



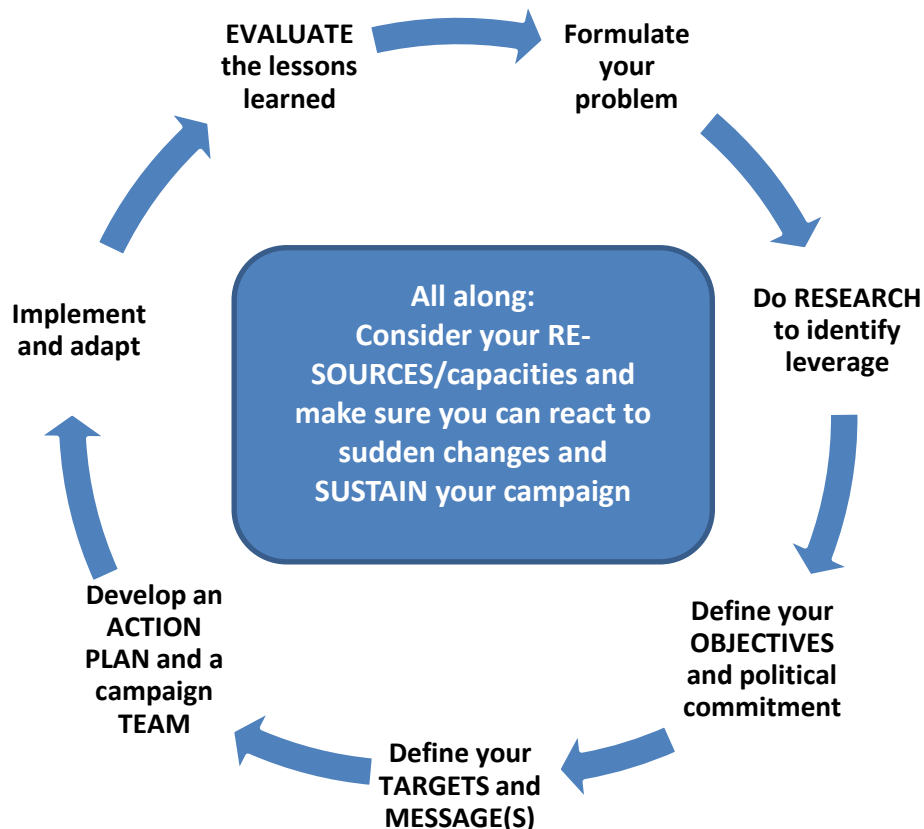
**FES International Trade Union Conference
“Transnational Campaigning (and Network Building) for Decent Work”
Berlin, 5-6 October 2015**

Ten lessons learned

1.) The World of Campaigning: Bottom Line

Campaigns are not a goal in themselves, they are tools that can be used for achieving a wide range of objectives and that are very diverse, in their content, in their scope and in their success. Campaigns can focus on companies or entire sectors, on certain topics often related to states/governments (e.g. tax justice, precarious work, climate change) or international organisations (FIFA). They can be touching upon global politics, but they can also, on a more modest scale, simply protest against unfair dismissals of union leaders.

And yet, what they all have in common is some basic rules that campaigning should follow.



2. “Research is not an Academic Exercise”



To run a successful campaign, you need solid research. You need to know the status quo in a company, a sector or legislation, you need to identify power relations, political opportunities, leverage points and, on that basis, targets. Trade unions do a lot of research,

some internal with professional researchers, others with external researchers depending on what country, what company or what sector they want to do research on. The goal of research is often to know the company/industry well: Who are its owners, its investors, its contractors, its competitors? What is the political environment (state, governments, local politicians)? Where in these structures do unions have affiliates, what is the status quo on collective bargaining agreements? What holds true elsewhere is also evident here: Knowledge is power!

It is essential to know the local situation. In negotiations with MNCs, it is possible to drive a wedge between HQ and local management, if you can confront HQ with information that local management is hiding.

Research and corporate research in particular is more than an academic exercise, it is a tool to support and guide a campaigning strategy and that’s why it should always be **action-oriented** and kept **up-to-date!** Ideally, researchers are integrated in planning and decision-making. A key advice by global unions was that research capacities within affiliated national unions should always be tapped into as much as possible.



3. Identify the Soft Spot!

You have to look at your campaigning targets from all possible sides to find the best entry points for your campaign. For instance, among the investors of a certain company there may be a pension fund paid into by workers – a possible soft spot to create friction among investors. Buying shares as a trade union can be another way.

Sponsoring can also be an entry point, in particular with regards to sports events – when Qatar Airways is featuring very prominently on FC Barcelona jerseys, it might be worth considering campaigning around the executive board elections for that club, appealing to the morale of the Catalan club and fans. CocaCola, Visa, McDonalds and others have recently been pressured successfully into publicly demanding Sepp Blatter’s immediate demission. A general impression was that in football, companies may be more effective targets than politicians because those are often closely intertwined with power structures in the lucrative football business. **“Campaignable moments”** can be key in this sense – the recent and upcoming FIFA elections are a case in point, mega sports events are another.

Tax justice can be another leverage point – if sound reasoning with a company doesn’t get you any further, denouncing a company’s tax practice can help you mobilise the public as well as the state (e.g. McDonalds).

