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Problems of rural workers' organisation: The Cameroonian experience

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It is now generally accepted that successful rural development in the Third World requires the active participation of the rural population in the development process. It seems as yet to be less generally understood that this participation depends upon the population's being effectively organised.

This was one of the main reasons leading to the formulation and the adoption in 1975 of the ILO's Rural Workers' Organisations Convention (No. 141) and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 149), which reaffirm the right of all rural workers–both wage-earning and self-employed–to freely form and join organisations of their own choosing.

While rural wage earners in the majority of developing countries generally have the same rights of organisation as industrial workers, geographical dispersion, economic and social circumstances and generally lower levels of education make the development of any workers' organisation in a rural area inherently more difficult than in urban surroundings. In addition, the rights to form such organisations seldom extend–and the authorities have so far given little indication that they ever will extend–to the self-employed, who constitute the majority of the rural populations of the developing world and are much less experienced in establishing and running participatory organisations.

This article examines some of the general and particular issues that can arise in the development and operation of workers' organisations in the rural areas, using as a basis information obtained during an ILO study of the National Union of Cameroon Workers undertaken in 1982 by B. E. D. Komba Kono.

General background

The United Republic of Cameroon has a total land area of some 47.5 million hectares, of which over half is forest and some 15 per cent is under cultivation or permanent crops. Tropical agriculture is still the main industry–coffee, cocoa, palm oil, bananas and groundnuts are among the

* International Labour Office.

main export earners–with some two-thirds of the total population of just under 8.5 million dependent on it. In 1980, about 80 per cent of the economically active were engaged in agriculture, and of these the vast majority were either self-employed cultivators or unpaid family workers. The 68,000 agricultural wage earners (nearly double the number of ten years earlier) constituted only 5 per cent of the agricultural labour force.[1]

The country consists of the former French Cameroons (in the east) and most of the former British Cameroons (in the west). The eastern region gained independence in 1960 and was joined by the western region in 1961. In 1966 the existing political parties in the two regions were dissolved and a single party–the Cameroon National Union (CNU)–was formed. A referendum in 1971 established a unitary system of government.

Trade unions

Present-day trade union legislation has its basis in the Labour Code of 1974.[2] This defines a worker as any person "who has undertaken to place his gainful activity, in return for remuneration, under the direction and control of another person . . . who is styled the 'employer'". Any person who is "subject to customary law and works within the traditional framework of the family" is excluded.

The Code recognises the right of workers and employers to form and join organisations of their own choosing and specifically includes agriculture. The range of activities in which a trade union may engage is very broad and does not exclude, as is the case in some countries, the development and running of co-operative societies.

Unions have the right to draw up their own constitutions, but a basic union has to group members belonging to the same or related branches of activity; for this purpose all occupations have been brought together under three main groups, the first of which–designated "primary"–covers all agricultural occupations.

The geographical coverage of basic unions may be limited to a division (administrative district) or a number of divisions, or it may be national in character. Whatever the coverage of a union, its existence precludes the formation of another of the same nature for the same occupational activity.[3] Divisional or interdivisional unions in the same activity group may form federations and they may also federate with other organisations covering other activities. All types of organisations may federate at national level.

Trade unionism in Cameroon was largely a post-1940 development and tended to follow the lines of the French or the British movement, depending on the region. At the time of independence it was reckoned that there were over 100 unions with an aggregate membership of some 40,000, and by the early 1960s five principal groupings had developed–four in the former French Cameroons and one in the former British region–whose international affiliations or contacts differed according to their respective ideologies.

During the 1960s the Government became increasingly concerned at these divisions, and substantial pressure was brought to bear to effect a change. Eventually a committee comprising representatives of the unions, the CNU and the Government produced the constitution and rules of a new single national centre, to be known as the National Union of Cameroon Workers (NUCW). In the autumn of 1971, the existing national groups, whose number had by then been reduced to three–the Federation of Trade Unions of Cameroon (FSC, by far the largest organisation), the Federation of Believing Trade Unions of Cameroon (FSCC) and the West Cameroons Trade Union Congress (WCTUC)–dissolved themselves and a provisional National Council of the NUCW was established with 25 members from each former group. In February 1972, this Council chose a Confederal Bureau to manage the affairs of the new organisation and the President of the NUCW became a member of the Central Committee of the CNU.

