

# Annual Report 2024

IMPROVING  
WORKERS RIGHTS  
IN THE WORKPLACE

Development Cooperation  
Programme 2018-2025  
Phase II, 2022-2025

saski

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## 1. Summary

The year 2024 marked the **third year** of SASK's four-year funding period 2022–2025, and the seventh implementation year of SASK's eight-year programme 2018–2025 funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The SASK programme improves the **realisation of human rights in the world of work** by capacitating workers of all genders and their trade unions to become stronger actors in society in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The programme attends to four themes: 1) the fundamental principles and rights at work defined by the ILO, 2) gender equality and non-discrimination, 3) just transition and climate resilience, and 4) digitalisation and new forms of work.

The total **programme budget** was EUR 5.55 million, and expenditures were EUR 5.52 million. Implementation rate was at a very satisfactory level of 99%. The **implementation rate** of the operations in the Global South was **101%**. In total, **30 projects** and **five Quick Action Support initiatives** were implemented, comprising of 594 activities in which 97,368 people participated.

**On the programme's outcome level**, the trade unions supported by SASK are more effectively protecting workers' rights in the programme countries. Through several interventions resulting from the project activities, trade unions supported by SASK have gained more competencies and become stronger actors in society. Additionally, a clear majority of the output level indicators are showing progress and are well on track to achieve targets by the end of 2025.

Some **highlights of the results** on the outcome level include that trade unions supported by SASK reported several achievements in terms of coverage and content of the collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). The number of workplaces covered by new or renewed CBAs increased by 39,413, which is already 99% of the programme's final target. The increased number of workplaces covered by CBAs brings nearly 1,98 million more workers towards living wages and providing better and safer working conditions.

**On the programme's impact level**, the realisation of trade union rights remained largely similar to that in the previous year. Still, some **long-term signs of advancement** are recognisable. Results highlight the coverage of over 800,000 more workers under minimum wage agreements negotiated by SASK's partners across several programme countries. This significant increase reflects the growing impact of partners' collaborative efforts to **promote** fair labour standards. Furthermore, the ratification of *ILO Convention 190* in **the Philippines** and **Zambia** in 2024 marks great milestones in the fight against violence and harassment in the world of work, which particularly benefits women and some discriminated minorities in the world of work.

**Brazil's** improved Global Rights Index country rating will open space to strengthen workers' rights again. Additionally, the successful modification of the "*Omnibus Law*" in **Indonesia** for the benefit of the ordinary workers and the adoption of the *Omnibus Guideline on the Exercise of Freedom of Association and Civil Liberties* in **the Philippines** are further signs of the long-term impact the partners supported by SASK's programme have contributed to.

The **operating environment** is shaped by exceptional uncertainties in Finland and internationally. Global geopolitical tensions and the national political situation in the programme countries have strongly influenced the work of SASK's partners. In many parts of the world, the increasing pressure on freedom of association, as well as violence against human rights defenders and trade union leaders, weakens the possibilities to defend human rights in

the world of work. Therefore, operating has become more challenging in many of SASK's programme countries.



**Picture 1. Fishermen's union member Arnel Badajos repairs fishing nets at one of the MATAPA union's meeting areas in Talisay, the Philippines. Photo: SASK**

In 2024, some steps were taken to enhance the functionality of the **risk management** system. The risk management guidelines and whistleblowing process were refined. The risk related to an unstable operational environment was realised in **Mozambique**. The political instability following the general elections in October 2024 affected the implementation of various projects. However, viable alternatives were identified, which ultimately led to their successful implementation. Also, in **Brazil**, municipal elections influenced the project implementation.

Regarding **domestic operations** in 2024, the focus was on advocacy work and Just Transition as the main theme of communications and global education. The global education activities reached a record number of people through different forms of cooperation with other actors. SASK's biggest event, Solidarity Days, was a success, gathering more than 300 people from Finland and abroad. SASK's website was made more accessible and introduced a new, appealing visual. Significant effort was put into the advocacy work, which resulted, for example, in SASK being invited to several parliamentary committees related to the policy papers aligning Finnish foreign and security policy.

**Finland's development policy** focus areas were renewed in 2024. SASK's work continued to contribute to these focus areas: climate, education, rights of women and girls, and the rights of sexual minorities. The programme also contributed to many Sustainable Development Goals, particularly *SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth*, *SDG 5: Gender Equality*, and *SDG 10: Reducing Inequalities*. All of them are at the core of the SASK programme, and all the projects were aimed at reaching them.

## 2. Implementation of the Programme

SASK's programme consists of operations in the Global South and Finland, both guided by the ILO's fundamental principles and rights at work, as well as SASK's strategic themes. The programme implementation strongly contributes to the *Agenda 2030* and integrates the cross-cutting objectives of the Finnish development policy, applying both mainstreaming and targeted actions in different operations.

The year 2024 was the **third implementation year** of the 2022-2025 funding period. The total programme budget was EUR 5.55 million, and expenditures were EUR 5.52 million. Implementation rate was **99%**. Operations in the Global South accounted for 71% of total expenditure, whereas operations in Finland and regional offices accounted for 20% and administration accounted for 9%.

SASK's operations in the Global South are focused on countries where trade union rights violations are the most serious. Many of these countries are lower- or upper-middle-income countries. Of SASK's operations, **45%** were implemented in **Africa**, **40%** in **Asia**, **13%** in **Latin America**, and **2% globally**. Of the country-specific activities, **29%** were carried out in the **least developed countries (LDCs)**, **32%** in the **lower-middle-income countries (LMICs)**, and **36%** in **upper-middle-income countries (UMICs)**. Some **3%** of the activities were global and regional, with no country breakdown. For more information, see Table 1.

**Table 1. Classification of main programme countries by ODA rating, ITUC Global Rights Index rating (2022-2025), and share of funding in 2024**

Main programme countries	OECD / DAC	ITUC 2022 (1-5+)	ITUC 2023 (1-5+)	ITUC 2024 (1-5+)	ITUC 2025 (1-5+)	Funding for projects EUR	Share (%)	Number of projects
Malawi	LDC	2	2	2	2	124 190	3,2	3
Mozambique	LDC	3	3	3	3	252 943	6,5	6
Nepal	LDC	3	3	3	3	309 602	7,9	5
<b>Total (LDC)</b>						<b>686 734</b>	<b>17,5%</b>	<b>14</b>
India	LMIC	5	5	5	5	243 632	6,2	4
The Philippines	LMIC	5	5	5	5	470 981	12,0	6
<b>Total (LMIC)</b>						<b>714 613</b>	<b>18,2%</b>	<b>10</b>
Brazil	UMIC	5	5	4	4	250 240	6,4	4
Colombia	UMIC	5	5	5	5	187 176	4,8	3
Indonesia	UMIC	5	5	5	5	528 353	13,5	7
<b>Total (UMIC)</b>						<b>965 769</b>	<b>24,7%</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Country-specific projects (total)</b>						<b>2 367 116</b>	<b>60,4%</b>	
<b>Global or thematic multi-country projects (19 countries)</b>						<b>1 544 183</b>	<b>39,6%</b>	
<b>GRAND TOTAL EUR</b>						<b>3 911 299</b>	<b>100%</b>	

The implementation rate of the operations in the Global South was **101%** (2023: 104%). A total of **30 projects** and **five Quick Action Support initiatives** were implemented, comprising 594 activities in which 97,368 people participated. The total budget for the projects was EUR 3.86

million. The realised costs of the projects were EUR 3.91 million (2023: EUR 4.0 million). The state aid carried over from the previous year was also used well.

SASK's projects are planned, monitored, and implemented under **nine sectors**. Figure 1 shows the distribution of expenses by sector.

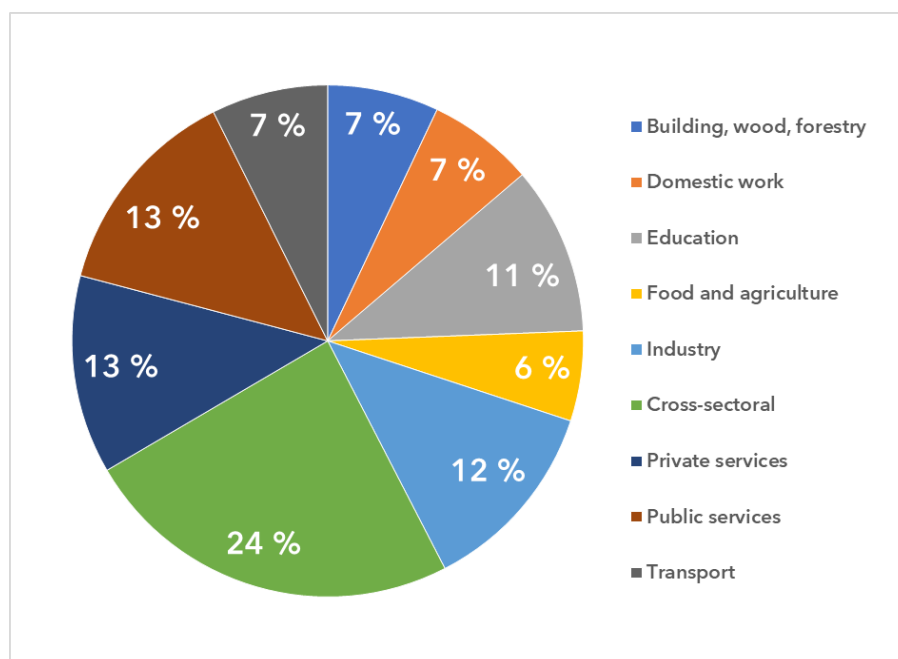


Figure 1. Distribution of expenses by sector in 2024

## 2.1 Changes in Political, Economic, and Civic Space Contexts

In 2024, global developments continued to challenge the foundations of democracy, human rights, and social justice, creating a complex and often restrictive environment for workers and civil society actors. Like 2023 and 2022, the year was marked by sustained repression of civic freedoms, mounting authoritarianism, economic hardship, and widening inequalities. These trends significantly shaped the operational contexts of SASK and its partners across the Global South, while also influencing international solidarity efforts in Finland and beyond.

