is that we are

on track at the end of year two of our stratplan, and that those organisations responding to our education programme activities are the actors we want to work with. We are expanding our global knowledge community through our activities, and facilitating the increased building and sharing of resources. A number of new collaborations have emerged in 2021, while several new organisations took part in programmes. Eight new organisations joined the study circles, of which four were not affiliates, as well as IDWF affiliates from Malawi and Singapore. PLUW Macao joined the Digital Skills and Methods course.

Low levels of digital literacy, and the differing digital literacy levels of participants remain the greatest challenges. The expansion of the number of activities with a small education team meant that hands on support for many facilitators, sometimes 16 or more at a time, each running their own study circle, was time consuming, and difficult to keep track of.

Governance

Despite our inability to convene a face-to-face EC meeting since electing the new Executive Committee in December 2019, we have tried to keep our interaction with the EC as dynamic as possible, through short, informative multi-media presentations of our programme work at every meeting.

The EC approved the Annual Review and Audited Financial Reports of 2020, as well as the Final Operational Plan and Budget of 2021 at its meeting of 18 March 2021. A mid-year report was circulated to the EC in July 2021. A round-table discussion on the IFWEA education programme for 2020 and 2021, served to involve EC members in various programmes and to hear preliminary remarks on the two new initiatives developed by the Secretariat for 2022.

Given the increase in vaccination availability and restoration of travel we began discussing with the ABF in October for our first face-to-face meeting in Stockholm in May 2022, after the international days of the ABF's Ordet Fritt Convention. Although the latest surge in cases of Omicron could still sabotage this, we will continue to set up the arrangements until further evidence suggests that this has to be abandoned.

Secretariat

Two new staff members were appointed in July to cater for the expansion of our programme activities, bringing our staff compliment to six. Melanie Julie has joined us as E-Learning Developer, and Yusrah Abrahams as Administrative Assistant. We are very happy with our new additions, who have enhanced our performance with their energy and commitment. Their joining us also allowed for Renaldi to take maternity leave from July to October without too much strain on the remaining staff. We continued the contracted services of Karen Rutter as our Communication Manager and Michael Hands's Accounting Services as our Finance Manager.

Secretariat staff worked from home for much of the year. Throughout the year we structured weekly online Secretariat meetings to monitor work, ensure that deadlines are met, and support and guide staff with forthcoming activities. As lockdown restrictions eased in the third quarter of the year, we began using the Secretariat office in Community House

more, and did some minor improvements to the lighting (for better visuals for online meetings) and some very necessary painting and cleaning of the outside premises.

As there seems no indication of a halt to the growth of activities, we want to retain the Secretariat team as is.

Conclusion.

It's been a challenging but busy and productive year. We have an expanded Secretariat team, and are forming new partnerships and alliances, as new union organisations are seeking advice and support for their educational needs. Pandemic lockdowns notwithstanding, we have collaborated across continents and continued to grow our global labour knowledge community, whilst advocating for democratic online access, and, as a global leader in worker education, supporting our affiliates and partner organisations through the process of digital upskilling and knowledge sharing.

We remain both humbled and renewed by the commitment, energy and drive of the educators and worker leaders, some operating under grievously trying circumstances, whom we engage with in our work. We wish to thank all affiliates, donors and executive committee members for their support and collaboration during the year.

To see our our 2021 Education Programme courses please [click here](#)

Compiled by the Secretariat team, written by Karen Rutter and Sahra Ryklief, adopted by the IFWEA Executive Committee 7 December 2021