The NUCW has both a vertical and a horizontal structure. The former comprises basic unions and divisional unions to which all basic unions, regardless of their occupational coverage, have to adhere. The latter comprises the national unions and occupational committees grouping basic unions within the same field of activity. Membership of the NUCW can be granted by its Confederal Bureau only after consultation with the CNU. The supreme organ is the triennial Congress, whose decisions can be implemented only after consultation with the CNU.

The internal regulations provide that the monthly contribution of each member shall be 1 per cent of his wages. All check-off contributions are in practice forwarded to a National Committee for Trade Union Contributions which is responsible for reallocating the moneys in the proportion of 10 per cent for social affairs, 40 per cent to the appropriate basic union, 20 per cent to the divisional union and 30 per cent to the national centre.

In 1981 the NUCW reckoned that the aggregate membership of the 325 basic unions affiliated through 39 divisional unions was 120,000.

Before 1945 there was no trade union activity in the plantation sector. In 1946 the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) was established in the British Cameroons to take over certain existing plantations and to develop new ones; and in 1947 its workers formed the Cameroon Development Corporation Workers' Union (CDCWU). So far as is known, there were no similar developments in the French sector.

The CDCWU eventually secured a collective agreement and this, coupled with the CDC's own welfare activities, led to certain improvements in the workers' conditions over a period of years. By 1963 the Union had succeeded in negotiating the check-off system, and the regular income thus obtained enabled it to embark on a modest programme of services to members, including educational loans for their children. As school fees rose this became a heavy drain on resources and the Union ran a campaign for the establishment of credit unions, which became particularly successful when it also negotiated the check-off of contributions to them.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the CDCWU was a prominent member of the West Cameroons TUC and one of its leaders, Gabriel Fogam, became a Vice-President of the International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural and Allied Workers (IFPAAW), to which the CDCWU was affiliated, and a member of the Governing Body of the ILO. The CDCWU and IFPAAW also gave encouragement to a small union which had developed in the French-speaking area–the National Union of Cameroonian Agricultural Producers and Peasants (SYNAPCAM). But these activities coincided with mounting pressures for the creation of a single national centre, during which the IFPAAW representative was deported[4] and a number of trade unionists were imprisoned. With the creation of the NUCW, the CDCWU became a basic union of the new national centre under the title of the Agricultural Workers' Union, Fako Division (AWU). Exactly what happened to SYNAPCAM is not known; indeed it is unfortunate that little is recorded about this organisation since, to judge from its title, it appeared to cover the self-employed sector.

Today the AWU is one of the 35 basic unions catering for workers in the primary (agricultural) sector. Because of the system of classification by sector, they also cover related activities, so that a basic union's membership may include, for example, clerical, research, hospital and co-operative employees in agricultural undertakings. It has been estimated that the total membership of the agricultural basic unions is over 50,000.

Each basic union is affiliated to the NUCW through its appropriate divisional union, and the 35 unions are grouped in a National Occupational Committee. Each basic union has an Executive Board of 11 members; the majority of these officers continue to work in the agricultural sector, carrying out their trade union duties on a part-time basis.

The CDC, which was taken over by the Government in 1974, still has the largest plantations and employs some 21,000 workers in five different divisions; the basic unions within each division separately represent the interests of their members to the Corporation. Because of its strong original base the AWU, with some 10,000 members, is the largest union in the group (and also in its division) and its President is a Vice-President of the NUCW and a member of the National Occupational Committee.

The working conditions of organised workers in the primary sector are covered by a collective agreement between the NUCW and the agricultural employers' associations. The agreement is largely procedural but provision is made for the (voluntary) check-off of union contributions, and for piece-work, for which the rate "shall be determined by direct agreement between the employers and the workers concerned" and must be such that an average worker working normally would earn at least the same as if he were paid by the hour. The sections concerning industrial accidents and occupational diseases rely mainly on the relevant national legislation.