**Civic space remained under considerable pressure worldwide.** According to CIVICUS<sup>1</sup>, at least 116 countries actively restricted civic freedoms in 2024, with nine experiencing further deterioration in their ratings.

The International Trade Union Confederation ITUC<sup>2</sup> reported in its Global Rights Index that **79% of countries violated collective bargaining rights** and nearly 90% restricted the right to strike, levels of repression that have persisted or worsened over recent years.

Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2024 report<sup>3</sup> confirmed that the **global democratic recession extended into its 19<sup>th</sup> consecutive year**. While a handful of countries saw modest gains, the overall pattern was one of regression in political rights and civil liberties. This erosion

<sup>1</sup> [CIVICUS 2024 State of Civil Society Report](#)

<sup>2</sup> [ITUC Global Rights Index 2024](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Freedom House. Freedom in the world 2024](#)

has made it increasingly difficult for trade unions and other civil society actors to engage meaningfully with state institutions, advocate for decent work, or shape labour and social policy.

Economic indicators added to this difficult backdrop. The UNDP's Human Development Report 2023-2024<sup>4</sup> emphasised the uneven nature of the post-pandemic recovery. Progress in many countries has stagnated or reversed, with deepening structural inequalities, weak social protection systems, and persistent unemployment driving social and political tension.

Across the Global South, 2024 highlighted diverging regional realities; yet, many shared core drivers of volatility, including technological disruption, demographic pressures, unequal global resource allocation, and the consolidation of authoritarian political power.

**In Africa**, the environments in Eswatini and Nigeria illustrate two different, yet connected, dimensions of repression. In **Eswatini**, the assumption that trade unions can operate freely remains profoundly invalid. Independent unions and civil society activists continued to face systemic intimidation and violence, with little to no recourse in national institutions. Meanwhile, in **Nigeria**, economic instability, worsened by the removal of fuel subsidies and soaring inflation, prompted mass demonstrations and strikes. While state responses were often repressive, Nigerian trade unions showed notable resilience, maintaining pressure on authorities and securing limited concessions through sustained mobilisation.

**In Asia**, political space narrowed markedly. The situation in **the Philippines** remained particularly concerning. Labour leaders and activists were still targeted under broad anti-terrorism legislation, with "red tagging" campaigns by security forces fostering a climate of fear among the unionists. In **Indonesia**, growing authoritarianism translated into further constraints on freedom of assembly, strikes, and collective bargaining. Although civil society remained active, the democratic deficit between legal frameworks and real-world practices widened, undermining the potential for meaningful social dialogue.

**In Latin America**, developments were mixed. In **Brazil**, democratic space had reopened under a more progressive federal government. Trade unions participated in public debates on living wages, education, and climate justice, regaining access to policy dialogue that had been restricted during previous years. Similarly, **Colombia** witnessed growing inclusion of unions in national reconciliation and development processes, following the election of a reform-minded government in 2022. However, challenges persisted in rural areas affected by armed conflict and weak institutional presence. Conversely, **Guatemala** experienced serious democratic backsliding. Regressive judicial actions and increasing restrictions on freedom of association created a chilling effect on organised labour, with widespread union-busting and legal harassment reported by civil society monitors.

While contexts vary, common patterns emerge. **Technological disruption**—not only digital inequality, but also the rapid expansion of platform-based work and automation—continued to fragment labour markets and weaken traditional models of trade union organising. This trend disproportionately affected young workers, especially in countries where demographic shifts were most pronounced. In many regions, the rising share of youth entering the labour force was not matched by access to quality employment or social protection, reinforcing conditions of precarity and disempowerment.

<sup>4</sup> [United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report 2023-2024.](#)

**Geopolitical factors** also shaped 2024. The war in **Ukraine** remained a dominant force in global development financing, drawing resources and attention away from other pressing regional needs. This diversion affected partner funding opportunities, limited civic space support in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and amplified global asymmetries in solidarity and aid.

Meanwhile, the global **rise of nationalist politics** continued to erode civic trust and institutional checks and balances. In several countries, nationalist rhetoric was used to delegitimise trade unions, portray them as politically motivated or foreign-aligned, and restrict their ability to operate. This authoritarian drift, which increasingly overlaps with anti-rights and anti-labour narratives, poses a growing challenge to democratic union engagement.

**In Finland**, civic space remained stable and formally open. However, the year saw a narrowing of meaningful dialogue between civic society, including trade unions and political decision-makers, as per the OECD Civic Space Review of Finland<sup>5</sup> and the CIVICUS Monitor 2024<sup>6</sup>. Civic actors reported that their expertise and views are increasingly being overlooked in policymaking, particularly due to barriers faced by younger people and migrants. SASK's domestic operations—including public engagement, campaigning, and policy advocacy—continued without constraint. However, broader European trends mirrored the global context. The rise of populist, anti-union, and nationalist discourse across the continent, including increasing far-right influence, highlights the importance of sustained public education and value-based advocacy on labour rights and international solidarity. Despite these developments, the Finnish civil society continued to serve as a key platform for voicing support for democratic unionism worldwide and ensuring coherence between national policy and global justice goals.

The combined effect of these global and regional developments reinforced the importance of **SASK's adaptable and partner-driven approach**. In restrictive environments, SASK's support to partners' organisational resilience, advocacy capacity, and strategic alliances became even more essential. Domestic operations in Finland continued to provide a crucial counterbalance, offering visibility, legitimacy, and political engagement that benefited partners abroad. As SASK and its partners prepare for the final year of the current programme phase, the evolving political, economic, and civic landscape underscores the urgency of defending civic space, promoting inclusive labour policies, and reinforcing the foundational rights on which fair and democratic societies depend.

## 2.2 SASK's Theory of Change and Logic of the Programme

The Theory of Change (ToC) of the SASK Programme provides the **strategic and operational foundation** for programme implementation by defining how change is expected to happen through a clear logic of intervention. It connects the organisation's mission and strategic goals with the realities of the global working environment, guiding action through three interlinked spheres: (1) the sphere of control, encompassing direct activities and outputs; (2) the sphere of influence, focusing on partner-driven outcomes; and (3) the sphere of interest, prioritising long-term societal impact.

The 2022-2025 programme has continued to operationalise SASK's strategic goals, particularly in responding to growing challenges of the world of work in the Global South. In 2024,

<sup>5</sup> [OECD. Practical Guide for Policymakers on Protecting and Promoting Civic Space 2024.](#)

<sup>6</sup> [CIVICUS Monitor 2024: Global Findings.](#)

implementation followed established **change pathways**, including strengthening partner capacities, enabling advocacy and social dialogue, promoting equity and inclusion, and engaging the Finnish public. Results achieved in 2024 contributed to the programme's expected outcomes and advanced progress toward SASK's long-term vision of decent work, social justice, and sustainable development.

Compared to previous years, 2024 saw **intensified efforts** in linking local union actions with national advocacy and international cooperation. Several partner unions reported improved influence in policy processes, while domestic operations in Finland broadened engagement through studies, campaigns, and co-operation with the private sector. This synergy confirms that the programme remains on track towards its 2025 targets.

### 3. Results and Impact Analysis

The **Results Framework** (Annex 2) concretises SASK's Theory of Change with objectives at Impact, Outcome, and Output levels for both domestic and international operations. A comprehensive set of indicators has been defined for each objective to track progress of the results towards the targets, and to finally impact societies.

The progress within the SASK Programme is not fully linear, where change occurs evenly. SASK Programme facilitates several interventions (Outputs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5) to strengthen the expertise of its partners. This leads to increased capacity for workers of all genders and their organisations to act for rights at work. The Outputs of the Results Framework measure the institutional capacity, workers' awareness raising, as well as campaigning and advocating for workers' rights. Once the capacities are built, partners are better equipped to protect the rights of workers of all genders.

**On the outcome level**, the trade unions supported by SASK are more effectively protecting workers' rights in the programme countries. Through several interventions resulting from the project activities, trade unions supported by SASK have gained more competencies and become stronger actors in society. Additionally, a clear majority of the output level indicators are showing progress and are well on track to achieve targets by the end of 2025.

More capacitated trade unions can organise more workers, negotiate better terms of employment, and build safer workplaces. With the resources and skills gained through the project activities, the supported local trade unions are expanding their reach in terms of numbers and presence. **The number of trade union members** is growing steadily, by over 1,35 million members since the previous year, and with over 97% achieved of the programme's final target. When workers become more aware of their rights, they are more likely to join the union. More importantly, for the institutional and financial sustainability of the local trade unions, the number of dues-paying members has increased by almost 1,83 million workers from the previous year. This progress is the result of, for example, the development of digitalised membership registers and more effective dues collections systems. Still, some local unions mentioned that employers are not always submitting the dues to the union.

