



PSI Inter-Americas

Action Plan 2015-2020

ADVANCING TRADE UNION RIGHTS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES IN PUBLIC HANDS

Public sector workers and their families throughout the Americas are experiencing major challenges in their working and daily lives. Many of these challenges are as a result of the global crisis that started in 2008 and which we are still experiencing five years later. At the same time, there are increasing attacks on the trade union rights and especially public sector trade union rights. Some of these attacks have been head on, others have been more subtle. And these attacks have been experienced in every country in the Americas – large and small. There are also opportunities for working women and men to create a better Americas. There are opportunities to create a region that meets the needs and aspirations of citizens.

Immediately after PSI's 2012 Congress in Durban, the new Secretary-General, Rosa Pavanelli, initiated a series of consultations and a strategic planning process that focused attention on the best ways to deal with these challenges. "*Working for the Alternative: Implementing PSI's mandate in 2013 and beyond*", serves as the frame of reference for constructing and implementing the Inter-American Action Plan for the next five years.

It sets out the challenges facing the peoples of the Americas, our priorities and the broad guidelines on how to coordinate and further develop our work. It emphasizes the key roles that (sub)sectors will play. "*PSI occupies a unique place in the trade union movement... For workers in these public services we are their voice in international forums and the only body coordinating global public sector union action*".

Structure of the Action Plan

Through local, national and sub-regional consultations, our affiliates in the Americas initiated a blue print for this Action Plan. This started in early 2013 by identifying strategic priorities, approaches to realise PSI's vision and mission. "Working for the Alternative" also assisted affiliates in defining specific action steps that need to be taken during the period between the two Regional Conferences.

Given the wide diversity of our affiliates in the Americas, this Action Plan seeks to provide a framework on which more specific and targeted actions will rest. The Americas comprises countries at various stages of development: the developed countries in North America, high- and middle-income as well as least developed countries in the Caribbean and Latin America and the large emerging economies in South America. Affiliates in the various sub-regions, through their advisory committees (SUBRACs), will then be able to specify the key issues for each sector or country. For each year of the Action Plan, sub-regions will define their priority areas of focus. Such a focus will ensure optimal use of available resources and will also facilitate clear and objective evaluation in each area and sector represented by the PSI. The Inter-Americas Action Plan therefore defines an important aspect of PSI's global policies and strategies.

Trade union rights, collective bargaining in the public service and the fight against privatisation are key priorities for all affiliates throughout the Americas. In comparison with the 1990s, democracy has progressed, especially in Latin America. The election of popular and progressive governments more attuned to working class needs, has meant that more people are witnessing and experiencing more social improvements and more social inclusion. But there is also a contradiction - the same cannot be said about public sector labour rights. Even in the presence of collective bargaining in a number of countries, it still remains an unsettled issue in many of the larger countries throughout the region. And in others, there are subtle attempts to replace it with so-called consultations. The collective bargaining process, social dialogue and genuine consultation are all under threat and together they remain a key focus of PSI's work in all countries in the region.

Effective implementation of the Action Plan relies on strong and targeted collaboration with:

- the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA),
- other global union federations (GUFs) present in the region,
- regional and sub-regional offices of the International Labour Organisation (ILO),
- the various non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations with whom PSI shares common goals,
- national regional and international networks that are also promoting quality public services.

This Action Plan revolves around the 4 priorities presented in the document "*Working for the Alternative*" and approved by the Executive Board. The plan also expands on and adapts the document to the realities faced by the region's working women and men and their families.

1. Fighting privatisation;

- 2. Advancing trade union rights;**
- 3. Influencing global policy/global governance;**
- 4. Building trade union membership and growth with equal opportunities.**

The various workshops and discussions organised prior to the Inter-American Regional Conference (IAMRECON) will help us to further define the Action Plan. These workshops and discussions will help us to identify for each priority or issue:

1. The specific actions or activities that we will undertake
2. Those responsible for implementation
3. The internal and external resources we will need
4. The other organisations and networks with which we will need to collaborate

There are some critical things that we have to do in order to make positive differences in the lives of working women and men and societies in the Americas. This 2015 – 2020 Action Plan therefore:

- builds on our successes and proposes new approaches
- celebrates who we are
- looks at and prepares us for what lies ahead

1. FIGHTING PRIVATISATION, PROMOTING THE ALTERNATIVES

Over the years, our affiliates have had some success in slowing privatisation efforts. This has been especially in the water supply and sanitation sectors. But the attacks in education support, health and municipal services continue, and in some cases are more coordinated and determined. Working together with like-minded civil society organisations, our affiliates have been able to slow the pace, but there are always new threats and new forms of privatisation. Public Private Partnerships, mutualisation, labour outsourcing, precarious contracts through intermediary firms and other forms of privatisation have spread throughout the region.

