
2. Global Labour University (GLU)

Implementation: 2002-to date

Description of the STTC good practice

The Global Labour University (GLU)⁶² is a network bringing together universities, international and national trade unions, civil society organizations and the International Labour Organization (ILO), and was created as a partnership for international knowledge management, research, and capacity building. Primarily based on university campuses in Brazil, South Africa, India, and Germany, the GLU offers postgraduate programmes and research opportunities for trade unionists and labour activists. Combining academic studies with practical work through close cooperation with trade unions and field based internships, the GLU provides a true “one world” research and learning environment for labour to research, analyse, and identify effective policy measures to meet the labour challenges of today. GLU is a triangular cooperation good practice *per se*, as it links efforts from the North and the South to promote horizontal cooperation. It also links various IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa) initiatives to efforts by the Government of Germany to promote capacity building among workers’ organizations.⁶³



Disseminating knowledge and capacity building through STTC

The GLU network supports the need to enhance the analytical capacity of trade unions to understand and challenge the prevailing views of globalization, build alliances with broader civil society, develop alternative ideas for fair and inclusive globalization, and build sustainable networks.⁶⁴ Whenever possible, students from all regions are represented in the courses offered in Germany and IBSA countries. Global workshops, conferences, publications and internet working groups facilitate genuine global dialogue and sustainable international networks. Moreover, the GLU is critical to the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda, especially since it is focused on the implementation of workers’ rights.

Why is the GLU innovative?

The GLU helps strengthen trade unions’ organizational and analytical capacity at both the national and global levels. It is based on the premise that solutions must be developed through a joint global research and deliberation process, not only through North-South knowledge transfers. The active role of labour organizations in Brazil, India and South Africa in shaping the future of their societies is an inspirational source for new ideas and reverberates in the global South. The GLU is a new channel of South-South Cooperation. It is the only network worldwide that offers global cooperation between trade unions and academic institutions, with a strong focus on South-South cooperation. Over the past five years it has strengthened the voice of the South in global debates, and many of its alumni have taken up new responsibilities and leadership functions in their organizations. The network creates new

⁶² <http://www.global-labour-university.org/>

⁶³ http://www.global-labour-university.org/fileadmin/GLU_Info/Info_Booklet_South_South_cooperation.pdf

⁶⁴ Article by Frank Hoffer, Building Global Labour networks: The Case of the Global Labour University, 2006, <http://www.justlabour.yorku.ca/volume9/pdfs/02HofferPress.pdf>

channels for trade unionists and researchers from the South, bringing a confident Southern voice to the global labour discourse.

Why is the GLU network sustainable?

Trade Unions and universities from countries such as Ghana, Russia, Argentina, and the United States have expressed their interest in participating in the GLU network. Because of their wide reach, the following initiatives help expand and sustain the network: GLU alumni networking and research projects such as the Alumni Summer School of 2013; the ICDD Thematic Conference in Mumbai; and the GLU conference scheduled for Berlin in 2014; video lectures;⁶⁵ video conferencing; on-line modules; the Global Labour Column (GLC), and the Conference Book. Likewise, scholarships offered to students from developing countries allow better representativity of trade unions. For instance, the Brazilian programme has been successful in mobilizing Brazilian Government scholarships for non-Brazilian applicants from developing countries as well as funding for internship placements.



Former President of Brazil Luis Inacio Lula da Silva supports a GLU activity.

The content of Masters' programmes on labour policies and globalization at various universities has created a common purpose and strong commitment among the partners. This vast network of academics and trade unionists from around the world who contribute their expertise to the network and gain new knowledge and capacity from GLU research, conferences, and publications, has inspired an initiative by the international trade union movement to build a Global Union Research Network (GURN),⁶⁶ supported by the ILO. The GURN facilitates debate, research and information exchanges on global labour issues. It organizes workshops and on-line debates, supports research, and maintains a number of websites to provide up-to-date information on important global labour issues.

⁶⁵ Available on Youtube at: <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLC8EE39ABE8D7CBD5>

⁶⁶ <http://gurn.info/en/>

Contact

Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV)

Email: hoffer@ilo.org

+41.22.799.8937