Trade unions supported by SASK reported several achievements in terms of **coverage and content of the collective bargaining agreements (CBAs)**. The number of workplaces covered by renewed or new CBAs increased by 39,413, which is already 99% of the programme's final

target. The increased number of workplaces covered by CBAs brings nearly 1,98 million more workers towards living wages and providing better and safer working conditions.

**On the impact level**, the realisation of trade union rights remained largely similar to that in the previous year. Still, some **long-term signs of advancement** are recognisable. **Brazil** saw the President Lula-led government take a significant step towards restoring vital social dialogue between workers, employers, and policymakers, after several years of regressive and anti-democratic policies by the Bolsonaro administration. This improves Brazil's Global Rights Index country rating and will open space to strengthen workers' rights again. Despite Brazil's development, opposite progress is more likely ongoing elsewhere in Latin America.

**The ratification of ILO Convention 190 in the Philippines and Zambia in 2024** marks great milestones in the fight against violence and harassment in the world of work. The ratifications are the result of years of determined union advocacy, coalition-building and institutional engagement, supported by the programme. The Philippines' formal ratification in February 2024—the first for Asia—Zambia in the same year, and the expected **Mozambique's parliamentary approval** for ratification in the ILO in 2025, demonstrate the long-term impact of persistent trade union efforts. These achievements represent powerful victories for democratic organising in contexts where civic space is still fragile, and bring legal protection to millions of workers, in particular women and informal workers.

In **Lesotho**, the tripartite structure known as NACOLA has reviewed, amended, and adopted several pieces of labour legislation aimed at advancing the labour movement and strengthening the work of unions. These include, for example, the Labour Act 2024 and the OHS Regulation 2024, of which the latter is benefiting approximately 1 million workers. These recent steps in Lesotho, along with ratifications of the *Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention 187*, *Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention 151*, and *Violence and Harassment Convention 190* in 2023, are paving the way for the realisation of workers' rights.

Additionally, victory against the Omnibus Law on Job Creation in **Indonesia** and the adoption of the *Omnibus Guideline on the Exercise of Freedom of Association and Civil Liberties* in the **Philippines** (see more in Chapter 3.1.1) are further signs of the long-term impact the partners supported by SASK's programme have contributed to.

In 2024, over 800,000 more workers were covered under **minimum wage agreements** negotiated by SASK's partners across several programme countries. This significant increase reflects the growing impact of partners' collaborative efforts to promote fair labour standards. Expanding minimum wage coverage is a critical step toward reducing income inequality and achieving living wages, protecting vulnerable workers, and fostering inclusive economic growth. It directly supports the achievement of SDG 8, for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

Picture 2 highlights the **key results for 2024**, and detailed examples of different achievements can be found in the continuing sub-chapters.

## sask Highlights Summary 2024 Progress in Numbers



With support from  
Finland's development  
cooperation

**35** projects  
in **27** countries



with **227** local partner unions  
among **nine** sectors.

**97,368** participants in  
activities with **5,52 million**  
euros in annual expenditure.



### Workers' Rights & Legal Frameworks

**Core labour rights** were increasingly addressed in advocacy efforts and development cooperation policies of many countries, including Finland's stance on CSDDD and funding frameworks. Brazil's **Global Rights Index** rating improved. The Philippines and Zambia ratified **ILO Convention 190**. Victory against the **Omnibus Law** on Job Creation in Indonesia and the adoption of the **Omnibus Guideline** in the Philippines. Over **570 local unions** made progress in strengthening and implementing their internal strategic development plans.



### Coverage & Representation

**804,581** more workers are  
covered by minimum wage  
agreements.

In **7** countries workers benefitted  
from improved OHS measures.

**39,413** more workplaces  
are covered by CBAs.

**1,98 million** more  
workers are protected by CBAs.

**366** campaigns and  
advocacy actions.

**1,35 million**  
workers joined unions.

**1,83 million**  
more dues-paying  
members.

In **14** countries,  
improved parental leaves.

In **11** countries,  
increased wages.

### Equality & Non-Discrimination



New gender equality  
and non-discrimination **training**  
**tools** were developed and  
adapted to local languages.

**More women** in leadership  
positions and CBA negotiations.

**311** trade unions now have a  
gender strategy or policy.

**79** more unions now have gender  
equity or non-discrimination  
clauses in CBAs.

**48** more unions are effectively  
implementing actions for gender  
equity or non-discrimination.

**3,846** more members identified as  
People with Disabilities.

**The rights of sexual minorities**  
gained more space in unions' work.

### Climate Resilience & Just Transition



**23 more unions** developed just transition strategies.

Unions in nine countries launched **just transition campaigns**,  
especially in the energy, textile, and mining sectors.

**Social dialogue on climate policies and labour rights** advanced in  
national tripartite forums in at least five countries.

### Communications & Global Education in Finland

**Five national policy initiatives** were influenced.

Global education efforts reached **over 5,000 people**.

**58 new SASK Ambassadors** were trained.

**5,5%** more visitors in SASK's **renewed website**.



### Digitalisation



**351 unions** now have  
digitalised membership registers.

Partner unions launched **digital**  
**tools** for member organising in  
five countries: Zambia, Malawi,  
Indonesia, Nepal, and Colombia.

**Digital security and data**  
**protection** were increasingly  
addressed in partner unions'  
leadership trainings and strategic  
development plans.

Picture 2. Summary of highlighted results for 2024

In 2024, SASK undertook significant measures to address some of the challenges identified in the previous year regarding **indicator data quality and reporting**. Training was held for project partners to review indicator definitions and reporting, revealing difficulties in data collection and calculation logic from the project planning phase up to the third year of reporting. In some projects, baselines were either missing or misunderstood, which affected target setting and results reporting. Some projects have faced changes in project management personnel, raising the need for orientation. Additionally, some indicator definitions needed clarification, for example, Outcome Indicator 1.1 regarding the number of workplaces covered by CBAs was, in some cases, reported as the number of CBAs. Result data validation is essential as one CBA can cover one workplace or multiple workplaces.

To tackle these issues, additional efforts were made in continuous support and orientation sessions. SASK focused on re-orienting project partners on the programme indicators and jointly reviewing baselines and targets set by each project, as well as validating results data from 2024 more comprehensively. These measures aimed to enhance data quality and reporting accuracy. As a result of the measures with partners, the **SASK Programme Results Framework (Annex 2) has been updated**, refining both baselines and targets to better reflect the progress of the projects. Continuous training sessions and technical support provided to partners have significantly improved their understanding and application of the indicator data logic. Partners have shown a high level of engagement and commitment to improve the reporting, despite some constraints on data collection or modest target setting. Additionally, some indicators for the domestic operations have been re-validated due to changes in the monitoring system or calculation logic. Also, the baseline and target levels were refined.

Regarding the **gender-disaggregated indicators**, the current programme 2022–2025 is the first where SASK has introduced gender disaggregation for non-binary within project documentation. The rights of sexual and gender minorities are a rising topic within the trade union movement, and with the inclusion in the project documentation, it is building the attention and awareness of partners. SASK is encouraging partners to recognise workers and members who identify themselves as non-binary, but the topic was new for many partners. During project planning, baseline and target setting were optional, or it was based on a modest estimate due to a lack of proper membership data. Result data validation revealed that some partners used the non-binary category when the gender disaggregation between female and male was not known. This is visible in the 2023 result data. After the training and indicator reviews, the issue has been corrected in the updated SASK Programme Results Framework.

Still, for many of the gender disaggregated indicators, the results for non-binary gender disaggregation exceed the target multiple times. This is caused by the above reasons. But, after the orientations, more results are reported for non-binary than anticipated during the recent reporting period. This reaffirms that the topic is on the agenda of the supported partners, and actions to promote the rights of sexual and gender minorities have, to some extent, increased.

The comprehensive Programme Results Framework continues to support monitoring, with ongoing validation and partner training to ensure reliable data collection and reporting for the 2025 annual reporting. These measures are also expected to streamline processes and improve the analysis for the overall effectiveness of the SASK programme.

### 3.1 ILO Core Labour Principles and Rights

Promoting the fundamental rights at work specified by the ILO remained the main objective in SASK's work also during 2024. SASK's local partners, total of 227 trade unions and central organisations, defended the rights of workers of all genders, campaigned for the ratification of various ILO conventions, and implemented the ratified conventions into national legislation in the changing world of work.

#### 3.1.1 Key Regional and Country-level Breakthroughs

The examples below highlight significant achievements of the programme at the country and regional levels, showcasing **progress that reflects broader structural, institutional, or policy change**. These selected developments, drawn from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, relate to the strengthening of trade union influence in national policy processes, legal and regulatory reforms, improved occupational health and safety practices, and enhanced regional cooperation among unions in key sectors, such as industry, health, and agriculture.

**In Asia**, the **Indonesian** trade union movement, many of them being SASK's partners, achieved a significant legal and political victory when the constitutional court annulled 21 out of 71 provisions in the contentious *Omnibus Law on Job Creation*, particularly on the crucial issues like contractualisation, outsourcing, sectoral minimum wage, job security, and severance pay. This ruling requires the parliament to draft a new labour law within two years. The union movement continued this positive momentum by achieving a significant 6.5% salary increase, which was implemented across all provinces and sectors in 2024. This was achieved through relentless lobbying and advocacy by trade unions, many supported by SASK, and restores essential labour protections. It is set to benefit over 140 million Indonesian workers, including manufacturing, services, and informal sectors. This not only signifies a shift in legal precedent but also highlights the evolving role of trade unions in influencing national economic policy.

