

2015 Annual Report



The 29th Annual general Meeting of the Labour Research Service, 21 September 2015

The Chairperson's Report

The board discharged its duties well in 2015 and continued to fulfill a valuable oversight role for the organisation. The board met five times in 2015 and achieved quorum on each occasion.

Date	Total Attended	Attending	Women
02 March 2015	4	Bhekani Ngcobo Trenton Elsley Nyaniso Siyana Sidney Kgara	0
23 March 2015	6	Bhekani Ngcobo Sidney Kgara Nyaniso Siyana Trenton Elsley Nadeema Syms Stephanie Duffy	2
04 May 2015	5	Bhekani Ngcobo Trenton Elsley Nyaniso Siyana Sidney Kgara Nadeema Syms	1
21 September 2015	4	Bhekani Ngcobo Trenton Elsley Nyaniso Siyana Nadeema Syms	1
02 November 2015	5	Bhekani Ngcobo Trenton Elsley Nyaniso Siyana Sidney Kgara Stephanie Duffy	1

The trade union membership of the LRS remained steady in 2015.

LRS Member Unions 2014/2015	Acronym	Estimated Membership
Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers Union	CEPPWAWU	80 681
Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa	DENOSA	80 000
Food and Allied Workers Union	FAWU	127 000
Health and Other Service Personnel Trade Union of South Africa	HOSPERSA	66 721
Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union	IMATU	72 246
Metal Electrical Workers Union of South Africa	MEWUSA	17 180
National Education, Health and Allied workers Union	NEHAWU	276 486
National Union of Mineworkers	NUM	270 649
National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa	NUMSA	320 000

South African Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union	SACCAWU	150 000
South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union	SADSAWU	7 200
South African Democratic Teachers Union	SADTU	253 039
South African Municipal Workers Union	SAMWU	161 490
South African Transport and Allied workers Union	SATAWU	170 000
Transport Omnibus Workers Union	TOWU	3 000
Total	15 Unions	2 055 692

The 28th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the LRS was held on 21 September 2015.

The nine member trade unions present elected the following individuals to the board of directors.

Clement Chitja (CEPPWAWU)

Sydney Kgara (NEHAWU)

Bhekani Ngcobo (NUM)

Nyaniso Siyana (NUMSA)

Stephanie Duffy (SACCAWU)

Samuel Fenyane (SADTU)

It is with great sadness that we learnt of the untimely passing of its newest board member, Comrade Samuel Fenyane, early in 2016. We extend our condolences to his family, friends and comrades.

The LRS suffered the tragic loss of one of its dearest staff members and comrades in January of 2016. The words most used to describe Michelle Taal after her passing were intelligence, warmth and humility. These are rare qualities, exceptionally so when they are all present in one person. Michelle led our Transforming Corporate Governance programme, which is an important avenue of work that links South African trade unions with their counterparts on the continent and globally. Michelle Taal leaves us with a very fine body of work and some of the best resources that the LRS has to offer. Michelle is sorely missed. Her legacy lives on in the hearts, in the minds and in the work of all her interacted with her.

The board extends its admiration to the staff of the LRS for the manner in which they dealt with a difficult year. It is a testament to the spirit within the organisation that it is able to weather adverse conditions and still deliver a significant service to the trade union movement.

The Directors Report

The international donor environment is highly stressed. The global financial meltdown and the Syrian crisis are more recent dynamics putting further strain on labour-oriented donor funding. The fragmentation of the trade union movement in South Africa certainly weakens labour hand. There is also uncertainty about what a changed landscape would look like. This presents us with further complexity in the work of supporting and developing trade unions. The year under review required great individual and group effort on the part of the staff of the LRS. The spirit of the individuals who make up the organisation, along with the trust and support of our many stakeholders and role players, takes us into our thirtieth year. This is no small achievement. The ability of this small organisation to make a disproportionately large contribution to workers and their organisations remains a source of great pride to us all.

Influence and change

It is no simple matter to track the causal relationship between our interventions and subsequent shifts in behavior or organisational and institutional policy. There is a range of variables influencing outcomes in the real world.