Privateers are not necessarily from large developed countries. In some cases there are local and national private companies acting on their own and in others, they are part of regional or international groupings and consortia. Those who drive privatisation are well-coordinated and they operate locally, nationally and regionally, often directed by their global counterparts. They use a variety of means to foster privatisation: international trade agreements, donations to political campaigns and strong lobbying of public budget and loan processes of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and the regional development banks. We also see their influence in the policies and actions of diplomatic and trade missions.

In many countries of the Inter-Americas, the health services sector is a key target for privatisation. Medical tourism, organ transplant services and similar practices are developing throughout the region. The medical and associated pharmaceutical services are designed to make profit and there is little or no focus on improving and servicing the health care needs of communities. The privatization of the health care sector impacts even the power of

communities and their leaders to establish standards of care.

A key component of PSI's strategy is to develop and define specific sectoral approaches to fight privatisation in all its forms and propose alternatives that build fair and sustainable societies. In this regard, PSI Americas will undertake the following broad actions:

- assist affiliates in developing sectoral strategies that focus on providing alternatives to the privatisation models being proposed;
- build the knowledge, skills and competencies among affiliates to engage with transnational companies and corporations that promote privatisation;
- develop profiles of and analyse the major national and transnational corporations (TNCs) in the region that push privatisation;
- compile for affiliates successful strategies and lessons learnt in confronting these TNCs;
- work with affiliates to develop tools and materials to launch and implement pro-public campaigns.

The fight against privatisation and the promotion of alternatives relies heavily on our affiliates' ability to promote the value and contribution of public services to local, national and regional development. This requires our affiliates to demonstrate credibility, integrity and competence in campaign actions. PSI Americas will therefore:

- use PSI's global reputation and reach to enhance the local, national and regional credibility and reputation of our affiliates;
- work with affiliates to develop tools and capacity to promote and defend quality public services;
- compile and make available to affiliates examples of successful models of public management;
- equip, integrate and involve women activists, young worker activists and activists from other equity-seeking groups as key partners in campaigns and actions to promote the value and benefits of high quality public services.

Tax justice is key in the fight against privatisation. Throughout the region, governments, civil society, trade unions and every citizen are all debating taxation: who pays, who should be paying; how much and why. Questions about harnessing tax dollars to improve societies and build growth are at the heart of discussions about economic growth, public spending and debates about high national debts. Fair and progressive taxation is a key demand from our affiliates. There are tax havens in the Inter-Americas region, used by companies that do not want to pay taxes. Some use vague accounting practices and other means to evade taxation – often with the complicity of States which, in its turn, allow the use of vague accounting mechanisms. Large, well-known companies – Microsoft, Amazon, Starbucks, FedEx, Google – which operate in almost all our countries in the region, some with a physical presence, others through online services - pay no taxes; either in their country of origin or in the various capitals around the world. This is why we must demand from governments a review of non-double taxation agreements signed with tax havens and ask them to support the multilateral agreements of automatic exchange of tax information.

Tax havens deprive state governments of billions of dollars of revenues when corporations and individuals shift earnings to financial institutions in countries where they can reduce their income tax liability. For example, the US federal government loses approximately \$150 billion in federal tax revenues every year due to corporations and wealthy individuals sending their money to offshore tax havens. The federal government shoulders this burden by cutting public services or adding to the national debt. PSI Americas will therefore:

- use its global reputation to build a strong and powerful tax justice campaign (also linked to the anti-corruption campaign);
- assist affiliates in further developing their capacity to research and analyse the tax systems in their countries;
- work with other regional actors to build a broader regional movement for tax justice;
- assist affiliates in developing materials and tools to educate activists on tax justice;
- identify key affiliates to launch anti-corruption campaigns;
- assist affiliates in drafting and promoting whistleblower protection.