**In the Philippines**, a notable advancement was the adoption of the *Omnibus Guideline on the Exercise of Freedom of Association and Civil Liberties*, which guarantees that trade union activities are shielded from external interference, including by the police and the military. This represents a crucial institutional safeguard for union rights. It marks significant changes in the landscape of labour rights, with the potential to affect millions of workers. The Guideline provides a vital institutional safeguard, particularly in a country where union members have historically faced—and still face—harassment and government interference. It ensures union activities are shielded from police and military intrusion, greatly enhancing the organising environment for public sector workers, teachers, domestic workers, and private sector employees. It has the potential to bolster protections for up to 48 million workers, a significant number of whom are currently not unionised, making this legal advancement a strategic opportunity for broader organising efforts.

**In Africa**, there was progress in workers' voices being heard in trade and investment processes in **Namibia**. The *Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)* project, implemented by ITUC Africa and the Labour Research Service (LRS), a South African membership-based labour-support organisation, and national trade union confederations in nine African countries, successfully advocated for the Trade Union Congress of Namibia TUCNA's inclusion in the National Implementation Committee of AfCFTA. This important milestone followed a high-level visit from ITUC Africa and TUCNA leaders to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, consolidating TUCNA's involvement in national discussions about the implementation of the African

Continental Free Trade Agreement. At the continental level, TUCNA is now calling on the AfCFTA Secretariat to ensure that every member state includes trade unions in their National Implementation Committees. This may be a crucial act for other countries' trade union confederations to reach the same goal.

Additionally, health and safety practices on **South African** wine farms have seen significant improvements thanks to workshops led by unions. For instance, at farms like Louisvale, clean drinking water is offered, and companies are now marking areas where pesticides are sprayed, enclosing tractor cabs used for spraying, regularly educating workers about safety protocols, and taking charge of cleaning protective gear. This shift shows a greater commitment to complying with occupational health and safety legislation.

**In Latin America**, IndustriALL—a global federation representing approximately 50 million workers primarily in the mining, energy, and manufacturing sectors—has successfully brought together five key sectors (mining, mobility, footwear and clothing, beverages, and energy) to foster coordinated trade union efforts considering **Brazil's** new industrial policy. After years of disjointed efforts, unions co-operated to create joint strategies and a national trade union agenda that emphasises the most important demands for each sector. This collaboration has also resulted in greater involvement of trade union leaders in national industrial policy discussions, particularly on topics such as just transition, decarbonization, environmental protection, and investments in clean, renewable energy and job security.

Similarly, initiatives of Public Services International—a global union federation representing over 700 public service trade unions and 30 million workers—have led to the formation of a regional health sector union network in **Brazil, Colombia, and Guatemala**. This network has rolled out a regional action plan focusing on the private health industry, the supply chain, negotiations with multinational corporations, and advocacy concerning the WHO pandemic treaty. This signifies a new era of cross-border union collaboration and strategic planning in the health sector.

Together, these exemplary changes in which the SASK programme was instrumental illustrate the power of persistent union engagement and international solidarity, pushing forward not just local rights but also setting regional standards for labour justice.

### 3.1.2 Selected Achievements Across Sectors and Regions

In 2024, SASK's programme further **realised specific, concrete achievements in ILO core labour rights** across various regions and sectors. These included, for example, improvements in existing collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) and signing many new agreements, expansions in occupational health and safety (OHS) coverage, better access to social security schemes, and enhanced organising efforts that boosted partner unions' visibility. Some of these examples are demonstrated below, per region.

**In Africa**, civil aviation unions from **Kenya, Nigeria, and Ghana** teamed up to track multinational companies, such as Emirates, Turkish Airlines, and KLM/Air France. By exchanging information on CBAs and planning joint campaigns, these unions coordinated strategies across borders, transitioning from working in isolation to adopting a united cross-border bargaining approach, boosting their power. This was a major shift in strategy and operational approach from working in isolation at the country level to collaboration across borders and countries, aligning with the airlines' operations.

In the Metal and Mining sector project, implemented by IndustriALL, 13 initiatives focused on occupational health and safety, as well as just transition, were rolled out by the national affiliates. This benefitted 177 union members in **Malawi**, **Eswatini**, and **Lesotho**. The initiatives led to the establishment of national and union-level safety committees, enhancing compliance with labour safety standards. This shows the importance of incorporating just transition into traditional occupational health and safety practices. The project's success in establishing collaborative safety measures at the workplace level is a significant step forward.

The **Kenya** National Private Security Workers Union (KNPSWU) launched an impressive organising campaign, bringing in 1,247 new members in just six days. Organisers who were trained in 2023 by the SASK programme played a vital role in this achievement. Additionally, the union secured a recognition agreement with the Kenya Security Industry Association, which represents 139 private security companies, paving the way for a sector-wide CBA. This shows that despite global challenges in recruiting new members to trade unions, the opposite is also possible with careful planning and effective strategies.

Meanwhile, in **Mozambique**, the forestry sector project assisted the national union of workers in the sugar, alcohol, and forestry industry (SINTAICAF) in renewing a company-level CBA with Green Resources, a significant player in forestry and wood processing in the Niassa region. This renewed agreement includes essential social protection provisions, and the union is now pushing for similar protections to be included in CBAs across other organised areas of the country. The project is implemented by Building and Wood Workers' International BWI, a global union federation representing over 12 million workers in construction, building materials, wood, forestry, and allied sectors through more than 350 unions in over 100 countries.

**In Latin America**, a significant milestone was reached in a project implemented by UNI Global Union in partnership with its national affiliates in **Colombia** and **Brazil**, aiming to strengthen workers' rights and union representation in call centres, particularly through organising and negotiating with a multinational employer, Teleperformance. UNI is a global trade union federation representing over 20 million workers in the services and skills sectors through more than 900 affiliated unions in 150 countries. With the project support, the first CBA was signed in Colombia in April 2024, ensuring that union leaders can take leave, facilitate weekly site visits and onboarding sessions, and feature webinars and meetings for new members. As part of signing the CBA, union visibility saw a major boost thanks to billboards that showcased meeting dates, contact details, and QR codes for easy access to materials and registration. In 2024 alone, over 1,000 workers joined the union directly, with an additional 300 signing up through online tools, demonstrating that rapid increases in trade union memberships are possible.

**In Colombia**, the domestic workers' union UTRASD has made progress in securing legal protections by proposing a *Household Labour Inspection Law* and advocating for a commission focused on health and safety for domestic workers. The strides that UTRASD is making in Colombia are important, as they work towards securing legal recognition and protection for domestic workers—one of the most overlooked and vulnerable groups in the labour market. By introducing the law, the union tackles a major enforcement issue: domestic work, which takes place in private homes, often slips under the radar of state regulation, leaving workers exposed to exploitation and unsafe working conditions, manifested as a pervasive global problem. Additionally, UTRASD's efforts to establish a dedicated *Health and Safety Commission* aim to integrate domestic workers into national occupational health frameworks, from which they have been excluded for far too long. These initiatives not only aim to extend fundamental labour rights to domestic workers but also empower them as catalysts for change in a country

grappling with high levels of informality, gender inequality, and racialised labour divisions. In this way, UTRASD is shining a light on invisible work and fostering structural change from the grassroots level.

**In Asia**, there was substantial progress in enhancing collective agreements and broadening social protection. For instance, in **the Philippines**, the national trade union centre SENTRO, representing a broad range of sectors, successfully negotiated better terms at several Coca-Cola plants, which now include full hospitalisation coverage and extended health insurance benefits for the partners of unmarried workers, including those from the rainbow community. In a region where recognition of diverse family structures is rare in labour agreements, this sets a precedent for inclusive bargaining that actively addresses discrimination. It also demonstrates how national unions can embed equality and health rights into mainstream collective agreements across sectors.

**In Indonesia**, the Sapulidi domestic workers union, part of the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), ensured that about 40 per cent of its roughly 2,749 members received social security contributions from their employers. This is particularly notable because domestic work is informal, with few mechanisms for enforcement. This outcome reflects persistent, local-level organising and advocacy that translated into concrete protections, showing how domestic workers' rights can be enforced even without a national law in place. Despite the absence of a law, there has been positive progress towards legislation through determined lobbying with the parliament members, which was also nationally endorsed by President Prabowo.

Additionally, the IndustriALL initiative, supported by the programme in **Indonesia**, reported the signing of 16 new CBAs that benefit 18,427 workers, along with the renewal of 15 CBAs that offer enhanced maternity leave and improved social security benefits. This shows a significant increase in collective bargaining coverage within Indonesia's industrial sector. These renewed agreements go beyond the basics, ensuring better maternity leave and enhanced social security—signifying a move towards more rights-focused, gender-sensitive negotiations. It also highlights the growing negotiation skills of unions backed by the SASK programme.