The agreement itself contains no actual wage rates but refers to the schedule of minimum wages determined for the primary sector after

negotiations in the National Joint Collective Bargaining Agreements and Wages Board (NJC). The December 1981 schedule provides for no fewer than 324 different rates–according to occupational category, length of service and in which of the three national pay zones the employment falls. The lowest grade of worker in the lowest pay zone was in 1981 entitled to 12,580 CFA francs a month minimum and 13,750 maximum.[5] The minimum for the same worker in the next pay zone (covering most workers on the large plantations) was 13,895 CFA francs. The rates are based on a standard 200 hours a month, which in practice works out at eight hours a day, six days a week.

Although the President of the AWU was one of the eight trade union signatories to the collective agreement (in the name of the NUCW) and took part in the NJC negotiations for the minimum rates, the 35 basic unions in the agricultural sector were not themselves directly involved in negotiating the two basic instruments affecting their members' conditions of employment. Other aspects of working conditions–for example, hours of work, overtime, occupational safety, invalidity and retirement–are also affected by national laws and regulations, and while it is a reasonable assumption that the NUCW will have been involved in their formulation, this cannot be said of the basic unions in any of the three sectors.

The main activities of the basic unions, apart from representing their members within the NUCW machinery, are therefore grievance handling, workers' education and the running of local services for members. On the basis of the 1982 investigation, which covered plantations in six divisions –including that in which the AWU operates–the most important function is clearly grievance handling, the main issue on a long list of problems of concern to ordinary members being that of piece-work.

It was reported that some employers or their representatives (a number of the estates are run by public corporations) did not negotiate the piece rates as required by the staff agreement but fixed them arbitrarily; that the output levels set were too high to allow workers to earn the minimum; that the variations between one estate and another for the same work were much greater than the variations in working conditions; that insufficient allowance–or none at all–was made for the variations between peak and low seasons, particularly for tea pluckers; and that complaints on these matters resulted in victimisation.

Another common matter of concern was the housing arrangements on the plantations, with overcrowding and inadequate or non-existent sanitation high on the list of complaints. Other related complaints concerned the lack of provision stores on plantations or of transport to enable the workers to do their shopping in the nearest town or market; the lack of arrangements for the care of children while mothers were at work; the distances children had to walk from the plantations to the nearest school; and overcrowding and lack of teachers at the schools themselves. Frequent references were made to dispensaries at the place of employment being insufficiently stocked with

medicines, lack of transport facilities to recognised centres for medical treatment, and cursory attention by doctors.

It was claimed that holiday entitlements were being incorrectly computed, that accidents were not being properly reported and that insurance contributions deducted from the pay of temporary workers were subsequently found not to have been credited to them.

Obviously, therefore, the basic unions have a variety of issues to handle–thus demonstrating to members that they are getting a return for their contributions and providing incentives for new members to join. However, since a number of issues can only be resolved fully at national level and are therefore matters for the NUCW, the basic unions need to seek other ways of serving their members.

Some of them, in fact, have already done so, a particularly successful instance being the credit unions started by the CDCWU. These are now in operation in all 35 basic agricultural unions, the monthly savings in June 1981 of around 47.5 million CFA francs representing a rate of 570 million CFA francs a year. Most withdrawals were for school fees, and repayments of loans were arranged through check-off. The AWU is also running consumer stores on plantations to provide food and basic household necessities and in some cases clothing, and it is possible that other unions are doing the same.

Co-operatives

The co-operative movement in Cameroon was active long before independence but the current basic legislation is Law No. 73/15 of 1973 and Decree No. 74/874 of 1974 for its application. Any group of ten or more persons may form a co-operative provided that they are over 17 years of age, exercise an occupation connected with the purposes of the society and are not members of another co-operative with the same aims in the same area of jurisdiction. Co-operatives may not undertake deliberations or activities of a religious or political nature.