The main contribution of the LRS is to build unions through leadership development by cultivating new layers of worker leaders and supporting existing role-players, especially women in unions, organisers and negotiators.

The LRS faced the year with a total staff complement of eight people. The LRS involved over 3,700 workers and officials directly in its activities during the year and reached many more through its website, publications, presentations and e-subscriber list. This is a brilliant achievement.

The Labour Research Service reached 3,700 individuals directly through its programme activities. Of that number we know that 2,028 were women and 1671 were men. The proportion of woman was therefore over half (55%).

Our programme work facilitated the recruitment of 3,150 new members by trade unions. The LRS e-resource list made 22 resource deliveries to over 2,000 unique subscribers. The LRS website had about 9,800 hits at an average of 816 hits per month.

There is no doubt that many of the spaces that the LRS creates for unionist and other social actors to engage in signify a change in itself. These spaces are different to those found in and around unions. The spaces that we create seek to provide the freedom to share, reflect, listen and learn. These spaces challenge existing hierarchies, value all participants and invite activists to locate themselves in relation to the challenges that they confront, be it gender equality or a campaign for a national minimum wage.

Our work around gender in particular has been successful in building and coordinating stable groups of workers, predominantly women workers, who grapple with different workplace and community issues and display high levels of self-organisation. This is an achievement in itself and creates a real possibility for change that is directed by workers themselves and their organisations.

The Labour Rights for Women Campaign is an example of an intervention wherein the participants display high levels of self-organisation and self-directed activity. There are campaign groups in nine provinces and they are assisted in formulating and mounting activities themselves that further the campaign. We consider this an important dynamic and an outstanding achievement.

The LRS challenges the tendency of labour to talk to itself. There are several examples in our work where we are facilitating the development of linkages between unions and other actors by including a broader range of stakeholders.

Our work in the Vaal region around ways of rooting out gender-based violence brings the perspectives and experiences of traditional healers, the police, unionists, community-based organisations, church groups, community police forums, local radio stations, a university and the departments of community safety department and social development. This exposes the social actors to different voices, perspectives and experiences and opens the possibility of shifting the way issues are understood and ideas about the responses required. Change is then possible within and between groups.

A workers' dialogue on a national minimum wage hosted by the LRS this year included a range of unions drawn from different federations, farmworker organisations, a domestic workers union and unemployed community activists. The involvement of these different voices shifted the complacent approach sometimes taken by unions on the issue of the national minimum wage. Workers in ultra low wage employment were able to bring home to their better-paid comrades just how much a national minimum wage could mean to them. The voices of the unemployed forced everyone to confront the limitations of a minimum wage policy. On the one hand it highlighted the role that a form of social wage could play in complementing a wage policy. On the other hand it helped all of us explore the connections between wage earners and the unemployed.

The debate around the national minimum wage in South Africa is largely confined to a narrow layer of political and trade union leadership, labour officials and academics. Beyond the rhetoric, it is difficult to find evidence of a mass of workers debating the issue in a meaningful way. The work of the LRS on this subject, while modest in scope, is one of few efforts to bridge this divide. The response of workers is always one of appreciation for the opportunity to grapple with the idea, build their understanding of it and locate themselves in relation to it. The participants at the workshop were invited to vote on how much they thought a national minimum wage should be. The majority pegged it at R5000 per month.

The LRS advocates for the consolidation of agreements in collective bargaining, rather than the phenomenon of “one page” agreements that register only a handful of items that changed in a bargaining round and reduce the fuller range of conditions of service in a workplace to phrases like, “Status quo remains”. This abbreviates the body of knowledge and insight we have into bargaining outcomes and limits our ability to properly analyse these important processes. It also serves to undermine continuity in institutional memory. A new negotiator would have to collate agreements over many years in order to arrive at a full understanding of the prevailing conditions in a workplace and this invariably undermines bargaining and bargaining strategy.

This year, regional secretaries of at least three major unions reportedly refused to sign agreements until they reflected the full conditions of service and they could properly assess the quality of what the union was agreeing to. This is an indicator of change.