**In Nepal**, SASK's long-time partner in the public sector, PSI, played a crucial role in integrating 103 community health workers in Bansgadi Municipality into the national social security system, collaborating with the Ministry of Labour. The partner also managed to secure pension coverage for workers in Kathmandu, Hetauda, and Bansgadi, with benefits ranging from EUR 500 to 1,400. This achievement is remarkable because it shows how persistent union advocacy, along with collaboration across different levels of government, can bring formal social protection to female community health workers in Nepal's informal public sector. This underscores the power of unions to shape local and national policies, leading to inclusive, rights-based social protection outcomes in a sector that often lacks regulation.

Meanwhile, in **India**, the establishment of the *Amazon India Warehouse Workers Union* marked a significant advancement in workplace safety. This union has been instrumental in tackling heat stress concerns, ensuring the appointment of female nurses, enhancing restroom facilities, and providing shelters for gig workers, a form of employment increasing consistently across the globe with typically poor protections and employment terms. This historical achievement also proved that it is possible to fight for workers' rights in one of the most hostile and biggest multinational companies in the world. This serves as a benchmark and inspiration and may be replicated in other places.

### 3.1.3 Variability in Outcomes Across Contexts and Sectors

The programme achieved results in a variety of social, political, and economic landscapes described in more detail in Chapter 2. Across the regions, in general, African unions demonstrated resilience through grassroots organising, Asia showcased innovative themes even as civic space shrank, and unions in Latin America made significant headway in building alliances and advocacy efforts. However, trade union rights at the national level have largely stayed the same as in 2023, highlighting the continuous need for strategic flexibility, partner capacity, and targeted actions in such challenging environments.

In upper-middle-income countries, such as **Brazil**, **Colombia**, and **Indonesia**, there was notable structural, policy, institutional, legal, and regulatory progress. Unions played a key role in national policy discussions, securing better Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) and pushing sectoral strategies. On the other hand, least developed countries such as **Malawi**, **Lesotho**, and **Mozambique** concentrated on strengthening union capacity and raising awareness on workers' rights, particularly among informal workers, leading to significant improvements in areas like maternity protection and OHS. Lower-middle-income countries, including **India** and **the Philippines**, experienced mixed results due to limited civic space and high levels of informality. However, there were encouraging developments in, for example, digitalisation, OHS, and the inclusion of marginalised groups in **Zambia** and **the Philippines**.

**The state of civic space** had a significant effect: in countries rated 5 by the ITUC Global Rights Index (lowest possible ranking implying "no guarantee of rights"), like **Eswatini**, **India**, and **the Philippines**, visibility for campaigns and organizing efforts was restricted, while more open environments, like **Brazil** and **Nepal** fostered greater engagement by the implementing unions. In **Zimbabwe**, Quick Action Support allowed unions to tackle repression and maintain their operations despite these challenges, including when trade union activists were arrested.

**The outcomes were shaped by the sectoral contexts.** For example, the public sector struggled with challenges around negotiation rights, yet made advances in the health sectors of **Colombia** and **Guatemala**. In the industrial sectors, particularly in **Brazil** and **Indonesia**, the SASK partners achieved notable institutional influence and progress in planning for a just transition. The private services and informal sectors gained more visibility and coverage under CBAs, especially in **Colombia** and **Mozambique**. Meanwhile, in **Malawi** and **Indonesia**, the construction and wood sectors were able to advance OHS initiatives, and domestic workers saw their policies gaining traction in **Mozambique**. Education unions remained active despite facing obstacles in collective bargaining, for example, in **Eswatini** and **Mozambique**. Food, agriculture, and hospitality sectors began to include gender and safety clauses in their CBAs in **the Philippines** and **Brazil**.

## 3.2 Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination

Institutionally, many unions embedded gender equality clauses in their constitutions and created standing gender committees or focal points. Hundreds of gender-focused training sessions were held across regions, strengthening unions' capacity for gender and promoting gender equality. However, enforcement of negotiated benefits remained somewhat inconsistent due to hostile employer practices and required further persistent efforts.

### 3.2.1 Equal Participation and Leadership

In 2024, the SASK programme pushed for greater gender equality and non-discrimination throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America, making progress even in tough circumstances. A total of **97,368 individuals got involved in project activities**—surpassing the initial goal of 88,117 participants by more than 10%. **Among them, 48,732 were women**, which is an increase from the 47,905 women we originally aimed for—an absolute gain of 827 women. 144 participants identified themselves as non-binary, demonstrating continued awareness and inclusion of sexual minorities in the programme, despite increasing contextual challenges.

Although the programme had set a target for a female majority (54.4%), the actual participation numbers led to a nearly **equal split**, with 50.1% women and 49.8% men. This showcases the programme’s strong outreach and broad engagement, especially important given the shrinking civic space in many areas. The near gender balance achieved, within a much larger participant pool than expected, testifies to the inclusive approach of the programme and the increasing dedication of union partners to fostering participation across all genders.

However, geopolitical shifts—particularly a rise in nationalist and anti-rights narratives—also undermined the progress on gender equality and non-discrimination in several contexts. According to the *ITUC Global Rights Index* and *UN Human Rights Council* (2024), increased authoritarianism and anti-gender backlash in the Global North and South had a substantial impact on rights-based work related to gender equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination. The backlash resulted in the promotion of repressive legislation and cultural stigma in several project countries, with direct consequences on how openly unions could advocate for vulnerable groups in their operational contexts.

As the UN Human Rights Council<sup>7</sup> noted, this backlash often intersects with nationalist and anti-feminist agendas that resist international rights standards. This directly affected gender and inclusion-focused union work under the programme.

Despite these constraints, projects made measurable progress. In **Mozambique**, the project on domestic workers' rights was exemplary in women’s empowerment. The SINED union reported 59.9% female participation, and 90% of new members were women, many of whom held top leadership roles. In the project for decent work in the wine sector in **South Africa**, women-led collective bargaining and anti-gender-based violence efforts were made, and the CSAAWU union achieved full gender parity in its executive, electing its first female president. Project interventions in the industrial sector in **Eswatini** significantly contributed to the growing participation of women and youth in union leadership, with 50% of local office bearers in Amalgamated Trade Union of Swaziland (ATUSWA) being women and 60% being youth, reflecting a strong emphasis on inclusivity.

In the private sector, the trade union leaders and shop stewards from UNI Global Union affiliates in **Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique** took part in the first ever gender equality workshops entirely for men. The goal was to increase women’s representation and equality in unions in the three countries by breaking gender biases and raising awareness about gender as a societal construct. The workshops took an inclusive approach by addressing how men, too, are affected

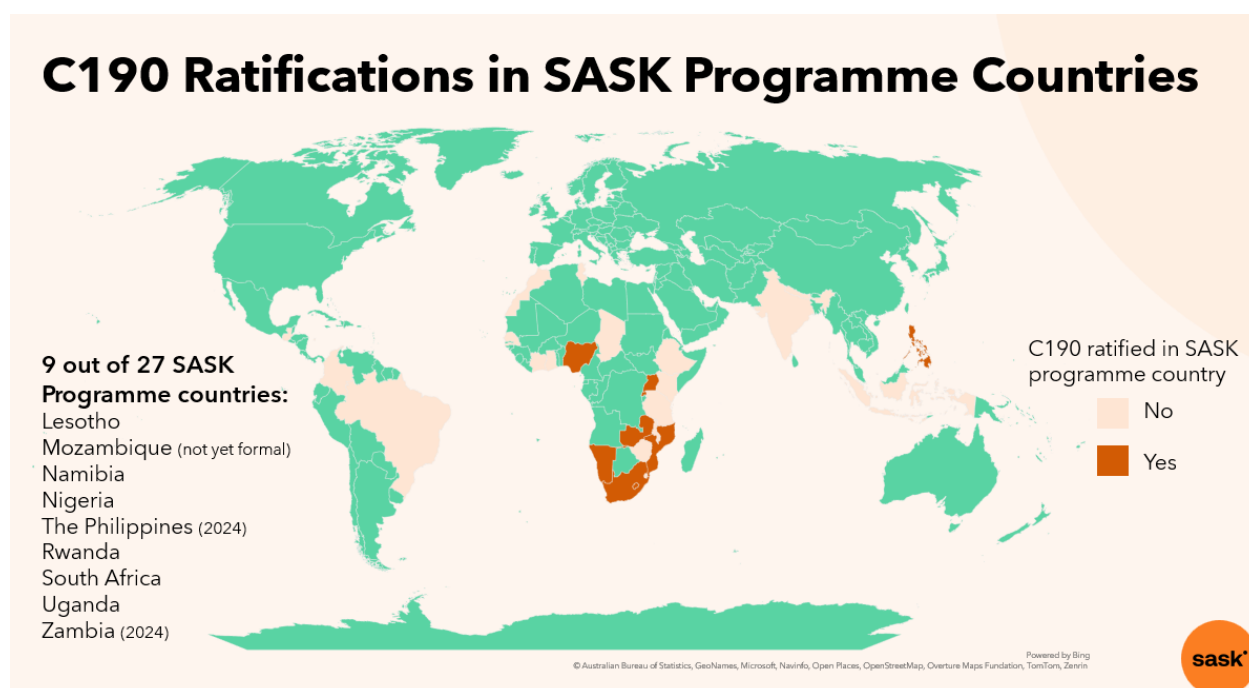
<sup>7</sup> [UN Human Rights Council. Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls 2024.](#)

by gendered issues. Similar workshops directed for men have also been successful in other SASK projects in several other programme countries in the previous years.