Collectivities or bodies corporate may also become members of a co-operative; since a registered trade union acquires legal status, it could presumably become a member of a co-operative if it so wished. A Department of the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for the promotion and supervison of co-operatives and for the auditing of their accounts. The Minister may designate one of his officers to take over the management of a society if it is deemed necessary.

The basic structure of the movement is in the form of a pyramid, with the local societies forming the base. These are grouped into area co-operative unions which in turn are grouped in an apex organisation. As might be expected from the jurisdiction of the supervising Ministry, the main developments have been in the rural sector, particularly among self-employed small farmers at village level. These village societies are run by their elected committees under the supervision of an official of the area co-

operative union. Most are concerned with marketing or collection of one of the main cash crops.

Among the various forms of assistance to the movement has been an ILO programme for institutional development and the training of members of village societies. Although an ILO workers' education mission which had casual contact with these activities in 1975 was favourably impressed with the results,[6] the 1982 mission which provided material for this article found opinion divided among the rural workers themselves. Some considered that co-operatives had considerably reduced the exploitation of the small farmers by merchants and traders; others expressed the view, not uncommon in countries where circumstances are similar, that it was the larger farmers who had benefited most, often to the detriment of the smaller.

Appraisal and observations

Two main points arise from a consideration of the legislative provisions covering rural workers in Cameroon. First, wage-earning rural workers have the same rights of association as all other wage earners and the industrial legislation in general treats agricultural workers equally with others. Second, self-employed rural workers and their families are excluded from forming or joining workers' organisations. Although, like wage earners, the self-employed may form and join co-operatives, the latter may be more limited than trade unions in what they can achieve for their members.[7] In this connection, it is pertinent to recall that, in restating the right of freedom of association for all rural workers, ILO Convention No. 141 expressly referred to the role rural workers' organisations can and should play in something that is the concern of governments in all developing countries–economic and social development.

Unfortunately, the overall situation just described is not uncommon in other countries. For the vast bulk of the rural populations of the developing world, the law does not allow the self-employed to choose for themselves the type of organisation most likely to serve and further their interests. There are, however, a few other countries where the legislation governing trade unions also covers employers' organisations, and in more than one of these the agricultural workers' and employers' organisations have traditionally and openly included self-employed small farmers amongst their members, the decision as to which they joined being that of the individuals concerned according to the "side of the fence" on which they considered themselves to be or the organisation which they felt would best serve their interests.

The above possibility no longer seems to exist in Cameroon. Nevertheless, as we have seen, there was once a union–SYNAPCAM–which appeared to cover the self-employed, and even today, when a unionised rural wage earner gives up paid employment and returns to his village to become a self-employed farmer, he can, and frequently does, retain his membership of the basic union. It has been estimated that the total of such workers may at

present account for 10 per cent of the aggregate membership of the agricultural basic unions, and it is possible that the proportion may continue to increase.

Another interesting aspect of the overall legal situation is that, unlike the basic trade union laws in a number of countries where the authorities have used their influence to ensure a single trade union movement, the law of Cameroon has remained unchanged. It is the constitution of the NUCW itself which establishes the single national centre. Theoretically, it appears that a new independent union could be legally established; in practice it would probably be debarred by the pre-existence of a union covering the same activity, and in any case it would obviously have difficulty in being effective without becoming part of the NUCW. On the other hand, it is open to question whether the law would have remained unchanged if the unions had resisted pressure on them to set up and develop the NUCW.

For agricultural workers and their unions, what has been the effect of the establishment of the NUCW? Obviously, any pre-existing organisation would have suffered some loss of autonomy; decisions which before were its own to reach are now subject to those of the NUCW, in turn subject to consultations with the CNU. Whereas a union could formerly negotiate directly with an employer, even one operating in more than one division, today all negotiations–as opposed to grievance handling–are the province of the NUCW.

It may be argued that this disadvantage is offset by the fact that a single national centre carries more weight than a number of individual organisations, and by the fact that the number of rural workers organised is now greater than before unification. Both points are difficult to judge. The numbers organised might have increased in any case; and, even allowing for possible NUCW influence on the legislation that covers many of the conditions of workers in the primary sector, the fact remains that the single national agreement for agriculture is basically unchanged from the time when it was concluded in 1976.