Organisation

The year under review through up important questions about our organisational form, roles, responsibilities, functions and the way we work together. We have an opportunity to revisit many of our assumptions and the challenge is to follow through on this.

We restructured our finance management and administration function in this period. I am happy to report that we have seen an improvement in both the quality of outputs and the cost to the organisation of this important function.

A general decline in worker education initiatives and the difficulty in raising funds to support the trade union library & archive have meant that this resource of the LRS has been underutilized and underfunded for some years now. We will now target

strategic partnerships in order to ensure that this unique collection of material is available to unions and scholars alike.

Cooperation to expand influence

The LRS is engaged in a continuous process of renewing established relationships and cultivating new relationships that hold possibilities for strategic cooperation.

These include:

International solidarity support organisations

Community-based organisations

Government departments

South African Trade unions in a range of sectors

South African trade union federations

Global union federations

Academic institutions

Our relationship with the ILO has deepened and now includes work on the national minimum wage and sexual discrimination.

The Gender Programme

The Labour Rights for Women (LRW) Campaign focuses on empowering women to defend their rights in the workplace strengthen women's participation and leadership in collective bargaining and social dialogue. The campaign is coordinated by the four trade union federations in South Africa and supported by the LRS.

In 2015 campaign coordinators report 1509 new trade union recruits of which 311 are under the age of 35. 23 women were newly elected into leadership and decision-making positions and 15 into negotiating teams. The Campaign now exists in all 9 provinces with functioning campaign teams in all the provinces.

LRW Activities 2015		
Tackling Spread of Violence	Women's Participation in Unions &	Bargaining for Gender Equality

against Women Workers			Access to Leadership/Decision-Making Positions					
Name of Activity	Date	Province	Name of Activity	Date	Province	Name of Activity	Date	Province
LGBTI Workshop Rights Dialogue	23-Sept-15	Limpopo	Planning Meeting with ITUC	06-Feb-15	Gauteng	LRW Employment Equity Workshop	21-Apr-15	Limpopo
LRW Participation in Soweto Pride	26-Sept-15	Gauteng	National Strategic Planning Workshop with 7 Provinces	12-13-Feb-15	Gauteng	Workplace visits	Apr-15	Limpopo and Gauteng
LRW participation in Action Aid Networking Meeting on young women's livelihoods	16-18-Nov-15	Gauteng	Meeting, National Federation coordinators	25-Mar-15	Gauteng	Workshop, Durban LRW Gender and Collective Bargaining	27-May-15	Kwa Zulu Natal
LRW workshop on sexual harassment	24-Nov-15	Gauteng	LRW Northern Cape Launch	6-8-May-15	Northern Cape	LRW Women's Day Celebration	11-Aug-15	Gauteng
LRW, GBV and HIV/Aids workshop	02-Dec-15	Eastern Cape	Cape Town LRW Strategic Planning	28-May-15	Western Cape	Workshop on- "How gendered is minimum wage?"	02-Sept-2015	Gauteng
Workshop, 16 Days of Activism	04-Dec-15	Free State	LRW Eastern Cape Launch	2-5-June-15	Eastern Cape	LRW workshop on new amendments to labour	17-Oct-15	Limpopo
Workshop, 16 Days of Activism	08-Dec-15	Kwa Zulu Natal	LRW participation in ITUC Action Aid Network	10-June-15	Gauteng	LRW organising vulnerable workers workshop	17-21-Oct-15	Limpopo
Workshop on 16 Days of Activism and GBV	09-Dec-15	Mpumalanga	LRW participation in COSATU Gender Congress	9-12-June-15	Gauteng	LRW Workshop on Maintenance Amendment Act	20-Oct-15	Limpopo
			LRW participation in COSATU young women engagement	29-Aug-15	Gauteng	LRW March Cancer awareness	30-Oct-15	North West
			Women and Heritage Day Celebration	26-Sept-15	Gauteng	LRW workshop on women and	20-Nov-25	Gauteng

						public transport		
			Training, ILO, UN Women- young women leadership training	6-7- Oct- 15	Gauteng	Workshop focussing on occupational health and safety with gender focus	07- Dec- 15	Free State
			LRW participation in FEDUSA gender audit presentation	09- Oct- 15	Gauteng			
			LRW/ILO young women leadership training	30- Nov- 04- Dec- 15	Gauteng			
			LRW team evaluation meeting	03- Dec- 15	Free State			
			Cape Town evaluation meeting	04- Dec- 15	Western Cape			
			LRW National Evaluation Meeting	9-10- Dec- 15	Gauteng			