### 3.2.2 World of Work Free from Violence and Harassment

Global efforts to **ratify the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention 190**, alongside efforts from institutions such as the ILO and UN Women for gender equality and non-discrimination, helped advance gender justice in workplaces.

At the country and regional levels, indeed, achievements included ratification of C190 by **Zambia** and **the Philippines**, following union advocacy. In **Mozambique**, C190 was adopted by the National Assembly in May 2024 – ratification in the ILO is expected to follow in 2025. **Lesotho's** labour law reforms aligned with C190, and **Colombia's** unions are preparing for national ratification by updating internal codes. **Brazilian** and **Filipino** unions continued to pressure governments and employers for stronger protections.



Picture 3. C190 ratifications in SASK programme countries

### 3.2.3 Occupational Health and Safety and Maternity Protection

In the construction, wood, and forestry sector project in **Mozambique**, **Namibia**, and **Zambia**, women negotiators secured new collective bargaining clauses on maternity, housing, and menstrual leave. These agreements directly addressed women's needs and marked a shift from traditional bargaining centred on wages.

Similarly, in **Nepal's** education sector, unions successfully negotiated 60-day maternity and 15-day paternity leave via national advocacy. In **the Philippines**, a beverage sector union won additional maternity leave and breastfeeding support facilities. A few days' paternity leaves were achieved in the **Indonesian** transport sector and the **Zambian** construction sector.

Altogether, improvements in paternal leave were achieved in six countries in 2024: **Ghana, Malawi, Morocco, Zambia, Indonesia** and **Nepal**, and maternal leave in fourteen countries: **Eswatini, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia, Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Nepal** and **the Philippines**.

### 3.2.4 Rights of Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups

**The work on sexual and gender rights** has advanced in several contexts. In **South Africa**, labour law was updated to prohibit harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Trade unions incorporated these updates into broader campaigning to push the ratification of the ILO C190. In **Latin America**, particularly **Brazil** and **Colombia**, unions have started recognising and addressing the intersection of sexual orientation, gender identity, and labour rights. Brazilian unions promoted visibility and protection for LGBTQIA+ workers through anti-discrimination clauses and workplace campaigns. In **Colombia**, unions engaged in awareness-raising about the inclusion of workers belonging to diverse minorities, particularly in the public and service sectors. Unions in both countries are dedicated to inclusive organising by tackling issues of gender and sexuality.

In the **Indian** transport sector, significant progress has been made in promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusion, largely thanks to the efforts of the India Platform, which encompasses the Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers (IFAT) and its affiliates. The India Platform hosted a sexual and gender rights awareness and sensitisation workshop in collaboration with Sahodharan, an organisation dedicated to supporting sexual and gender minority communities. This workshop aimed to educate union members about the challenges faced by sexual and gender minority workers and to encourage more inclusive practices within unions.

Another noteworthy development in **India** was the increasing involvement of unions with transgender workers in outsourced positions at metro systems, such as the NOIDA Metro in Uttar Pradesh and the Kochi Metro in Kerala.

**The rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)** have been gaining traction in various countries. For instance, in **the Philippines** and **Nepal**, unions have started to weave disability awareness into their gender and inclusion training programmes. Meanwhile, in **Lesotho**, the Independent Democratic Union of Lesotho (IDUL) took a proactive step by training 200 workers on disability rights and assisting with workplace compensation cases. To further support these initiatives, SASK carried out research in **Zambia, Brazil**, and **Indonesia** as Quick Action Support to identify systemic barriers and potential solutions for PWDs<sup>8</sup>.

The findings were quite revealing; in **Indonesia**, for example, the rate of formal employment for PWDs was still at 0.55%, largely due to widespread discriminatory hiring practices, even when, by law, 1% in the private, and 2% in the public sector should be employees with disabilities. In **Zambia**, stigma and the absence of reasonable accommodations posed significant challenges, while in **Brazil**, the enforcement of the national quota law remained problematic. The research recommended that unions should bolster their internal capabilities, work closely with Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs), and weave disability inclusion into their collective bargaining and leadership frameworks.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sask.fi/vammaisten-ihmisten-asema-tyoelamassa-tiivistelma-kolmen-maan-tutkimuksista/>

These recommendations have increasingly found their way into union activities. By 2024, 215 unions had embraced a non-discrimination policy, and 378 unions reported actively implementing gender and inclusion strategies. Additionally, 369 unions had added relevant clauses to their collective agreements. Thanks to improved data collection and better inclusion, 4,349 union members were identified as PWDs, showcasing a growing awareness and visibility. SASK's programme approach focused on both immediate capacity-building and a long-term commitment to institutional change.

**Migrant workers** were effectively supported in **South Africa**, where in the wine sector unions ensured contracts, payslips, and social protection for Zimbabwean and Lesotho-born workers. Legal assistance was also offered in response to forced evictions. Youth engagement was prominent in the construction, wood, and forestry sectors in **Mozambique**, **Namibia**, and **Zambia**, with youth holding 60% of leadership roles and spearheading training and digital campaigns. **Mozambique's** domestic workers union, SINED, also included retired domestic workers in its advocacy, reflecting intergenerational inclusion with the support of the programme.

SASK's partners are making demonstrated and increasing progress toward **intersectional representation** of people with overlapping vulnerabilities, including gender, disability, class, age, and sexual orientation, among others, particularly in countries where civic spaces are supportive and legal protections are progressive.

### 3.3 Climate Resilience and Just Transition

The year 2024 was yet another **record-hot year** for the planet. Studies show we have passed the 1,5 degrees temperature increase, after which many changes due to the climate crisis are becoming irreversible. The climate effects on working life are clearer, and the global labour movement is fighting on many fronts to find ways to push for a worker-led just transition. While the COP29 international climate negotiations in Baku, Azerbaijan, did not significantly succeed in advancing the goals of the *Just Transition Work Programme* agreed in COP28 and pushed by the labour movement, the expectations for COP30 in Belém, Brazil, in 2025 are more optimistic. Many SASK partners are part of this advocacy through their global organisations.

**On the project level** in 2024, SASK partners have made good progress in advancing the work on just transition through capacity building, advocacy, campaigning and by starting to get breakthroughs in collective bargaining. SASK programme indicators (OPI 1.4.1 and 1.4.2) on just transition show that the work is steadily moving forward. From the beginning of the programme phase, 58 new unions have developed new strategies and policy proposals on just transition, whereas 70 new unions are implementing just transition-related actions. These represent 76% and 94% respectively, of the programme target by 2025.

**Heat stress and its effects on occupational health and safety** are an important aspect of climate-related collective bargaining. In the construction sectors of **Namibia**, **Mozambique**, and **Zambia**, SASK's partners campaigned and negotiated for improved working conditions when working in extreme heat. In **India**, the partners succeeded in protecting construction workers from heat stress. The Tamil Nadu State Government declared heat wave as a state-specific disaster and announced financial assistance for loss of life due to heat-related causes. It also issued a heatwave guideline that outlined relief measures such as restricting working hours between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. and access to drinking water. In **India**, the Amazon workers have been trained,

especially during the heatwave season, to recognise heat-related illnesses and advocate for better protection measures such as adequate rest breaks, hydration, and cooling systems in warehouses.

Getting workers a **"seat at the table"** on the workplace level, in collective bargaining, on just transition-related issues, is tough. In the **Indonesian** mining sector, the SASK partner succeeded in negotiating the establishment of a bipartite just transition committee in the collective agreement, which serves as a platform for communication between the union and management. The industrial unions in Indonesia launched a joint just transition strategy and action plan, which includes mapping climate-affected companies and engaging policy on energy transition.

**Just energy transition** is a major area for union advocacy. In **Brazil**, SASK partners in the energy sector (such as wind energy, coal and thermal power plant workers) advocated for reindustrialisation associated with policies of decarbonising the economy, preserving the environment, and investing in clean, renewable, and affordable energy, and job security. In **Indonesia**, SASK partner confederations and industrial unions were actively involved in the *National Committee on Just Energy Transition* and advocated for workers' participation in the implementation of the **Indonesian Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP)**. As a new area of work in **Namibia**, SASK partners are building their knowledge and advocacy around ongoing green hydrogen investments in the country, the opportunities and challenges, as well as implications for the national energy matrix and job creation.

**Upskilling of workers** on climate-related issues, as well as **disaster-preparedness**, increased among teachers in **the Philippines** and **Nepal** through training on climate effects on education, and in **Mozambique** through launching a campaign to support teachers severely affected by climate disasters such as cyclones. In **India**, SASK partners organised training for gig and platform workers on climate change and the impact of global warming on their livelihoods. Furthermore, the region-wide African Global Labour University continues to have just transition as one of the core topics of its curriculum.

**Alliance-building** remains one core area of work in building a worker-led just transition. The SASK partners are strong advocates in regional alliances such as trade union confederations, working together in **the Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal**, and the ITUC to influence the Nationally Determined Contributions of their respective countries, or energy unions in **Eswatini** and **Malawi** working together under the *Sub-Saharan Africa Energy Network* for a just energy transition. In terms of coordinating the global work, SASK continued to coordinate with its international sister organisations, as well as with Finnish member organisations and development cooperation organisations.