Lack of earlier comparable information makes it impossible to say whether there have been significant improvements in members' conditions at their place of work. But general experience and casual information would indicate that relatively little has changed. Similar complaints to those referred to earlier are of course frequently voiced by plantation workers in a number of developing countries; often they are in large part a legacy of the past, compounded by more recent falls in world commodity prices and increasing national economic difficulties. Thus the situation found on the plantations visited by the mission is not necessarily any reflection on the new trade union structure. It does nevertheless pose a double-barrelled question which will only be answered by time and the reactions of the plantation workers themselves. In the long run, will a unified national centre working closely with the government and the single national political party, as in Cameroon, achieve real advances for the workers in an industry where the government

is the main employer? Or will the close relationship between the trade union and the government inhibit progress in an economically sensitive sector?

Piece-work is a feature of plantation employment throughout the world. It is a system which many regard as an evasion by management of its responsibilities, since supervision is reduced to the bare minimum by relying on the workers' absolute need–or, in more affluent circumstances, avarice. It is also a commonplace that piece-workers in all occupations, though never satisfied with their rate, are seldom content with any alternative system of payment. However, the situation in Cameroon reflects a problem which can also be found in other countries.

In some cases the unions have succeeded in securing properly negotiated piece-work rates; but in most the matter is left to worksite bargaining, in which case the outcome can be affected by many factors–including the attitudes of the employers' and workers' spokesmen and the existing hourly rate of pay. In countries where the union has been able to negotiate an hourly rate above the minimum, even a badly fixed piece-work rate would normally mean that any worker could earn at least the minimum. Where, as in Cameroon, the minimum is the only rate, an inequitable piece-work rate means that many workers will be earning less than that.

Such a situation would be roundly condemned if the employer were a private individual, an expatriate or a multinational company. It is, however, no less serious when, as in much of the Cameroon plantation sector, the employer is, directly or indirectly, the same authority as is responsible for fixing and enforcing the minimum rate; nor is there any cause for the unions to be less vociferous in their demands because they are closely associated with planning and implementing national development policies.

A trade union exists to serve the interests of its members. Among the more important of the factors determining its effectiveness in doing so are membership strength, finance, administration, leadership capacity and membership participation. The NUCW cannot yet claim the majority of workers as members: roughly one-third of the estimated 400,000 wage earners appear to be organised. But among the rural wage earners, although no firm figures are available, it seems clear that the proportion of workers organised is higher than in the workforce as a whole. There are many national and rural trade union movements, not just among developing countries, that would be happy if they had a similar percentage of organisation.

In this light, the fact that there is a single national centre can be considered an overall advantage; nationally there is no question as to who represents the interests of workers. In theory, since all basic unions are members of the NUCW, the same could be said at local level. In practice, however, despite the existence of the (very small) National Occupational Committee, it might well be questioned whether the 35 autonomous basic agricultural unions can provide the same degree of national solidarity as would a single agricultural union–by far the more usual arrangement in countries that have officially adopted a unified national system.

By providing for contributions to be based on a percentage of members' incomes the NUCW has taken the most important step towards maintaining viability: the incomes of the unions will increase parallel with wages, which could be expected to rise at least at the same rate as the cost of living. There is insufficient information to judge whether the actual level of 1 per cent of wages is in fact high enough, but so far as the agricultural unions are concerned there are a few indicators. Experience around the world suggests that, in order to provide effective service, a rural union requires contributions of 2 per cent of the income of its lowest-paid members. The NUCW basic unions directly receive only 40 per cent of the total paid by their members–less than half of 1 per cent of their incomes. But the average wages of members are higher than those of the lowest-paid and allowance must be made for the services the basic unions receive from the divisional unions and the national centre which have received 20 and 30 per cent of the total contributions paid. Both factors can appreciably alter the first impression that the basis of contributions is too low. Moreover, the annual contribution of a member paid at the lowest rate in the primary wages schedule (12,580 CFA francs a month) is approximately 1,500 CFA francs, of which the basic union would receive 600 CFA francs. If one assumes that the cost to the union of employing a full-time worker is three times the basic wage of the lowest-paid member, this amounts to roughly 450,000 CFA francs a year. Thus in theory a full-time worker could easily be employed by a basic union on the income from 1,000 members–a situation in which many rural unions would be happy to find themselves.

