



PSI Local and Regional Government Global Network

Session #1: Asia-Pacific / Arab Countries Francophone Africa & Anglophone Africa / Europe

5 April 2022

REPORT

Welcome and opening remarks

Daria Cibrario, PSI Local and Regional Government Officer, opened the meeting and welcomed participants.

She briefed that is the PSI sectoral cross-regional policy forum for all PSI affiliates representing LRG workers and union representatives worldwide, established by its Charter in 2016 in Brussels. This was made in compliance with resolution 34 of PSI's 2012 Congress. This contact group is now planned for twice a year in order to strengthen joint work at regional and global level.

Rosa Pavanelli, PSI General Secretary, presented her opening remarks:

Rosa shared her concerns over the current global situation; the continuing effects of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine which has led to the end of the geopolitical balance that resulted from the end of the Second World War. The crisis is affecting the social, economic, and political system globally. Rather than being the solution, the neoliberal model has instead caused increased inequality and injustice throughout the world. This is the moment to reconsider the overall economic and political model and end the colonial system. The multilateral system must be strengthened to stop a few super powers governing the world. Local and regional governments are fundamental for providing all services that people need. It is vital to create a substantial policy that local governments are the common house of the community where the fundamental rights of the person can find satisfaction. Rosa recalled PSI's campaigns, including against privatisation, for tax justice, and most recently to support the waiver of intellectual property rights for vaccines. Medicines, and all technological facilities that can help to produce vaccines. She stated that strong innovation is needed to confront the challenges ahead and concluded that it is important to establish alliances with civil society and progressive organisations, and especially with local authorities that are working to create the changes needed.

Questions and comments:

Mohamad Alarada, Kuwait Trade Union Federation, suggested that the key to future successes is alliances but also strong ties within workers' unions. Unions must be ready to the benefit of workers and find new patterns of work, which will need new legislations and better protections of workers' rights.

Samira Abdulaleem, Union of Public Services Palestine, asked Rosa what the role of women is regarding war and climate change. She also asked how workers' unions can be a force for good and help people in Lebanon following the shocking news that the state is bankrupt.

Jammu Anand, Nagpur Municipal Corporation Employees Union India, pointed to the situation in Sri Lanka, where the government is bankrupt. Trade unions have a major role in exhorting pressure on governments and creating international pressure for a new economic order. He noted that trade unions should be more vocal in their support of peace and that workers have the strength to mobilise for a new social order and against war.

Ram Prasad Poudel, Local Level Employee Union Nepal, expressed his solidarity and that of the LRG Unions in Nepal to the Ukrainian people. He asked Rosa how PSI can help Ukrainian workers.

Rosa's responses:

- Agreed with Mohamad that new legislation is needed to redistribute wealth. Multilateral organisations must be strengthened in a democratic way and against the idea that participating in the systems means someone can forge the political global agenda, as happens in the current UN system.
- In response to Samira, Rosa stated that the role of women in war is mainly as victims; of violence, rape, displacement, and having to support their families whilst the men are at the front. PSI believe that women have a fundamental role and need to be recognised for their role in all spheres of society.



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PSI are working across sectors to strengthen the role of women, for example in the social redistribution of paid and unpaid care work. Without real equality between men and women there will not be any possibility to have deep change in the current social and economic model.

- Last year, Sri Lanka accepted a loan from the Chinese government to fund the rebuilding and maintenance of Colombo airport. To repay the loan the government had to invest almost half of the country's resources. This demonstrates the importance of reforming the debt crisis. Loans with such unbearable repayment conditions leads to privatisation of public services and resources. Unions must expose that current conditions are no longer acceptable or possible. PSI, along with its colleagues and affiliates, must influence the policies of national centres and campaign to shift power from corporations and business to workers and people.
- Rosa highlighted the recent success of pressure put on governments and the workers group in the governing body of the ILO, which helped to elect Shimer Humbold, who has been chosen as the candidate of the trade union movement.

Daria informed that the full action plan for the local government sector, presented last December at the end of the cycle of consultations called LRG Next, is available along with a one page summary. Comments are welcome. She also stressed that participation in the session would be very welcome.

Item §1. LRG Workplan & Activities 2022 - Part #1

1. Assessment of LRGNext2021

Global LRG Network Action Plan 2022

- **Assessment of LRGNext2021**

Daria reported on the results of the LRGNext 2021 Consultation Series. Six thematic policy consultations were held on difference themes. PSI delivered ten PSI background policy briefs as discussion papers. 26 responses were received on the survey that was circulated for feedback.