**In Finland, just transition was the key communication theme of SASK in 2024**, and activities related to it were carried out throughout the year. At the Solidarity Days in February, the ITUC's Asia expert from the Philippines spoke about the topic from the perspective of the Asian trade union movement. Webinars on climate change and global working life were held in April and June with perspectives on climate work in Finland, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Morocco. In September, the President of SASK's Brazilian project partner, IndustriALL, visited Finland and spoke at SASK's volunteer training about the just energy transition. He also participated in a roundtable discussion organised by SASK, gathering various Finnish stakeholders in the industry sector. In November, as part of the Finnish CSO climate justice working group, SASK

participated in a joint report coordinated by FINGO on CSOs' climate work, with an example of just transition in the Philippine fishery sector.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.4 Digitalisation and New Forms of Work

SASK continued its focus on digitalisation and new forms of work in 2024. The most important elements were mapping out the crucial sub-areas for the member organisations and partners, building the capacity of SASK partners on the topic, and engaging Finnish member organisations in participating in the thematic work of SASK. As a result of the mapping, **artificial intelligence** was added as a central subtheme, alongside **automation**, **workers' digital rights**, and **platform work**.

The theme was more visible in SASK's work than before, as digitalisation at work and the challenges it causes for workers have increased in the partner countries. For example, **in Africa**, where technological change has been somewhat slower than on other continents, ATMs are disappearing, and even minibus drivers use mobile banking. The finance sector in Africa witnessed a significant decrease in jobs due to technological change. Of the regions where SASK works, **Latin America** has the biggest proportion of employment with potential exposure to the automating effects of generative AI. In **Asia**, for example, in **the Philippines**, the AI-generated widespread job displacement causes concerns.<sup>10</sup>

As part of the SASK's major event in **Finland**, the Solidarity Days, SASK organised an event on platform work comparing the experiences of platform workers in India and Finland<sup>11</sup>. Additionally, SASK contributed to a Fingo's online course<sup>12</sup> by providing the material for one of the modules, which focused on workers' rights in digitalised work. Along with Finnish trade unions, SASK was invited to two round-table discussions organised by the Foundation for European Progressive Studies to discuss algorithmic management in the workplace.

In 2024, six projects organised training or seminars on digitalisation. The themes of events varied from data rights to automation and the future of work in general. One of the most important events was the two-day digitalisation workshop organised by Global Labour University in **South Africa** with the leading specialist on digitalisation and workers' rights, Christina Colclough. The participants were trade union activists from different parts of Africa. In addition, SASK project partners are widely digitalising their organisations with growing number of local trade unions having digitalised membership registers and utilising digital tools in member recruitment.

Regarding **platform work**, three new unions joined the **Indian** Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT). The federation now encompasses 11 unions and 18,000 dues-paying members, while at the beginning of the funding period, there were 10,200. The federation affiliated with the International Transport Workers' Federation, a globally acting partner of SASK. These are important developments to make IFAT's work more impactful. IFAT and its affiliates have engaged with respective state government officials to establish welfare boards at the state level with financial allocation to implement various welfare schemes for gig and platform

<sup>9</sup> [https://fingo.fi/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Reiluja-ratkaisuja-ilmastokriisiin-torjumiseen\\_raportti.pdf](https://fingo.fi/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Reiluja-ratkaisuja-ilmastokriisiin-torjumiseen_raportti.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [ILO World Employment and Social Outlook Trends 2025](https://ilo.org/publications/ilo-world-employment-and-social-outlook-trends-2025).

<sup>11</sup> <https://insinoori-lehti.fi/artikkelit/jalkapalloilija-paaty-ruokalahetksi-ja-oikeustaistelijaksi/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://fingo.fi/palvelut/oppiminen/verkkokurssit/digivallan-tasaajat/>

workers and their families. Furthermore, Amazon India opened resting shelters for delivery riders. IFAT also focused on strengthening the capacity of its members on data rights.

On **automation**, the most visible actions among the SASK partners were taken in **Asia**. In **the Philippines**, a beverage sector union, SAMACOCKE, negotiated a collective bargaining agreement clause on the right to be consulted before the introduction of new technology. The achievement would not have been possible without the massive solidarity efforts of SASK's partners, such as trade union confederation SENTRO. This victory set a powerful precedent, proving that unions can and must play a decisive role in shaping how automation and digitalisation affect workers' rights and job security. Another significant milestone was the joint position paper by the industrial unions in **Indonesia** on technological development called *Defending the Rights and Interests of Workers in Facing the Future of Work*. The paper has been utilised in efforts to build a tripartite social dialogue on technology transformation, especially in the automotive sector.

On **artificial intelligence**, the teachers' unions in **Nepal** and **the Philippines** promoted the notion that teachers are more than just providers of information; they are educators and pedagogists whose expertise is a crucial part of quality education and who cannot be replaced by AI.

### 3.5 Quick Action Support and Agile Responses

In 2024, SASK's **Quick Action Support** enabled a quick and effective response to new challenges. As stated above, studies on disability and working life in Brazil, Zambia, and Indonesia<sup>13</sup> highlighted significant obstacles that people with disabilities, especially women, face in securing decent work.

**In South Africa**, the Global Unions' LGBTQIA+ Workers Rights Project, in collaboration with SASK's public sector partner PSI, hosted a global webinar, a pre-conference for ILGA World Conference, that brought together delegates from over 30 countries, and a workshop focused on ILO Convention 190. This initiative encouraged unions to pledge stronger protections and advocacy for workers belonging to sexual and gender minorities.

**In Zimbabwe**, the Musicians Union (ZIMU) adjusted its approach in response to the instability of the labour market, organising a National Conference that addressed issues such as exploitation, low wages, and a lack of awareness regarding rights, and shedding light on gaps in gender and disability inclusion. Provincial leaders made formal promises to enhance union unity and representation.

**In Latin America**, Education International's Women's Network conducted sub-regional meetings that provided training on digital violence, collective bargaining, and activism in the face of anti-democratic regimes. Four education unions are committed to creating internal gender policies starting in 2025.

The actual **projects of the programme were adjusted in 2024** to respond to emerging or new challenges in their operational contexts, as needed. For example, in **Mozambique**, the Domestic Workers' Union (SINED) adjusted its activity calendar to accommodate a national meeting for all provincial leaders and included it in the project work plan. It aimed to discuss the project team's

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.sask.fi/vammaisten-ihmisten-asema-tyoelamassa-tiivistelma-kolmen-maan-tutkimuksista/>

internal tensions that affected the implementation of project activities. As a result of the new activity, a new project coordinator was appointed, ensuring the smooth running of the project.

In the project advancing public sector workers' rights **in Africa**, implemented by Public Services International PSI, it was noted that the Community Health Workers (CHWs) national policy was to be revised in **Malawi** and **Zambia**. Therefore, PSI added one more activity for CHWs. The adjustment was instrumental in informing the policy position of the unions. At a later stage, PSI again commissioned research that looks particularly at the national policy revisions and includes feedback from the trade unions and CHWs.

**In Latin America**, the PSI health sector project re-arranged its budget and use of balance to enable broader participation of affiliates from **Brazil**, **Colombia**, and **Guatemala** in the regional health trade union network meeting. It is crucial to have a strong ownership of local affiliates from the beginning. The network has the form of a regional federation. It is the basis for key health sector regional and national advocacy.

**In Asia**, through open communication and quick decisions, some project partners were able to shift several activities according to the changing needs of the unions, for instance, the shift to focus on strengthening the foundation of the unions by allocating more resources to organising activities, in the cases of building transport workers' power in Asia and community health workers' empowerment in **Nepal**. In the case of empowering food and beverage workers in **the Philippines**, due to sudden pressure for automation and massive layoffs by the company, the partners collectively decided to organise a workshop on the future of work and automation to urgently discuss the upcoming action plan, which resulted in several local wins against automation disputes.

### 3.6 Reflection on Sustainability of Results

Since SASK's work mainly focuses on **societal change**, many of its results, such as advances in legislation, are typically sustainable. This was also the case in 2024. Examples of pro-worker legislation development are presented in Chapter 6.1. The role of SASK's partners in these kinds of positive achievements is supplementary - our partners have been contributing to the common goal with many other organisations and policymakers.

Within SASK's sphere of influence, there are signs of sustainability, especially in **strengthening the institutional capacities of partner organisations**. Many unions have a strong incentive to stand on their own feet, and this commitment is evident in the results: the number of dues-paying members (OI 1.4) and skilled trade union activists (OPI 1.1.3) has grown. The number of trade unions with adequate structures (OPI 1.1.1), strategic development plans (OPI 1.1.2) and financial base (OPI 1.1.4), as well as digitised membership registers (OPI 1.1.5) to ensure sustainability increased. Focusing on newer themes in the world of work, such as just transition (OPI 1.4.1 and OPI 1.4.2), digitalisation, artificial intelligence, and platform work, the unions managed to stay relevant for their members, which is a prerequisite for a sustainable organisation.

In several unions, for example, **youth, women, training, education, advocacy, and occupational safety and health committees** have been established. The committees ensure that the issues will stay on the unions' agendas. This work was further sustained by the development of union policies such as the gender policy (OPI 1.5.1) and the policy on non-discrimination (OPI 1.5.2).

Taking one step further, a partner union in **Malawi** introduced a gender-inclusive recruitment policy in a local hotel, where the results are already visible through an increased share of female staff, for example, in the human resources unit. It is noteworthy that although developed policies are important tools for tangible change, the unions should actively implement them for the change to be sustained in the long run.

