



# Trade unions

A trade union is an organisation of workers who come together to achieve common goals and are independent of the employer. Universal conventions enshrine the right to associate freely and bargain collectively on issues such as integrity of trade, safety standards, work rules, complaint procedures; rules on hiring, firing and promotion; attaining better wages, benefits and working conditions. Formal agreements between workers and employers provide the basis for sound labour relations and early dispute resolution.

Trade unions are traditionally member led and funded by member subscriptions. They have a constitution which details the governance of their bargaining unit and their affiliation to a sector or industry Federation or to a National Centre or Confederation which represents workers' interests in either the sector or the national context.

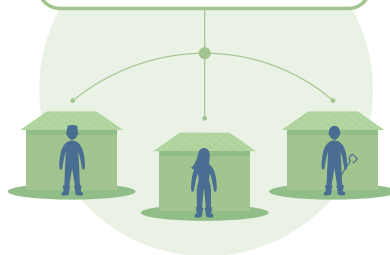
## Collective arrangements

Company, enterprise or workplace collective voice



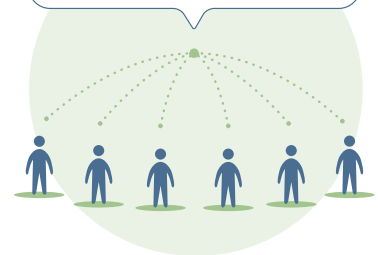
(eg workers associated with a specific workplace and/or company)

National sector or general unions



(eg horticulture, textiles, apparel, transport, energy)

Informal worker collective voice (based on work type)



(eg Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India)

## Rights and responsibilities of local unions & representatives

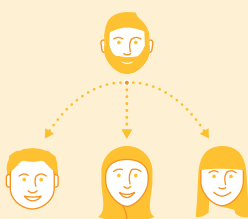
Trade unions represent individuals and should be consulted on any changes to the workplace, work processes, pay and pensions.



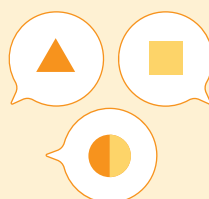
Elect representatives



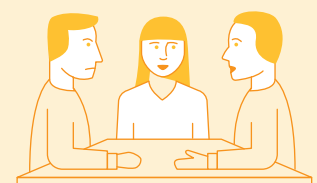
Establish committees & prioritise issues