Hazel Ripoll, PSI Campaigns Associate, provided highlights of the [LRGNext 2021 Survey Results](#): Overall participation of 453 people with 228 people attending one or more sessions with an average of 75 attendees per session. Participants included 129 representatives of 98 PSI affiliated unions, 43 staff members and 56 attendees from civil society and other organisations. Representatives of PSI affiliates in 55 countries attended the series.

Daria informed that [all the material developed](#), including video recordings, summary outcomes and finalising the design of all [policy briefs](#) and all these resources will be made available on the main PSI website.

- **Global LRG Network Action Plan**

This process has also taken stock of the work carried out by PSI in the sector between 2016-2021 and issued an [Action Plan](#) 2022-2027 that represents the roadmap for the work of PSI and affiliates

The draft LRG Action Plan was presented on 3 February the closure of LRGNext2021, has been circulated and comments and feedback are welcome. Daria thanked those affiliates who have taken the time to provide feedback especially Vision, JICHIRO and the FNV Overheid.

2. Thematic Workshops & Activities 2022

Daria briefed that the [Calendar of Activities and Events](#) for 2022 has been circulated.

Local Public Services Funding was a clearly priority that emerged from discussions. Accessing a regular stream of public resources remains a major challenge for most LRGs worldwide. Therefore, PSI will hold two online



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thematic working groups on this theme that will look at municipal and regional public banks and also socially responsible public procurement:

1. 12 May 2022
2. 28 September 2022

PSI will send out a pre-registration form for anyone interested in contributing.

Dr Thomas Marois, SOAS/University of London, presented a report on Public Banks:

Public banks can exist as important legacy institutions that can be significant organisations in the interest of workers and communities. A public bank is owned by public authorities and can also be public in terms of governance and mandate. They can be focused on specific purposes or be universal. There are over 900 public banks worldwide, which have control of over \$49 trillion of assets.

Prospects for workers and unions:

- Decarbonisation. Globally, public banks have been engaging in important projects such as decarbonisation and green transitions. They can of course be contradictory, for example the Chinese Development Bank is one of the leading investors in green technology, but also investing in things without community consent or consultation. Trade unions and communities must claim and shape public banks in their interest.
- Definancialisation. Can take flows of global capital and fix them within communities and direct them towards community development, for example the North Dakota Bank pulls together flows of capital and try to fix them within their jurisdiction.
- Democratisation. Public banks should be a site of economic democracy. Thomas gave the example of Banco Popular in Costa Rica which is a radical and inclusive democracy led by the Assembly of Working Men and Women, which consists of 290 representatives from ten social sectors. The partnerships formed by the bank, such as with Coopelesca, shows how public partnerships can be facilitated through finance.

Trade unions must ensure public banks be in the interest of the public; they need to claim and democratise them. This is a necessary condition of any transition to a more sustainable and equitable global economy.

Daria confirmed that Thomas will develop a policy brief for workers and trade unions on public banks as part of the working groups.

Questions and reactions:

Jammu Anand asked in what ways public finance exists for quality public services in India, as there public finance from public banks to local bodies does not exist. Local bodies must generate their own revenues.

Thomas answered that the enormous system of public banks in India raises the question of the funding for whom, the conditions, and who will see the benefit. Public banks cannot be taken as necessarily good just because they are public; they must be recaptured and reclaimed to be governed in the public interest.

Godsen Mohandoss, PSI Project Officer, mentioned NABHA, a national bank in India that focuses on local development. He asked what work can be done for the public sector to strengthen local governance. **Thomas** responded that this issue applies globally, not just in India. In the US there are almost no public banks. However, there is a grassroots movement between trade unions and civil society to create them. Whether a country has zero public banks at local level, or very powerful ones, the struggle is of democratising finance. People must strategize around the community with the aim of ensuring universal representation.

Daria concluded that Thomas Hanna will speak live in Session Two of this meeting, on 6 April 2022. For those unable to attend PSI will share the video.



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Item §2. LRG Updates & Actions from the Regions - Part #1

Daria invited affiliates and PSI Regions and Subregions to highlight the current challenges, union actions and activities currently ongoing in the LRG sector in their communities, countries, regions and subregions.

