

Sector summits

unions take the lead

Cosatu affiliates operating in nine sectors are engaging with the National Labour and Economic Development Institute (Naledi) in a process of policy development and pre-negotiation preparations to ensure sector job summits take place. This includes developing policies relevant to sectors and ensuring that affiliate's membership are aware of the issues and prepared for the negotiations with government and business. The timing of the upcoming summits is appropriate, given the government's newfound attraction to economic policy with more than just 'macroeconomic stability' as its goal.

Sector Job Summit Project

In order to ensure that labour goes to the negotiation table fully prepared and with solid mandates from membership; Cosatu, Naledi and affiliates in the relevant sectors have developed partnerships that collectively make up the Sector Job Summit Project. The following are the sectors and lead unions, which are involved in the partnership:

- Processing (Fawu) (Numsa)
(Ceppwawu)
- Paper (Ceppwawu) (Saccawu)
- Tourism (Saccawu)
- Technology & Communications (CWU).

The above affiliates are the lead unions in the relevant sectors. However, there are overlaps of sectors and other Cosatu

At the presidential Jobs Summit in October 1998, it was agreed that sector summits should be held in those sectors which either had a high potential to create or lose jobs. Mandy Moussouris and David Jarvis explore what unions are doing to prepare for them.

affiliates as well as unions from other federations who are included in the reference groups which drive the research process.

The main aim of the project is to develop comprehensive research in the sectors as a foundation on which to build comprehensive industrial policy proposals. Given the culture of participation within the South African labour movement, the project also aims to ensure that a broad spectrum of union leadership is involved in the process of policy formulation. To this end, the project engages in capacity building of union researchers, seeks ways to involve membership in the research process and ensures dissemination of information through membership education and publications.

After the summits, the project will

monitor the implementation of the policies and processes agreed to by the summits and continue to find ways to bolster labour's capacity in this area. In relation to the capacity-building component and participation of general membership around industrial policy issues, labour's development of industrial strategy is a highly inclusive procedure.

Numsa shows the way

A good example of this is the process Numsa has embarked upon. The union has adopted a two-pronged strategy, which involves mobilising its members around key sector job summit demands (or claims). Simultaneously the union will engage government and business in the sector job summits. The union is mobilising its leadership, membership and officials in key strategic regions to strengthen its negotiators in the sector job summit negotiations.

The union has set up industrial strategy teams in all its regions across relevant sub-sectors. These teams have assisted with the research in the respective sub-sectors. One of the valuable lessons learnt from preceding sector job summits is that labour can only achieve substantial gains in the process if it is fully supported by effective mobilisation of membership. Mobilisation is also an effective way to popularise the sector summit process and demands that are being tabled as part of the negotiation process.

Including the union membership in the process is a guaranteed recipe for success and is an important part of strengthening and building capacity in the union to engage in industrial policy development long after the summits have been held.

Workshops have been held in all the affiliate unions to interrogate the research findings and re-focus the research in order to ensure it addresses the concerns and

problems faced by union membership. What has emerged from this process for the researchers, is a much greater understanding of conditions in individual factories which has in turn assisted in the development of a working class understanding of the Industry.

The process has also assisted shopstewards in locating their experiences and knowledge into a broader understanding of their sector and of the SA economy as a whole. Key strategies that have been developed hinge on an understanding of industrial policy that focuses on more than just performance of companies. Research and policy development hinges on four cornerstones:

- Ensuring that the emphasis of sector strategy and the policies that flow out of these are on the creation of sustainable, quality jobs.
- Basic wage goods should be aimed at alleviating the effects of poverty on the poor, for example the provision of housing and ensuring food security.
- The strategy should deepen democracy and representation within sectors. This should be at the level of the workplace, ownership and within institutions that impact on the sector.
- The strategy should aim at improving the lot of rural communities, women and Southern African countries.

The role played by Cosatu and Naledi in the process is to link various findings and strategies in an attempt to feed directly into broader debates around industrial strategy and the development of a national growth path. The focus of the sector job summits is essentially about looking at how sectors can be developed in ways that lead to economic growth, while addressing developmental and working class issues.

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