Our work around transforming social norms underpinning violence against women and gender based violence included two collective impact, multi-actor, dialogical models in partnership with Gender at Work.

The Letsema project in the Vaal Community includes women and men, trade unions, older people and youth, church leaders, members of athletic associations, traditional healers, LGBT groups, Government departments - to identify and implement the collective actions necessary to create gender equal cultural norms. Over the past year the LRS has supported Letsema action groups with a series of community dialogues and advocacy programs connecting with over 1000 community members and workers in the Vaal.

At the beginning of 2015 LRS supported the trade union HOSPERSA to initiate the Meadowlands Clinic pilot project in Soweto. A core team consisting of participants from the trade unions HOSPERSA; NEHAWU; PSA and DENOSA, the local Clinic Health

Committee and District Health Forum, Lifeline and the Peoples Health Movement, the South African Police Services, local community newspapers and church groups, was formed to coordinate the project. Working with the framing question “What it will it take to create a Meadowlands Clinic and broader health system with 0% Gender Based Violence?” a series of dialogues with the community and a range of actors involved in the health system has been facilitated. Thus far project outcomes have included improved staff- client relations in dealing with gender based violence, improved clinic infrastructure promoting safety and security; a strengthening of forums facilitating dialogue at different levels i.e. between clients and staff, between staff and the health department and between the community and the health department, a range of community actors e.g. local radio and TV stations have shown commitment to work towards addressing gender based violence in the health system and lastly trade unions operating in the clinic have enhanced their profile as agents for addressing gender based violence.

ILO Pride (Promoting Rights, Diversity and Equality in the World of Work) Project

At the beginning of 2015 LRS was commissioned by the ILO to complete a South Africa Country Report to assess the knowledge gap in the area of LGBTI persons in the world of work including the assessment of social partners in the area of:

- Awareness and orientation towards LGBTI issues
- Awareness of LGBTI discrimination as a workplace issue
- Programmes that tackle LGBTI discrimination directly, and
- Areas of support they could use to up-sale their capacity

The Report, authored by the LRS in partnership with GALA (Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action), will be published at the beginning of 2016.

The participants in the activities of the gender programme were also a channel for introducing discussion on vulnerable workers, a national minimum wage and a decent living level.

Collective Bargaining Support Programme

The LRS authored a booklet, *Towards a South African National Minimum Wage*, that was published by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The booklet draws attention to the various benchmarks and the living wage as a key benchmark in determining a NMW.

The LRS published the *LRS Bargaining Indicator 2015* edition to encompass the concepts and strategies on the minimum wage, living wage and living levels. The LRS contributed four chapters;

- *At what level should a National Minimum Wage in South Africa be fixed? - Eddie Cottle.*
- *The Gap Between a Minimum Wage And a Living Wage In South Africa - Trenton Elsley.*
- *“How Can a National Minimum Wage Contribute To Narrowing The Gender Pay Gap and Moving Us Closer To Gender Equality?”- Nina Benjamin.*
- *Minimum wages in South Africa – George Mthethwa.*

The AWARD wage database, the MNC database and Inflation Monitor are key research and information instruments to develop the capacity of trade unions for collective bargaining. In addition the LRS released snapshots of bargaining outcomes during the year. A record 700 collective agreements were provided by trade unions for the LRS wage database. This is an indicator of our success in engaging with unions to improve their ability to manage information better and collective bargaining agreements in particular.

Besides workshops for sectoral determinations (wholesale & retail sectoral determination), the LRS also received several requests from trade unions to make presentations on collective bargaining and a NMW and Living Wage. LRS also produced tailored bargaining reports for its member unions that reflect trends in the wages and working conditions of workers.