Asia Pacific

Graeme Kelly, United Services Union NSW Australia, presented the following updates:

- Since October 2021, the USU are running a Council Services by Council Workers campaign in NSW aimed at getting elected officials to work with USU to eradicate contract labour. 400 candidates signed up to the campaign, 200 of which were elected.
- Contracts of under 150,000 USD do not have to go to tender in NSW, so recently senior council officers are putting out several dozens of contracts under this amount with no public scrutiny. USU are working to eradicate this.
- During Covid, a problem of insecure casual day labour arose across the industry. One council had 150 casual long term employees, some employed for over 20 years that were not receiving their entitlements. After industrial action in the courts, 120 of those people were made permanent employees.
- In July, the USU will set the rates of pay and conditions of employment for members for 2024-26. The main arguments will be centred on the current cost of living crisis.
- One issue at the forefront of the Federal election in May 2022 will be the issue of federal funding of USU branches. Under former labour governments, federal funding was 1% of GDP; this has now fallen to 0.5%. This has led to an infrastructure backlog of over 20 billion USD.
- USU aim to ensure funding for apprenticeships for young people as existed in the 1970-90s. The scourge of group training companies is depleting the funding allowances within local government.

Daria confirmed that PSI will be hosting a set of workshops on issues surrounding trade union strategy to insource, including with Ver.di in Germany and Unite in the UK. The first will be held on 14 June 2022. The hope is that cases like USU lobbying the 200 elected councillors will help other unions to learn how to strategically insource jobs. One aim of this working group is to make a map of multinational corporations that are seeking bids to take away local government services.

Tom Reddington, PSI Sub-regional Secretary for Oceania, reported that affiliates in the Pacific Island states are organising workshops in response to Covid and the current economic crises, and the climate crisis, which specifically look at the scope to organise frontline workers. The international climate finance being provided to developed countries is not living up to agreements, and what finance is being provided is not resulting in trade union jobs or enhanced public services at local level. Affiliates are looking at how to ensure the finance received is put into these areas.

Ram Prasad Poudel, stated that trade unions are lobbying the government to save the jobs of temporary employees and to protect employee rights. They are also planning how to organise local level employee unions and set out three and five year strategic plans.

Kopila Khatiwada, Local Level Employee Union Nepal, added that in theory the safety of local level employees is protected in the constitution but this is not seen in practice; this needs to be rectified. She noted that the hire and fire system is very dangerous and unions must work to fight against precarious work and the discrimination of employees of local government, who are denied the same facilities provided to those in central government.

Kannan Raman, PSI Sub-regional Secretary for South Asia, outlined the project in Nepal supported by FORSA and the workshop organised by the ILO in South Asia which strategized on how to formalise and remunicipalise sanitary work. It also looked at how to create links to bring sectors together.



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Dessie Robinson, FORSA Ireland, agreed with Graeme on the importance of the recruitment of apprenticeships. This must be a priority area as these are future trade union members. He added that the aging workforce gives local governments the opportunity to claim the need to outsource the workforce. **Daria** agreed that this should become an integral part of PSI advocacy.

Item §3. LRG Workplan & Activities 2022 - Part #2

2. Thematic Workshops & Activities 2022 (continued)

Edmundo Werna – World Urban Forum 11, gave the following presentation on why public workers should participate in the World Urban Forums:

1. Enhance the role of public workers at the central stage to give them more attention and support. 20th century onwards, the role of labour in urban development began to fade, linked to neoliberal policies. Decisions made by policy makers in local development impacts workers.
2. WUF are a magnet for LRGs. Members of the UN are central governments, but in WUF mayors and local representatives also attend, so it is an opportunity to liaise, making voices heard, and exchange knowledge.
3. Decision-makers about investments and policies influence the lives of public workers, so WUF are a good opportunity to advocate with these decision makers.
4. Need to concentrate in a few key meetings. There are now thousands of events every year but the WUF are the largest in the world so they deserve priority attention.
5. Debunk myths. The way urban development evolved included some myths that need to be addressed, including that investment is needed in equipment rather than labour, and the romanticisation of informal work and unpaid labour, when in reality it is far more ethical to pay good salaries. This can be done via presence in the WUF and engaging in debates. These myths prevail with decision makers in urban developments. Trade unions must counteract this and make decision makers understand the importance of workers. Decision makers also need to understand that without decent work cities cannot prosper.