Free trade Agreements (FTAs): Especially since Seattle 1999, trade unions and regional and global justice movements have been fighting against unfair trade deals. These deals are part of the process of trade liberalization. Throughout the Inter-Americas, people have seen and are feeling the negative impacts of unfair free trade: loss of local markets especially for agricultural products; depressed wages; lower tax revenues; migration of workers. In addition, workers' rights, women's rights and the rights of indigenous peoples have been targeted and there is a growing lack of respect for basic human rights. Public services, including public procurement, as well as industrial development are also feeling the negative effects. The Doha round of multilateral negotiations is in crisis and privateers are pushing for bilateral and regional free trade agreements. Many countries in the Inter-Americas are at one and the same time engaged in bilateral and multilateral negotiations with Canada, the USA, the European Union and Asia.

The Trade in Services Agreement (TISA), the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement – EU-Canada (CETA) are deep threats to public services. They will trigger further liberalization and make it even harder for governments to regulate private companies that provide public services. These deals can make it impossible for a change in policy and prevent future governments from reversing previous privatizations. These deals will only add to the current landscape of increasing income inequality, stagnating and declining wages and extremely high trade deficits that negatively impact economic growth. This is the situation facing small, medium and large economies throughout the region.

PSI and Our World Is Not For Sale (OWINFS), have launched a global campaign against the TISA, TPP, TTIP and CETA. PSI Americas plays an important role in the campaign and will:

- work with affiliates and allies to raise awareness about the threat to public services, especially in those countries involved in the negotiations;
- continue to develop campaign materials and tools especially for affiliates in the Inter-Americas region;
- build affiliates' capacity to engage in national, regional and global groups and forums on trade and trade-related issues;
- provide guidance to affiliates in establishing working groups with a specific focus on trade and trade-related issues.

2. ADVANCING TRADE UNION RIGHTS, BUILDING SOLIDARITY

Trade unions are human rights organisations and they depend upon the most basic rights – the right to freedom of association and freedom of speech. Trade union rights are human rights and in many countries throughout the Americas, the right to form unions has been hard fought. Yet in the 21st century we are still fighting this battle for the right to form unions, the right to collective bargaining and especially in the last three years, at the International Labour Conference, the right to strike.

PSI will continue to work with its affiliates to fight violations of internationally accepted trade union rights. Together, we will continue to expose to the public, to the ILO, in the media and on the global stage, those governments and anti-democracy organisations throughout the region that act with impunity and deny workers their basic rights.

The struggle for trade union rights is a matter of life and death in the Americas. Guatemala is the most dangerous place to be a trade unionist. And next on the list is Colombia. Other countries in South and Central America (for example, Ecuador, Peru, Honduras, Paraguay) also have tarnished reputations regarding trade union rights. And in recent years, some state governments in the USA, and provincial and federal governments in Canada have violated and rolled-back on workers' rights, retreating even more with union and labor rights.

There are examples in Guyana and Haïti where governments and legislatures have taken away or reduced hard-fought collective bargaining rights or some deny them outright, especially in the public service. Some governments and employers in the Caribbean are using the financial crisis and the high national debts as reasons for not engaging in the collective bargaining process.

PSI Americas will work with affiliates in the region to:

- improve and expedite our responses in the most urgent cases of rights abuses;
- further develop capacity to use the ILO's supervisory and reporting mechanism to file complaints.

It is through our collective strength, in the (sub)region and globally that we are able to win victories. Well-coordinated solidarity actions on the sub-regional, regional or global stage have had positive results.

We will continue to build solidarity not only within sectors but between sectors. And it is even more important now for us to build that solidarity across wider civil society groups. And in particular, PSI Americas will work with affiliates in the region to:

- use the reach of Labourstart and similar organisations and platforms to launch campaigns in defence of trade union rights in the Americas;
- develop strong, powerful national and regional campaigns in support of trade union rights;
- increase the visibility of regional vice presidents in trade union rights campaigns;
- continue to provide attention to the causes behind the migration of workers, particularly in the health sector.

3. INFLUENCING GLOBAL POLICY AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

There are both challenges and opportunities for PSI affiliates in participating in genuine consultations and dialogue with regional inter-governmental institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Organisation of American States (OAS), MERCOSUR (Mercado Común del Sur) the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and other (sub) regional groupings,

The regional arms of United Nations organisations are also important points of contact, especially in relation to sectoral and crosscutting issues such as health (PAHO), women, (UN WOMEN), sustainable development (UNDP), the environment (UNEP) and other regional arms of UN organisations. A key global governance issue that deserves our full attention is that of free trade agreements. Increasingly, these agreements are attacks on public services and labour rights. PSI opposes loans that directly or indirectly destroy public services. Quality public services for all provide the important building blocks for countries to build and maintain fair and sustainable societies.

