

Training Module of Worker Leaders

Centre for Labour Research and Action

Supported by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung



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Training module for CLRA

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Centre for Labour Research and Action (CLRA) has been active in working with the unorganised sector workers in Gujarat and Rajasthan since the last 15 years. Its work has resulted in the establishment of a number of trade unions across sectors such as agriculture, brick kilns, construction, and cotton ginning. The Unions have undertaken many mass struggles, achieving success leading to wage hikes and improvement of work conditions. The Unions receive hundreds of cases of labour right violations including non-payment of wages, bonded labour, accidents at work place, and violence including sexual violence at work place. The Unions have a strong team that can tackle case work anywhere in Gujarat.

Rationale for the training

However, in spite of these significant achievements, the Unions have not reached a stage of financial viability and the membership base continues to be limited. The Unions are dependent on CLRA for their financial requirements, manpower and administrative costs. It is now increasingly felt that leadership, from within the ranks of the Unions, should emerge so that the Unions become genuine vehicles of workers' aspirations.

It is with this objective in mind that a long-term training programme is being sought to be undertaken to develop a strong politically conscious union cadre so that this impasse is proactively addressed. The programme is planned as a four-week training spread out over a period of four months (1 week per month).

Objectives and outcomes

This training programme will have the following objectives:

1. to develop political consciousness and leadership amongst the workers;
2. to develop a sense of ownership over the Unions;
3. to learn and practice skills to enhance their work in the Unions.

Content of the training programme will aim to ...	Outcomes envisaged
1. Create acquaintance with the unorganised sector, beyond one's own sector	1. Awareness of their own agency;
2. Create awareness of their own agency; increased confidence in their own abilities to solve problems	2. Awareness of individual skills and strengths of members

3. Familiarize them with the laws governing the unorganised sector	3. Increased confidence to deal with routine and daily issues of self and co-workers at work sites
4. Familiarize them with the bureaucratic and police apparatus they will most likely come up against	4. Ability to chalk out a short and medium term plan for the area / organisation
5. Appreciation of the need for a strong organisation	5. Plan to raise the profile of the organisation / TU
6.	6. Increase in the membership base of the Unions.

The success of the training programme could best be judged by the subsequent increase in the membership base of the Unions.

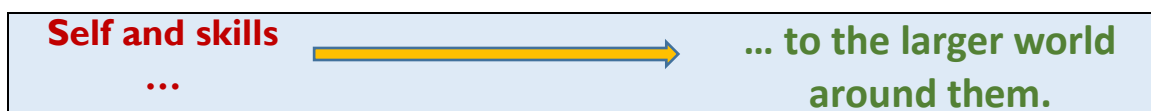
Movement

There appear to be two ways that the training programme could move.

1. One way is to begin with the macro level situation - social, political, economic - and begin to understand it and then move towards organisation and skills base.



2. The other is to begin with practical skill level inputs which makes them feel more in control of their own selves. Over a period of a month or two, the inputs will also lead them to question much of what is around them and their own experiences as well.



Trainees and some pre-requisites

The Union workers have identified some persons with whom they have come in contact in the course of their work. These are persons with potential to shape up as future leaders of the organisations / unions. Many of them have undergone short duration trainings imparted by the Unions. The present training programme plans to include two types of workers: activists favourable to Union and organic leaders.

Nonetheless, it may be useful to have some criteria in mind while choosing potential trainees and a screening process may usefully be developed.

1. Has taken some initiative in his/her group, community;
2. Has a basic literacy;
3. Ability to articulate even somewhat;
4. Has basic people-skills - readiness to answer calls, responsive, ability to listen;
5. Ability to spare time for unremunerated work.

A screening process may be usefully developed.

Pedagogy

Considering the trainee profile, the pedagogy of the training will have to be simple, without overly simplifying the issues or concepts. The input sessions would have to be shorter and more interactive to be effective. The following methods could be usefully integrated into the training programme.

Methods:

- Focussed inputs (brief, interactive)
- Q&A
- Self-reflection and discussion
- Simulation games and role plays
- Case study, news report (paper or electronic) or documentary analysis
- Practicing skills and feedback
- Simulation exercises
- Case studies / news reports and analysis
- Individual and/or group presentations
- Cultural evenings

Potential trainers

In-house trainers of CLRA	Sahiyar (POSH)	Sagar Rabari	Amit Bharadwaj
Vijay Parmar	Mukesh Lakum		

Content

2 days

1. Introduction to the programme, its rationale and content

Note:

Will be done by CLRA member/s.

2. Rules of engagement, daily chores, responsibilities, ... (from SSC)

Note:

The rules will be set for all the 4 weeks. Therefore some amount of explaining of the rationale and practicing them will have to be done.

Some amount of time may be set aside during the day, either at the beginning or at the end, to provide feedback on how they have performed vis-à-vis their task.

3. Introduction and icebreaking

Introduction of the participants

Note:

This should be slightly intensive, given that these people are intended to be resources to one another in the unions and will be called upon to engage and interact with one another over a long period.

Evening 1: Visit to a 'development' site (will have to be specific to the venue of the programme)

Evening 2: Group reading of the newspaper or discussion on the day's news

2 days

4. Getting to know the situation of different unions/sectors of employment (brick kiln, agriculture, sugarcane, construction, textile, ...) – understanding different streams of work – key issues and concerns of workers in different unorganised sectors

Note:

Some persons from each sector could make a brief but impactful presentation on each sector – with audio-visual inputs. The presentations should engage the rest of

the viewers. They could / should be helped to make this presentation.