On 8-9 July, LRS organised a national workshop on a National Minimum Wage. It was evident that the participants had not had much opportunity previously to develop their understanding of the national minimum wage. It was equally evident that the participants valued this opportunity to engage on the topic given the absence of discussion and debate within the trade unions. Representatives from COSATU, FEDUSA and NACTU were present and there were 110 participants (43% female and 57% male). This was the first national workshop organised in the labour movement on NMW and LRS sees this as a major accomplishment in assisting labour in building its negotiating and advocacy capacity. The majority position was a national minimum wage set at R5,000 per month.

The SACCAWU workshop on the Hospitality sector & Wholesale Retail Trade Sectoral Determination Submission was quite instructive and exposed the lack of any kind of systematic preparation of the trade unions for collective bargaining. The workshop had lots of participation by shop stewards and officials and made a huge impression on the Pretoria branch chairperson who requested we extend the discussion on a national minimum wage at the shop steward council meeting later in the afternoon. This was the first time that shop stewards had been exposed to a discussion on a national minimum wage in relation to a living wage.

Our workshop with the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM) around organising and recruitment in the construction sector with workers from 9 companies was successful. Workers had never had a discussion on recruitment strategies and how to plan such a strategy. Workers and Officials were taken through a process of developing a company profile, provincial and national planning recruitment and organising processes.

LRS organised an “Organizing Vulnerable Workers and the National Minimum Wage” workshop on 18 October in Limpopo province. There were 77 participants in the workshop with about 66% female participation rate. The vast majority of participants had not participated in any kind of discussion around a national minimum wage in their trade unions.

There was consensus throughout all participants that there is a need for the federations and unions to work together to achieve the NMW and to support and unite workers who are not part of unions. Participants felt that the NMW could be used as organizing campaign for vulnerable workers.

Women constituted about 37% (419 women and 702 men.) of 1,121 of direct project delivery. This includes all the workshops and presentations made by the LRS.

LRS has led on public mobilisation for a national minimum wage and was the first to roll out education workshops with COSATU affiliates. The vulnerable workers task team (VWTT) of COSATU appears to not have met in 2015 and coordinating staff have left leaving a huge vacuum on a possible large scale roll out of workshops.

The publication, *Towards a National Minimum Wage in South Africa* is on both the [ILO website](#) and the [South African History Online website](#). The article, “*At what level should a National Minimum Wage in South Africa be fixed?*” has also been published in the [Global Labour Column](#) and [GroundUp online](#) that focuses on social justice stories in vulnerable communities.

Our interventions around vulnerable workers contributed to over 1,640 workers being recruited in 2015 by three unions in the construction, wholesale and retail and contract cleaning sectors.

The Workers Education and Advocacy Programme

Our education activities in 2015 revolved mainly around developing a study circle facilitators’ course and training 30 facilitators who were mentored to run study circles with voluntary members of trade union and community based organisations.

Research was also conducted on the use and participation of the IFWEA Online

Labour Academy (OLA). The LRS is the first labour organisation in South Africa to develop and run online courses on collective bargaining for trade unions and workers. The LRS used the Online Labour Academy of the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA) as its platform.

Our advocacy activities involved facilitation of an ILO process towards Social Dialogue in the South African Agriculture Sector and a process of the International Transport Federation (ITF) in Southern Africa to build solidarity among transport workers using the transport corridors in the region. The ILO process resulted in a bilateral workshop between representatives of trade unions and employer organisations in the agriculture sector and has opened the door to long term dialogue between the social partners on the sustainability of the sector. The ITF process has resulted in a Southern African Transport Corridors Project that will highlight the conditions of transport workers in the region and build solidarity between transport unions in South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia and Swaziland.

Transforming Corporate Governance

Our work with global union federations deepened in 2015. We support several shop steward company networks. We are asked to share not just our information, our research, but our methods of creating, accessing and sharing information.