PSI Americas will:

- coordinate efforts, activities and campaigns to strengthen our affiliates' capacity to participate in consultations with regional governance organisations;
- coordinate and organise actions to establish labour protection safeguards in loan agreements from the World Bank and IADB; always fighting against privatization arrangements and struggling for the defense of quality public services;
- assist affiliates in building a strategy, developing and delivering key messages at the national, sub-regional and regional levels in the ILO and , regional governance institutions.

Regional integration

The regional integration movements (MERCOSUR, CARICOM, UNASUR and others) are all part of the regional governance network and deserve the attention from PSI affiliates. Their participatory forums should include the participation, whenever it is possible, of our affiliates, who should constantly evaluate the usefulness of these forums in the defense of public services and union rights. Regional integration is seen as key to the development as it is seen as a clear strategy identified by many governments, especially in the South, to foster development. We also recall that PSI represents the workers of these international institutions

4. TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP AND GROWTH

PSI's ability to achieve priorities, advance on crosscutting issues and extend still further existing sector coordination will depend directly on our growing as an organisation: increasing the number of new affiliates, as well as increasing our current membership to mobilise more collective strength and strengthen the affiliate unions. PSI will give greater priority to its activities with a sector focus, to structure each of the sectors represented in PSI and so facilitate the organisation of common regional and national struggles, together with campaigns against the international forces that promote privatisation in the region. Each sector must be equipped with a coordination and minimum structure to facilitate execution of a work plan in the intervals between meetings and, at the same time, be responsible for developing the sector work plan, the priority features of which should be directed to achieving greater influence on international banks and other intergovernmental institutions that promote negotiation processes on trade agreements, such as the TPP, TISA, US-LAC, and others that are no less important, so as to criticise these pernicious agreements and defend trade union rights and quality public services.

We must also center our efforts among our affiliates to promote new opportunities for trade unions to develop, so as to increase their organizational and political lobbying capability through tools that also help to unionise more public sector workers and, at the same time, strengthen them in their collective bargaining and social dialogue. It would therefore be important to build discussion forums for everyone to have knowledge about the different ways countries in the region have been using to restrict trade union rights and opportunities for growth (ie: Court decisions, lack of action on complaints ...).

It is PSI's goal to grow by 1 million members by 2018, and the region has opportunities to make a notable contribution.

It is important to strengthen unions in the Americas, ensuring that they're in inclusivity. It is important to improve and increase democratic structures, ensure that there is succession planning that creates the environment for healthy changes in leadership and where membership is involved and engaged. In addition, the region will establish annual sectoral growth targets and organisational priorities.

ORGANISING AND COORDINATING THE SECTORS

In recent years, PSI's capacity to organise and coordinate trade union sectors has grown enormously, and it has created many opportunities to strengthen the struggles in each of them. On the one hand, PSI has strengthened organisations, such as ULATOC (Public Control Organisations), CLTPJ (Judiciary) and CONTUA (University Administrative). On

the other, it has fostered regional confederations such as CONTAGUAS (Water) and CONTRAMA (Municipal workers). For some sectors, such as education support/health/social services and electricity, we have not yet managed to define an organisational model, while in others, such as Central Administration, we are working in the form of a network. In nearly all cases, the trade unions of Latin America have started to come together, probably facilitated by geography and language. In all of them, however, there is a will to extend this model of regional and world organisation. However, we have yet to advance in organising education support services, legislative, police and customs personnel, with whom we started to work in the last period.

We must continue working with each sector, supporting them in their needs, to the extent of PSI's means and structure, always prioritising opportunities for growth. It is also important that sectoral networks take into consideration the existing realities, structures and arrangements in PSI's national and regional coordinating bodies. The continued exchange of information and experiences will develop the sectoral networks and will add to PSI's strength and influence. Collective bargaining in each sector will be a priority.

