

Briefing Notes:

Creation of global/regional/sub-regional solidarity networks of union organisers for exchanges of experiences, ideas and activities among unions and unionists (SoliComm)

By Michihiro Ishibashi, Program Officer, ITC-ILO/ACTRAV

One of the keys for a successful call centre organizing is “Globalizing Solidarity”. Working towards this goal necessarily includes building communication networks which allow unionists and organizers from all around the world to explore ideas, share research, participate in labour education and communicate their views and ideas to other unionists.

Fortunately the tools to build these sorts of global networks exist - including e-mail, mailing list, computer conferencing, web sites and computerized databases. Unfortunately, not every labour organization has the money or expertise to take advantage of these tools. What we need is a strategy for developing solidarity networks.

A solidarity network can be defined as an electronic communications system used by unionists to further the aims of the global labour movement. It should include a comprehensive set of communication tools including email, computer conferencing, website hosting, and database programs. And it should be adoptable by labour organizations - especially those in developing countries - which do not have the money or the immediate expertise to develop their own.

ILO ACTRAV - the ILO's Workers' Activities Programme – has developed a system for solidarity networks, called “SoliComm”. It enables labour organizations to build solidarity networks such as a labour network for union researcher, organizers and/or educators. SoliComm has five main components: e-mail, mailing list, computer conferencing, website hosting, and e-library capabilities.

The power of the labour movement comes from group solidarity. To help workers develop group solidarity, many of SoliComm's components, such as its conferencing system, are aimed at offering “collaborative” environment.

In this session, it will be argued that:

- 1) The best solution for solidarity networks lies in using technologies which are designed for more easily building a sense of community;
- 2) The community, once developed, does the teaching and support by itself;
- 3) Globalizing solidarity means building labour communities, and building labour communities means using tools such as SoliComm more effectively and efficiently.

[For further study/reading]

SoliComm Homepage	http://www.solicomm.net/
Information Technologies for unionists - Manual	http://training.itcilo.it/actrav/itguides/
Technology Organizing	http://training.itcilo.it/actrav/library/english/publications/tech_org.doc