David Kapih, ILO Regional LRG Studies, updated the meeting on the progress of the ILO research on working conditions of subnational level governments in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America:

Objectives:

- Develop comprehensive global analysis of working conditions of subnational government workers.
- Shed light on rights and working conditions, vocational training and qualification systems.
- Explore the role that national government frameworks have in ensuring local governments have the appropriate consequences and means to ensure decent working conditions, and reliable employment for subnational workers.

Current status of the studies being conducted in four regions:

- For Africa and Europe, the first drafts were received and commented on by ILO and PSI. The second drafts were received and are being reviewed internally and will be shared to PSI for input. The aim is to share the study for comments ASAP.
- In Asia the participating countries are still being decided and proposals for consultants are being received, with the aim of hiring consultants by late May 2022.
- In Latin America the study has been finalised and is on the ILO website.

Findings of the Latin America study:

- Data and statistics do not provide a clear distinction between different levels of government. Government is still regarded as general public administration, so this poses challenges to qualify the



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number of workers in subnational governments. Most countries are 3-tiered; permanent workers are the majority, then temporary fixed term contracts, and finally outsourcing is an increasing trend.

- Wages are lower for local governments than workers in central governments.
- Female workers are concentrated in the education and health sectors. They have the worst working conditions and salaries of all sectors.
- Several Latin American countries have not ratified all of the fundamental ILO conventions.
- National legislation against violence and harassment exists but is not usually accompanied by adequate mechanisms to lodge and hear complaints or accompanying sanctions.

Daria informed that the report on Latin America has been shared but only in Spanish.

Daria asked David what ILO could do once all four reports are published. David suggested a validation workshop as a first step, where consultants can share a platform with constituent affiliates and have a deeper conversation around the issues that came out in the studies.

Questions and comments:

Jammu Anand asked PSI allow members to plan regional workshops on these issues with affiliate unions from the LRG sector to discuss the findings of the reports in detail.

Edmundo responded that organising workshops are crucial to continue to spread the word to decision-makers and investors. Cities are built and managed by workers. The decision-makers prioritise the organisation of communities and neighbourhoods. However, there is already progress e.g. the Habitat 3 in 2016. 20 years earlier, there was hardly any mention of labour in Habitat 2. We must continue to advocate and to fight.

Daria informed the session of important upcoming events:

- 17-21 May 2022 – Africities Summit (Kisumu, Kenya).
- 26-30 June 2022 – UN World Urban Forum 11 (Kavotice, Poland).
- 27-30 June 2022 – Shifting narratives – the political economy of public services, spending, and production (London, UK, and hybrid).
- 10-14 October 2022 – UCLG World Congress (Dojeon, South Korea, and hybrid).
- 28 November – 4 December- TNI Future is Public Conference 2022 (Recoleta, Chile, and hybrid).

David Hall, PSIRU University of Greenwich, provided details on the Shifting Narratives conference:

- The conference aims to get academics, trade unions, and social movements collaborating with each other over key issues.
- It is organised around 1h30 minute workshop sessions, with discussion time at the end of each session. A summary report will be provided.
- PSIRU University of Greenwich and Mariana Mazzucato's unit at University College London are the two hosts; each are academic institutions with a long history of support of trade unions.
- PSI have been asked to nominate young activists to join the conference.
- There will be a strong focus on economics as this is an area where trade unions need more confidence in shifting narratives.
- David encouraged anyone interested to participate in the conference.

Daria added that the heart of the whole thing is that this is a moment of convergence between the theory and practice of progressive movements. This moment can be used to enhance and enrich collective advocacy and to fight back against assumptions that our unions have to deal with.



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Satoko Kishimoto, Transnational Institute Japan, briefed on the TNI Conference in Chile:

- The aim is to create links between civil society, academics, and trade unions.
- PSI were joint organisers of the 2019 Future is Public event in Amsterdam, they are important allies.
- Outcomes of the 2019 FIP included the publishing of the Future is Public book and the creation of a public database of deprivatised public services, which has 1,568 entries to date.
- Future is Public is being organised in collaboration with the Municipal Popular University in Chile, and is being supported by the Open Society Foundation.
- The support of OSF enabled the development of the [Global Manifesto for Public Services](#).
- The people of Chile are constructing their own constitution with the progressive government; this is the starting point for Future is Public 2022; Building a Global Movement for Democratic Public Services.