4. Leverage: “Getting Them Worried” – For Some, Image is Priceless

Their image is what worries many companies. This was confirmed by trade unions as well as from a business perspective. Many brand companies are extremely worried about negative headlines, demonstrations and public opinion. In these cases, creating a fuss and getting them worried is often a good option that can have companies make a step toward the union and at least engage in a conversation. The same can be true for some governments – by exerting pressure through a campaign, you can make it hard for politicians to say no to some demands.

But: there are “**hidden giants**” out there who are not under public scrutiny. While Brands like Nestlé, CocaCola, VW or Adidas are to some extent dependent on their image, non-brand companies and particularly suppliers (be it cement companies, lower tier automobile component suppliers or agribusinesses producing cocoa or mining companies) are much less so.

5. The “Art of Winning”

It is essential to define what can be considered a “win”. This implies that you have clear objectives, ideally for different phases of a campaign, to assess progress.

The art of winning includes an essential dimension sometimes underestimated: What do you do next when you have won? This can be looked at in terms of looking at campaigns and strategies as an incremental process. It also implies the necessity to anticipate how to sustain possible wins.



On the other hand, it is necessary to think about what to do when no advances are made with the campaign and it may be necessary to stop it, and how to devise exit strategies.

6. Buckle up: Tough Road Ahead

This should have been clear throughout the points made above already, but to put it even more bluntly: Trade union campaigns are up to powerful adversaries. And many of the major multinationals that unions are targeting are targeted *because* they are powerful – if you succeed in making a lead company move, this can have effects on an entire sector, and if a company is tending to monopolize entire sector, that is even more reason to tackle them. In terms of financial resources, unions versus multinationals are a **classic David versus Goliath story**.

7. Enter: Silicon Valley and the Art of Storytelling

While some trade unions stick to a rather traditional approach of printing posters and flyers, others have made acquaintance with some of the technologically sophisticated tools that the digital revolution has been spreading. Online petition platforms like “Sum of us” are gaining prominence. Today, “clicks are key”, advertising is targeted to specific groups and you have to “convince search engines”, not only journalists. Engaging in crowd funding for strike funds may be the next frontier.



Independent of all the digital high art, some basics still hold true: No online campaign can function without a link to the offline, real world. Online action wears off after a while and companies and governments tend to ignore it. And secondly, the **“art of story-telling”** is useful both online and offline – it is always helpful to emotionalize and per-

sonalize your arguments for the media and the public. It is therefore necessary to „Translate information into something that people care about!“ and “Tell the story of the people, not the organization!”

8. The Campaigning-Organising Nexus

Campaigning for the sake of campaigning is useless, if you are a trade union. Trade unions are powerless without their members and they need as many members as they can possibly mobilise. While this was not always understood throughout trade union history it seems evident today. Any campaign should therefore be linked to organizing. Campaigning can help organizing progress indirectly, by making potential affiliates aware of and interested in a union, or it can directly include organizing components in its action plans.

9. Do You Want to Campaign With Me?

Affiliate ownership is key in any campaign. Without local actions and support, campaigns are lifeless and not credible. This was a key lesson learned by many global unions who often find it difficult to mobilise their affiliates. To regularly engage in dialogue with affiliates, to take serious those who are key for a campaign, to identify jointly “what’s in there for them” and how it will make a difference for them when an issue is popular with the local public constitute *sine qua non*.

Campaigns are also good occasions to reach out to other organisations outside and beyond the labour movement and invest in **alliance-building**. Human rights organisations can be natural partners, especially in cases where a labour issue clearly involves human rights – e.g. modern slavery conditions of construction worker or domestic workers in Qatar or other Gulf countries or the right to strike. For the “Rerun the Vote” FIFA campaign, ITUC formed a “Sports and Rights Alliance” with amnesty international, Human Rights Watch, Transparency International Germany and others.



10. Rumble in the Jungle or “What is in Your Lorry”?

In our globalized economy, everything is interlinked. The supply chains and networks that cover our planet - stretching all continents and running via air, road, rail and sea - are messy, they are intransparent, they are – ironically – virtually endless, in short, they are a “jungle”. For trade unions, it is difficult to fully grasp supply chains in all their complexity. In today’s economy, opaque ownership structures complicate the matter.

Supply chains are a huge challenge to trade unions, because they modify – you could say pervert – classic employer-worker relations within a particular company or sector. Even relatively simple supply chains usually cover several sectors which in turn are organized by several trade unions: For instance, in the supply chain of a t-shirt, cotton workers may be organized by IUF in their agriculture branch, textile workers by IndustriAll, retail and brand company staff by UNI and throughout the chain you will find ITF workers in ships, airplanes, trucks or trains who make sure the supply chain is well connected. As a consequence, cooperation between global unions and between sectoral unions within and across countries is more necessary than ever.



At the same time, there is much in it for local unions, since international solidarity can be a key leverage point: Philippine workers of NXP24 in a special economic zone stand little chance of succeeding in protesting unfair dismissals of union leaders, but if this company produces components for Apple’s iPhone and is a member of IndustriAll who can mobilise internationally and create pressure, these Philippine workers may actually succeed in reversing company decisions.

And, when ITF is approached by certain truck driver unions whether or not they can do something for them through the international level, “What is in your lorry?” is a key question that can help figure out entry points for pressure by going up or down the supply chain.