We have extended into global networks for the first time in both the mining networks. This idea of partnering with the NGO and of our methodology of empirical research, participatory research, understanding of information and embedding it in the union work cannot be taken for granted, it is an ongoing process that is gaining traction but also requires continued thought and listening. Our partner organisations have their own methodologies and also huge organisational challenges, financial, practical and political, and we have to work within these.

Part of this greater exposure includes the use of our country reporting tool, developed over a number of years, being picked up by the global union to be used in other company networks. This is a useful tool that may change the way at least one part of a global union of 150 million workers engages with its affiliates through a far more participatory process. It goes hand in hand with our method of mapping company operations globally. Mapping exercises are not new to global unions or other global watchdogs and NGOs. However, from my experience our methods of using the country tools, getting the unions to participate and be key agents in the exercise and combining this with our research and administrative support is a new tool and one that is being recognised as more effective in gathering information and in stimulating networks.

The LRS enters networks as a resource, but increasingly we are viewed as part of the global union networks including Shoprite/Checkers, Massmart/Walmart, Pick n Pay, AngloGold Ashanti, SAEN and Anglo American.

We ran a network evaluation process with the various networks in 2015. It was designed to assist the networks to see how far they have come and to understand their strengths and challenges better and it has been invaluable in crafting the work for 2016. It has been a privilege to work with the networks over time, getting to know people and being more comfortably included in their discussions, as well as getting a better feel for how to communicate with them.

We are slowly building partnerships to help expose knowledge of corporate governance to a much wider audience. This kind of work should be useful to activists but is also aimed at opening up discussions in parts of society that do not necessarily take an interest in matters of inequality matters they do not feel it as much in their pockets. We have had economics students from UCT work part time in the TCG programme over the last four years. This experience opened up their way of seeing economics and economic development. This is an important impact.

We create tools that last. We maintain databases that are unique resources for workers and their organisations. These include the Multinational Company (MNC) database, the AGREED collective bargaining agreement database, the database of the SAEN and the AWARD wage database.

The Year Ahead

The LRS will continue to explore organisational structure and ways of working that suit the context. The LRS will cultivate new partnerships as a means of growing human resource capacity and broadening its influence.

The LRS values a Trade Union Movement that is consistently committed in word, action and structure to critical consciousness, participation, democracy, gender equality and solidarity. To this end, the LRS will support the labour movement in developing strategy and in cultivating new layers of progressive leaders. The LRS will maintain a focus on the key processes of organisation and representation. The LRS will maintain a strong interest in transforming the gendered politics of the workplace and the union movement.

The LRS will deliver educational processes and resources for leadership development and capacity development within the labour movement. The LRS will deliver support resources for strategy development, organising, bargaining and campaigns. We will continue to target vulnerable workers and wage legislation as key themes for organisation building.

The LRS will promote and support social dialogue as it intersects with our programmatic themes of gender, bargaining and corporate governance. We will look to broaden the reach of our research and resources through new online mediums.

Next year is the 30th anniversary of the Labour Research Service. We will celebrate this achievement in our work in partnership with all of you that find value in building the vital organs of civil society and thereby deepening democracy.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere appreciation to those organisations, institutions and individuals who chose to work with us in 2015. The LRS cannot do the work that it does without them. We thank our member trade unions and the many comrades who work with us through our programmes to make a contribution to the movement.

Special thanks for their financial support goes to:

Education International

The Gay and Lesbian Archive (GALA)

The International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA)

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Trade Union Competency Centre (TUCC)

FNV Mondiaal

Gender at Work

IndustriAll

The International Labour Organisation (ILO)

The Joint Gender Fund (JGF)

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM)

The Olof Palme Centre

The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS)

The South African Local Government Bargaining Council (SALGBC)

The South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU)

UNI Global Union

Interns & Part Time Contractors

Albin Nordin (OPC)

Alireza Saniei-Pour (UCT)

Jennifer Bonti-Ankomah (University of Ottawa)

Kailey Taplin (University of Ottawa)

Kaitlyn Posselwhite (University of Ottawa)

Robert Fairon (UCT)

Shahreen Shehwar (University of Ottawa)

Zenyuen Pang (University of Ottawa)