There nevertheless seems a case for further consideration of a problem inherent in the system adopted by the NUCW and other similar centralised movements. The incomes of rural workers are generally among the lowest, and because their members are scattered over large distances the operating costs of rural unions per member are generally higher than in other sectors. Thus, with a uniform system of reallocation of funds to the unions, those with the highest costs receive the least income per member. Although it is in principle desirable to treat all union members alike, it would appear that there is a case for considering some special arrangement to counteract the anomalous end-result of the system.

Many trade unionists would also raise two other queries concerning the system of financing. All the money from the checkoff–the vast bulk of the unions' income–is first sent to a central fund and a central committee oversees its redistribution. How can the basic unions manage if there should happen to be delays in the work of that central committee? Worse, if there were a serious disagreement between a union and the national centre, or between the national centre and the authorities, would there not be a risk that the union or the national centre might, at a stroke of the pen, be deprived of all income?[8]

On the question of leadership, the fact that a number of the leaders of the basic agricultural unions were among those who led the fight for union

recognition in the pre-NUCW days must surely be some indication of the confidence placed by the members in their qualities. But there is reason to suppose, as outlined below, that the position as regards local leadership and membership participation is similar to that found in rural unions in some other developing countries, particularly those where there has been a recent history of restructuring coupled with a fairly rapid increase in the number of members paying contributions by check-off.

Examination of the individual difficulties reported by the plantation workers would reveal to an experienced observer that many problems arose because members were not fully aware of their rights under the law or national agreement, that they were not familiar with union procedures to rectify problems, or that, because of inexperience or lack of understanding of union procedures, local union representatives did not always know how to handle situations where the management failed to take reasonable action. In addition, the observer would probably conclude that where the union was operating within a single national agreement or under national legislation (both likely to be seen by members as being determined by the authorities and not by union negotiations), and where the resolution of many problems was dependent upon national rather than local action, it would be necessary to develop some locally oriented services to retain members' interest and loyalty.

As in the case of many unions in similar circumstances, these problems could have been avoided–and will only be overcome–by sustained workers' education activity for the rank and file and for leadership development. How to develop that activity is always a matter for local determination but the general approach can be simply outlined.

First, a course or courses to train at least two persons from each basic union as local workers' educators capable, if necessary on a part-time basis, of running courses for members at worksite level, to eventually cover all members, including new members. The purpose of the courses run by the local educators would be to help members understand the national agreement and laws, their rights and responsibilities under these provisions and the use of union machinery to get problems rectified; and, above all, to bring home to them that the union cannot be fully effective on their behalf unless they put more into it than just their dues.

The best of those trained in the first courses should then receive further training in running basic and refresher courses for existing and newly elected staff representatives to ensure that they are fully aware of their rights, responsibilities and methods of operation.

Eventually, a few of the educators should receive yet further training so that they can themselves train the local workers' educators, thus making the union largely self-sufficient in workers' education in its traditional sector of operation.

The workers' education programme outlined may at first sight appear costly, but in practice the main item is the training of the trainers. It may be

possible to negotiate time off from work and worksite facilities for membership education courses; but even if this cannot be done, very little expense need be involved. Many unions run such courses successfully over the weekend in a member's home or a local school or meeting-place with members bringing their own food and doing their own cooking, thus effectively demonstrating the principle of collective self-reliance. The joint resources of the basic unions and the national centre should surely be sufficient to meet the cost of the courses for the training of staff representatives. It might even be considered that there was a case for a special subsidy from the national centre, which would also help to redress the apparent inequity of the standard division of contributions mentioned earlier.