Luis Monje, PSI Project Officer, gave a brief overview of the UD strategy of PSI and how it relates to LRG:

Union Development supports PSI's global and regional priorities. There are currently over 50 externally funded projects around the world at global, regional, sub-regional, and national level. The main contribution is to strengthen local ownership and participation of projects. It is crucial to maintain active participation from PSI affiliates.

Five main umbrellas of focus; trade unions rights, health and social care, defending public sector from privatisation, building QPS and climate change, and sectoral growth and capacity building.

The UD team have identified six main milestones:

1. How the Covid 19 pandemic has shown the value of essential public services.
2. Public investment in local public services. Try to change mindsets and reverse this trend.
3. Sustainable development goals cannot be achieved without participation of public service workers.
4. How to support public services workers in organising and unionising.
5. People over profit and remunicipalisation.
6. How to support through social dialogue and networks.

Luis introduced a new colleague in the PSI UD team, **Aisha Bahadur**, who added that unions are about organising; networks are great but unions must inspire each other and take action to the ground.

Daria noted that the LRG five year action plan has been given to the UD department to obtain alignment between objectives set by LRG affiliates and the projects on the ground.

Daria opened the floor for updates from the PSI regions:

Najwa Hanna, PSI Sub-regional Secretary for Arab Countries, gave the following updates:

The Middle East and North Africa are faced with many new challenges resulting from Covid 19, which aggravated pre-existing crises. There were 82.4 million immigrants in 2021; the majority are from the Middle East and North Africa. Instability in the region is accompanied by fragile health systems. In 2021, the Arab region lost over \$43 billion in income, equivalent to seven millions jobs. The informal sector now accounts for up to 60% of the labour market in some countries. Public services are some of the only remaining ways to connect societies. Trade unions in Jordan and Kuwait established centres for displaced people.

Priorities in the region are the right to work, professional health and safety, and quality public services.

PSI recommendations are to establish a network for municipal trade unions in the Arab region to encourage participation in PSI and the UCLG. This must be translated on the ground with involvement in activities and



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regional campaigns. Bylaws are needed for the sector to respect professional health and safety standards. Finally, the right to establish trade unions in the public sector and organise informal workers must be defended. Najwa concluded by thanking FORSA for their support on a successful two year project in Tunisia which aimed to improve the capacity of workers in municipalities.

Naadira Munshi, PSI Project Coordinator Southern Africa, presented updates on a recent regional project:

FORSA funded a project in Zimbabwe on occupational health and safety, and building capacity for frontline workers in response to Covid 19. The project worked with the Zimbabwe Urban Council Workers Union (ZUCWU) and involved organising consultants to help the union analyse the situation surrounding Covid 19 and the government response, including lack of vaccines, poor access to PPE, and low level of education about Covid. Campaign material has been developed and shared which emphasises public safety measures.

Kudakwashe Munengiwa, ZUCWU, provided further details of the project:

Occupational health and safety remains a challenge in Zimbabwe; the project tried to come up with a structured response. One of the biggest gaps is the lack of collective bargaining. The project mapped out challenges and developed campaign materials. A survey was conducted which helped to understand issues across the 23 urban council authorities in Zimbabwe.

Paola Panzeri, EPSU LRG Officer, presented updates from the European region:

A number of reports have been published which focus on how emergency services need to be adapted to respond to climate change and how much it is impacting emergency service workers and firefighters.

The EU is revising its legislation on asbestos and protecting workers. EPSU are ensuring firefighters and emergency services workers are among the targets of the legislation.

Main areas of work for EPSU LRG:

1. Digitalisation. Striking agreements at European level.
2. Working time and work organisation.
3. Third party violence. Multisectoral guidelines signed in 2010 are being revised with EPSU counterparts. A multisectoral project which will decide on what to do regarding the guidelines.
4. Remunicipalisation. Applied in 2021 to have funds from the European Commission to transform the [PSI Remunicipalisation Guide](#) into an online training module available to all workers and trade unionists. This will be a joint EPSU-PSI project.

EPSU are planning to do a webinar in early June to look at remunicipalisation in women-dominated sectors. This would be joint with EPSU Women's Committee.

SAVE THE DATE

19 October 2022: LRG Global Network (#2) One single virtual session 1-5.30pm CET

Daria thanked all participants for their contributions the meeting.