Each sector, through its internal discussions, should at each moment decide its priority actions and how to implement them, and designate those responsible. Accordingly, the general plan will serve as a matrix for the sector, steering in a single direction for all working men and women under a regional and world framework. This will be the strength of PSI and its affiliates to **ADVANCE TRADE UNION RIGHTS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR QUALITY SERVICES UNDER PUBLIC CONTROL.**

EQUALITY, EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

PSI has played a leading role in advancing gender equality and gender equity issues. Through the development of sound policies and practices, there has been a growth in women activists as well as a stronger focus on integrating gender in trade union work. Over two-thirds of those who work in public services are women and through their work, these women have been able to build better lives for themselves and their families. The public service is a source of good quality jobs for many women in the Americas. In addition, quality public services help to reduce inequalities, providing the services that women need and that help to bring them out of poverty. There are many success stories that highlight the advancement of women in the Americas over the years. But there is still a lot more to be done – both in unions and in wider society.

PSI Americas will:

- assist affiliates in integrating and involving women activists as key partners in all campaigns;
- work with affiliates to develop the capacity of women activists to develop and lead campaigns and actions that promote quality public services;
- provide tools and materials to help affiliates improve implementation of gender mainstreaming policies in trade unions;
- support affiliates in developing appropriate messaging and empowering women

activists to speak at regional and international forums.

Over the last four years, affiliates in PSI Americas have benefitted from the increased involvement of young workers in trade union campaigns and activities. The network of young workers is widening and at the same time, it is deepening solidarity between and among affiliates in the Americas. Our young trade union activists play a key role in the future growth and development of PSI. They are key partners in developing strategies and taking action to promote the value of public services and building the strength and influence of public service sector trade unions in the Americas. PSI Americas will:

- develop and structure programmes and activities that specifically engage and integrate young workers and young trade union activists in PSI's campaigns;
- work with young trade union activists to prepare materials and tools that will help to build their knowledge, skills and attitudes as young trade union activists;
- work with affiliates to develop the capacity of young trade union activists to develop and lead campaigns and actions that promote quality public services;
- support affiliates in developing and empowering young workers and activists to speak at regional and international forums.

There is more than enough evidence to show that cuts to public services have disastrous impacts on young workers, persons with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ community, racial and ethnic minorities and other equity-seeking groups. The nature and character of the current globalisation has been at the root of many cases of increased racial and ethnic tensions as well as an increase in xenophobia.

PSI Americas will:

- work with affiliates to ensure the integration and involvement of members from equity-seeking groups in trade union campaigns and actions;
- prepare materials and develop tools that will help affiliates in their fights against all forms of discrimination;
- provide materials and tools that will help affiliates build capacity to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers and their families;
- continue to work with affiliates on race, ethnicity and LGBTQ issues, developing materials and capacity to end discrimination and guarantee human and trade union rights.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE AMERICAS

The crises have highlighted the vulnerability of many of the countries in the Americas. Large economies in the north and south are showing some signs of recovery, but there has been a roll-back of public services and benefits to many workers. There is a jobs deficit and workers and their organisations are fighting even harder for decent jobs. It is increasingly difficult for young people to find jobs, far less decent jobs.

Smaller economies in the south are struggling in an environment of high debt and low

growth, with some Caribbean economies having decided to seek assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). This has exacted another blow on public services and the workers who deliver these much needed services.

Climate change is another important issue in the region, with vast ecosystems under serious threat. The Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and coastal regions in the Americas are struggling to survive. And the impact of climate change on all aspects of productive capacity and everyday life highlight the extreme vulnerability of countries in this grouping.

These and many other factors bring into sharp focus the issue of sustainable development and the role of public services in building fair and sustainable societies. There is a somewhat disproportionate emphasis on the economic aspect of sustainable development and seemingly little recognition that the three pillars (economic, social and environmental) are inter-linked.

PSI Americas will:

- continue to use its international reputation in forums to influence regional and global agendas on sustainable development, especially the post 2015 development agenda;
- work with affiliates to build their capacity to fight for climate justice and a just transition to green jobs and green economies;
- continue to build alliances with like-minded NGOs and networks;
- work with affiliates to reinforce the message that migration is not a tool for development.

LOOKING AHEAD

This action plan takes into account the current challenges that workers in the Americas face. But there are also some new challenges on the horizon, signs of things to come. This glimpse into the future provides opportunities for PSI and its affiliates in the Americas to prepare and plan actions that take advantage of opportunities and fight negative impacts. Unions are living in an increasingly hostile climate. This means that building union strength and influence are key parts of the strategy in the fight for trade union rights. Topics such as the productivity in the public sector – often imposed by international financial institutions –, the restructuring of economies and other issues always bring new challenges that must be answered by the trade union movement. To answer them, we must have clear what role plays PSI in the Americas.