If the full cost of the initial programme proved to be truly beyond available resources, experience would indicate that a sound NUCW proposal, based on a guarantee of follow-up action by the basic agricultural unions, would not find much difficulty in attracting external financing–particularly if, as may reasonably be presumed, it had the support of the national authorities.

As part of the above courses or parallel with them, special training is required in ways of making the membership aware of the possibilities of using local union machinery to develop special services for members; a few people should be trained to assist in the development of such services. As has been seen, the concept of special services is not new to the basic agricultural unions in Cameroon, but they do not yet appear to have appreciated the range of possible activities to the same extent as have rural unions in other developing countries.

The key factors are that the special services should be based on local needs identified by the members; and that, at least in the early stages, they should be run on a self-help basis by the members of the local union unit. Faced with difficulties similar to those reported by Cameroonian workers, and in no better financial circumstances, plantation workers in other countries have used their unions to run local crèches, kindergartens and even schools for the children of working mothers; members' wives or daughters have become teachers when no others were available; simple dispensaries have been developed, stocked and manned; and buses have been secured to take children to school and their parents to market. In all cases the service has been provided out of the work and resources of the members themselves, or out of resources negotiated from the employer, or both.

The matter of special services is particularly important for the members of the basic union who have returned to self-employment, whose numbers seem likely to increase. At present, there is apparently little that the union can offer in the way of services in return for their contributions, except defence of their interests should they again take up paid employment. But as cultivators or artisans they too have needs which could be met through the local union machinery, needs which may well be shared by wage earners whose families also cultivate land. The principles involved are the same: the

identification of the need and the development of the service by the members themselves.

Effective rural development will be attained only with the full participation of the rural population as a whole. That in turn can be achieved only if the right of organisation extends to all rural workers, self-employed as well as wage earners, and if members fully participate in the work and services of the rural workers' organisations.

Notes

[1] Statistics drawn from ILO: *Year Book of Labour Statistics, 1981* (Geneva, 1982), and *FAO Production Yearbook, 1980* (Rome, 1981).

[2] For the text of this Code, see *Legislative Series* (Geneva, ILO), 1974–Cam. 1.

[3] In March 1983, the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, in considering reports submitted by the Government of the United Republic of Cameroon in relation to the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) (ratified by Cameroon in 1960), pointed out that "a provision of this kind restricts the right of workers, without distinction whatsoever, to establish and join organisations of their own choosing (Article 2 of the Convention)". (ILO: *Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations*, General report and observations concerning particular countries, Report III (Part 4A), International Labour Conference, 69th Session, Geneva, 1983.)

[4] IFPAAW: *Report of the Secretariat*, Fourth World Congress, Geneva, 1971.

[5] In 1981, US$1 = 278 CFA francs.

[6] ILO: *Report of the DANIDA/ILO follow-up mission on trade unions and co-operatives, Africa, 29 March-30 April 1975* (Geneva, 1975; restricted).

[7] In considering reports from States Members of the ILO on the Rural Workers' Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141), called for under article 19 of the ILO Constitution, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations observed: "While recalling that rural workers, as defined by Article 2 of the Convention, have the right to establish organisations, the Committee considers that the existence of co-operatives or other types of associations should not prevent rural workers, whether wage earners or not, from setting up trade unions as the most advanced form of organisation and the one best able to create the necessary conditions for true development in rural areas, particularly in the most underprivileged areas." (ILO: *Freedom of association and collective bargaining*, General survey by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Report III (Part 4B), International Labour Conference, 69th Session, Geneva, 1983.)

[8] The two questions are by no means purely theoretical. The 1975 workers' education mission referred to earlier (note 6 above) observed that at that time the NUCW finances were under the control of the then Minister of Labour (who was shortly afterwards replaced) and that one agricultural basic union reported that in March it was still awaiting its share of the contributions due in the previous October. A detailed history of the union that started as the CDCWU would also record a period, shortly after the Corporation became nationally controlled, when check-off payments were completely withheld from the union. (IFPAAW: *Report of the Secretariat*, Fourth World Congress, Geneva, 1976.)