Cascade learning & education



Bargain and negotiate with employers

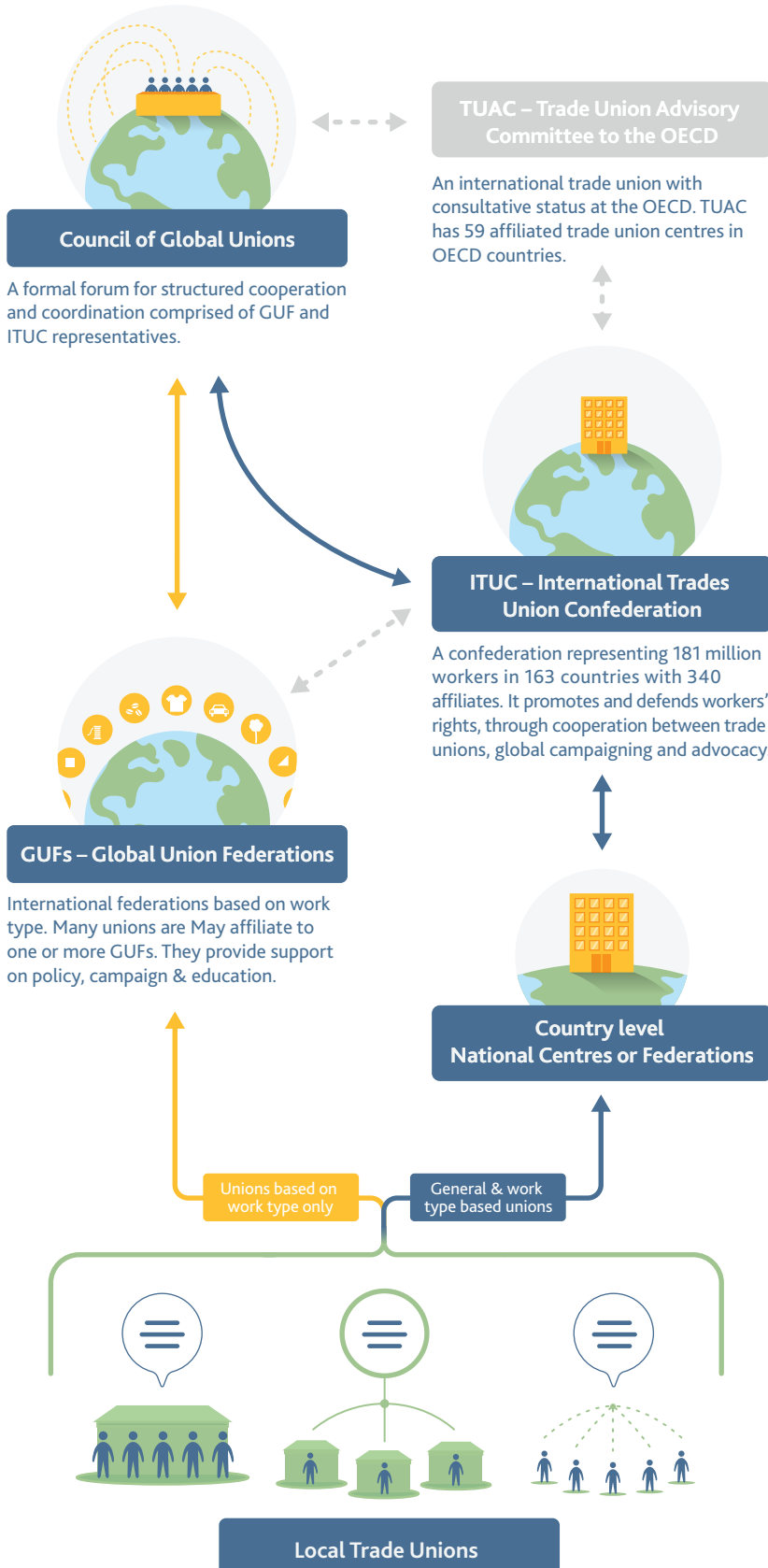


Resolve disputes

# Building better economies, communities and societies through democratic policy making, advocacy, campaigning, research and worker education is embedded in the trade union movement.

## Global links

Starting from the bottom, this infographic shows an overview of how trade unions work on a local, national, international and global scale to make sure workers' voices are heard and to defend human rights through communication, campaigning, education and more.



## Benefits of working with a recognised trades union:

- Build trust through dialogue and consultation
- Ensure workplaces are safe
- Audit non-compliance with labour codes
- Improve staff retention
- Promote equality
- Provide access to learning and skills
- Increase productivity & save money

## National and global activity:

Trade unions nationally and internationally participate in and have dedicated seats participating in global forums & organisations, eg SDGs, UNGPs, standards bodies (ISO, GRI), international & regional finance institutions, G5/G8/G20.



## What is the ILO?

International Labour Organisation (ILO): is a United Nations agency dealing with & setting international labour standards. They are the custodians of the fundamental workplace rights (core labour standards). The work of all the entities shown on the right is guided by the standards set out by the ILO.

[www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)



## Where to find information:

1. Search the ITUC website for:
  - Trade unions by region
  - National centre affiliates
  - Annual human and trade union violations reports [www.ituc-csi.org](http://www.ituc-csi.org)
2. Search the GUFs websites to find unions by work type. [www.global-unions.org](http://www.global-unions.org)
3. For FoA complaints: [www.ilo.org/global/topics/freedom-of-association-and-the-right-to-collective-bargaining](http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/freedom-of-association-and-the-right-to-collective-bargaining)
4. For OECD complaints: [mneguidelines.oecd.org/database](http://mneguidelines.oecd.org/database)