Each presentation can be followed by Q&A session. This could be treated as a skill building session also where asking questions, good questions, short questions and answering the question, not digressing ... are practiced and feedback provided. Essentially unlearning a lot of what has been taught by TV!!

5. Who are the powerful people in the area? In the work sector? In the community? In the family? (Kiski chaltihai-SSC)
6. Power structure analysis (O4P)

Evening 3: Watching a documentary or feature film (to be selected)

Evening 4: Debriefing on evenings 1, 2, and 3.

1 day Skill mapping: Group

7. Brief input on group and requirements.
8. What skills does the group require?
9. What skills does the group require? What skills does the group have? Who has what skills?

Note:

This is by way of mapping the skill requirements, abilities and future needs. This is by way of mapping group skills (in consonance with individual goals and inclinations). This can help in preparing group plans.

This is a group exercise.

This could be a guided exercise.

Evening 5: Group task to organise a cultural evening

1 day Skill mapping: Individual

10. What are your aspirations?
11. What skills do you have? What skills do you want to acquire?
12. What hurdles do you face in your work? How would you like to face them?

Note:

It is important to build a goalpost for the trainees (could be individual or could be group or community/area). It could perhaps motivate them to plan and therefore to engage with it more rigorously. It MUST NOT BE idealistic and impractical but

realistic, doable, achievable and relatable.

This is an *individual* exercise for self-reflection and planning. To be done keeping the group plans and goals in mind.

This could be a *guided* exercise.

Evening: Debriefing of evening 5.

6 days

13. Understanding our origins starting from the origin of the Universe, Origin of Life and Humans to formations of villages, towns, kings, castes, classes, religion and other social constructs through the development of gathering –hunting, cattle rearing and agriculture. (SSC)
14. social structure – caste, discrimination, gender,
15. Gender and patriarchy
16. Caste and ‘Brahminism’ and ‘Brahminical patriarchy’
17. Adivasi question – displacement and migration and marginalisation
18. Process of displacement, forced migration and urbanisation
19. Crisis of agriculture
20. Process of communalisation

6 days

21. Looking at history of human kind with the eyes of oppressed and attempt to understand the evolution of economic system. (SSC)
22. Understanding ‘development’ – unpacking the term and its politics
23. First World – Third World
24. Ecological crisis and its roots – poor as worst affected (including climate refugees)
25. Fragmentation of the marginalised as a group – peculiar character of Indian social structure
26. Crisis of social security
27. Self and the Constitution – Fundamental rights – individual in the constitution vs. family/group
28. Power structure – democracy and its practice (in the Indian situation)
29. Rights as citizens

6 days

30. Input on:
 - History of the labour movement – globally and nationally
 - Discussion on the unorganised sector
 - Characteristics of unorganised workers and future challenges (automation?)

Note:

There should be an input. However, it needs to be made interactive or interspersed

with some group work so as to retain attention and help in absorption. Visual inputs (videos, YouTube spots etc.) may also be included.

31. Need for organising

- Why to organise / unionise?
- How to organise?
- Shallow mobilising vs. deep organising (O4P)
- Difficulties in organising the unorganised (“...lifeblood of these movements was mass participation by ordinary people, whose engagement was inspired by a **cohesive community** bound by a sense of place...” (McAlevey, No Shortcuts) – Neither will be available to the unorganised labour now.

Note:

There should be an input. However, it needs to be made interactive or interspersed with some group work so as to retain attention and help in absorption. Visual inputs (videos, YouTube spots etc.) may also be included. Some amount of group / individual work and plenary may also be attempted.

32. Group work and skills

- Hurdles to group work / work in organisations? Identifying potential challenges, obstacles, hindrances, both external and internal
- Sensitivity to differences – gender, region, language,
- Cooperation, collaboration, trust – Simulation exercises
- Social media – fake news and fact checking (AltNews?)

Note:

These would best be done through participatory methods and simulation exercises followed by rigorous debriefing and feedback session.

33. Public programmes

- how to conceptualise, how to execute,
- How to leverage your grassroots presence – social media presence – updates – TV talks...
- Importance of winning small battles – how to strategise for that

Note:

This should be an intensive effort to practice the skills of conceptualising, building alliances, mobilising support, etc.

34. Financial viability – possibilities and plans – allocation and assumption of responsibilities – accountability measures

35. Increasing membership – membership drives, hurdles and challenges – plans for sustaining them in the TU
36. Bureaucratic and police apparatus – how to negotiate the maze – how to make demands
37. Soft skills necessary for that – practicing them (negotiating with bureaucrats or police; writing memoranda – when, how; making and formulating demands; building pressure; pressnotes – importance, who to send; ...)

Note:

This should be an intensive effort to practice the skills of confronting, negotiating, asserting, etc. Each participant must be able to practice and participate at least once.



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Centre for Labour Research and Action

Centre for Labour Research and Action (CLRA) promotes workers' rights in the vast informal sector economy of India. It undertakes research to document the work conditions in the informal sector followed by policy advocacy with the state so that the workers receive their due entitlements. The centre has done pioneering work in documenting the seasonal migration streams that feed labour to labour intensive industries like agriculture, brick kilns, building and construction. Its work has facilitated development of an alternative paradigm of organizing workers that factors in the constant movement of workers, the critical role of middlemen, the nature of production process, and the socio-economic profile of workers.

Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung

The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) is German-based foundation working in South Asia and other parts of the world on the subjects of critical social analysis and civic education. It promotes a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic social order, and aims to present members of society and decision-makers with alternative approaches to such an order. Research organizations, groups working for social emancipation, and social activists are supported in their initiatives to develop models that have the potential to deliver social and economic justice.

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