Other important signs of sustainability are when the unions have managed to gain **access to national-level policy forums**. For example, in **Namibia**, trade unions joined the National Implementation Committee of the African Continental Free Trade Area negotiations (see Chapter 6.1). This is a significant, sustainable milestone in promoting trade union representation in trade policy discussions. Trade unions joining nationwide federations also contribute to the sustainability of their actions, as seen in the case of **India's** platform workers, where three new unions joined the platform worker federation. Such federations help solidify union influence and credibility while providing access to decision-making processes with a longer-term impact.

Several projects successfully scaled up their outputs by actively **involving union leaders**. A key lesson learned is that when leaders develop a strong sense of ownership over project outcomes, they are more likely to drive broader dissemination and implementation. This was evident, for example, in the ILO ACTRAV (ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities) project in Africa, where trained union leaders played a pivotal role in expanding the project's impact. They continued to share the knowledge gained through organisational meetings, union education workshops, and strategic engagements across their networks.

### 3.7 Communications, Global Education and Advocacy

In 2024, the **focus was on advocacy work and Just Transition as the special theme** of communications and global education. A strong effort was put into organising the Solidarity Days, SASK's main event, taking place once per programme period. It brings together hundreds of SASK stakeholders from Finland and the Global South. Also, SASK's website was renewed along with the new SASK Visual and materials. The website now fulfils the accessibility requirements, and the amount of English content on the site has been increased.

The importance of human rights in the world of work was widely discussed in the **Finnish development policy** (Outcome 2). Several foreign and security policy initiatives were under discussion, including development policy. The main ones from SASK's perspective were the *Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation*, the *Government Report on the Implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the *Government report on Finnish foreign and security policy*, and the *EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD)* and Finland's approach to this legislation. SASK was heard by several parliamentary committees on these reports.

In those reports, the themes related to decent work and human rights of workers were barely mentioned. However, thanks to SASK's advocacy work, the discussion that followed the publication of these reports included critical commentary on the lack of these themes and recommendations for including them in the implementation of Finnish development policy. By getting involved in new working groups and networks, human rights in the world of work gained visibility and attention during the year. Additionally, SASK managed to maintain its presence in the *Development Policy Committee* for 2024–2025.

A new dimension strengthened in 2024 was promoting human rights in the world of work in **cooperation with private sector actors**. SASK focused on building a new strategy for working with the private sector to ensure the implementation of the ILO core principles, decent work, and living wages at the grassroots level operations of Finnish companies that have production in the Global South or where chains of logistics involve countries with which SASK has experience, expertise, and networks. SASK provided training to, for example, Finnfund on the ILO fundamental principles and rights at work.

Also, **SASK's role as an expert organisation** on human rights in the world of work (Output 2.1) was strengthened in 2024. That is partly due to the advocacy work already mentioned, but also due to an active year in communications and global education. Over 5,000 people altogether were reached during the year, which vastly exceeded the annual and programme objectives (Output 2.3). SASK has been able to strengthen its role as an expert on human rights in the world of work, and that expertise is utilised in events and training organised by stakeholders.

SASK **media hits** (2024: 104, 2023: 67), social media coverage (356 mentions), and **visitors to SASK's website** grew (+5.5%) from the previous year. This builds a strong basis for 2025, when in communications, SASK will focus on developing communications on the results achieved in the programme (Output 2.2). Programme targets were reviewed and adjusted based on the new media system's calculation logic and consideration that current communications activities are sufficiently maintained.

The **number of new volunteers**, the SASK Ambassadors, grew, exceeding the set objectives (Output 2.4). This was, however, done not by adding resources but by SASK affiliates taking a more active role in organising training sessions where new Ambassadors are trained. This only required SASK's contribution in terms of content, but not in terms of costs or organising. This indicates a commitment and growing interest in the SASK volunteer network, also by SASK affiliates, and increases the efficiency of SASK's work. At the same time, it has turned out to be difficult to track the progress of the new Ambassadors to intermediate and advanced levels, as per one of the indicators. This requires more reflection for the future.

In terms of **training sessions** organised by SASK, the programme objectives were reviewed and adjusted but still not met; nevertheless, the number of people participating in training sessions was satisfactory. There was plenty of activity, especially at the regional and local level, and events where the volunteers participated in planning and developing SASK operations. These kinds of events gathered over 80 participants during the year. To support local-level activities in Finland, SASK has created a regional volunteer structure, including 17 regional ambassadors and regional WhatsApp groups. The 13 groups cover all of Finland geographically, with over 150 participants.

**SASK's main event, the Solidarity Days**, organised once in every programme period, gathered hundreds of SASK stakeholders from Finland and the Global South. The event brought together over 300 participants over one weekend. It required lots of resources; therefore, the plan for 2024 did not include many training sessions. The objective was to bring together as many people as possible in one event to show the SASK network in its totality. Another way to build commitment and contacts between Finnish trade unionists and unionists in the Global South is through international activities provided to the volunteer network. In 2024, SASK piloted a new form of international activity, where a SASK Ambassador participates in a project monitoring trip together with a SASK regional representative and a union representative. This is cost-efficient for SASK, since the unions cover the costs and SASK acts as a coordinating body.

The international activities included a SASK-run **study tour to Malawi** and another study tour organised by a Finnish union, where SASK's role was to coordinate and assist in building the content.

**The feedback** for the SASK activities remained as positive as it has been over the years, with an average of 4,6 out of 5. Most praises were received for the expertise of the trainers and the speeches given by the partners from the Global South. The feedback also highlights that SASK's events offer the opportunity to meet people from diverse backgrounds and learn more about new topics. In the future, SASK should keep giving space to partners to strengthen the voices of people from the Global South.

**The building of solidarity networks** amongst the SASK affiliates exceeded the programme objectives and was thus increased. There is plenty of interest in this form of activity (Output 2.5). On the other hand, the programme target for the twinning pairs was decreased. The twinning pairs that have now been piloted a few times in different ways to find a model that would work best continue to present challenges. New ways of organising contacts between the trade union activists in Finland and the Global South are needed, and a new form of operations has been developed for the next SASK programme. This process has provided many learnings that can be utilised in future operations.

## 4. Analysis of the Realisation of the Risks

Following SASK's periodic risk assessment process, measures and responsibilities for the most significant risks are defined in the **SASK risk log**. Efforts have been made to implement the programme and its various activities to react to rapidly changing operating environments and global crises. Assessments of the risks recorded in the risk log are updated annually at the end of each year, evaluating the mitigation measures taken to avoid or minimise the risk effects during the year. Based on the periodic risk assessment, the risk levels (i.e., likelihood x consequence = significance) of the identified risks are re-evaluated, and mitigation measures for next year are planned.

**The Risk Management Action Matrix (Annex 3: Updated Risk Matrix 2024)** presents the assessment of risks and measures for the total of 21 risks that have scored nine or more in significance out of the total 68 risks in the SASK's periodic risk management process during December 2024–February 2025. One new risk related to private sector cooperation was identified during the reported year; see more in Chapter 4.2.

### 4.1 Risks Related to the Operations in the Global South

Several risks remained at high risk levels in 2024, including political instability, shrinking space of civil society, harassment of activists, global crises, and the effects of the division of the trade union movement. Here are a few examples of risks affecting SASK's operations.

The political instability in **Mozambique**, particularly following the general elections in October 2024, affected the implementation of various projects. The elections were marred by allegations of irregularities and lack of transparency, leading to widespread riots and social disorder across the country. The political climate caused significant delays in following planned implementation schedules, and the post-election upheavals made it difficult for workers to participate in project

activities, such as recruitment campaigns, limiting the achievement of some of the projects' objectives. Especially, the transport sector was severely affected by road blockages and violence, which disrupted operations and led to the cancellation of planned events to ensure the safety of the participants. Additionally, the province of Cabo Delgado faced episodes of terrorism and the impact of Cyclone Chido, which further complicated project activities.

Despite these challenges, project partners in Mozambique demonstrated resilience by adapting to new circumstances and exploring viable alternatives, which led to the successful implementation of revised plans. In multi-country projects, some activities were reallocated to other countries, and some were postponed. Project partners also identified key lessons, including the need to better factor in major political events during annual project planning and to avoid implementation of activities until the end of the year.

Also, in **Brazil**, municipal elections influenced the project implementation. Most of the planned bipartite or tripartite meetings could not be carried out due to the election schedules. Election results were eventually worrying for the trade union movement and democracy, as there was an advance of the extreme right in the municipalities. Considering the election results, the meetings will be held at a later stage to promote and mobilise the trade union agenda. Furthermore, in November 2024, the attempted coup d'état by extremist sectors put the country's democratic stability to the test. However, the government managed to contain the threat with the support of institutions and popular mobilisation in defence of democracy. For the projects, such unexpected risk underlined the need to continuously monitor and adapt strategies in the face of such events.

**In Zambia**, the partner reported small deviations from planned implementation due to employer interference, such as withholding employees from attending trade union activities, extreme weather conditions affecting access to clean water, and increased risk of waterborne diseases and other harmful effects of extreme heat and severe droughts. Having somewhat foreseen the influence of climate change and employer behaviour, the partner revised work plans and proactively addressed these issues, ensuring partial implementation of planned activities, preventing significant project impact, and maintaining credibility. To improve future implementation, the partner will enhance monitoring, reporting, and contingency planning, ensuring project success.

**As the Philippines and Colombia** are still ranked among the worst countries for workers according to the ITUC Global Right Index, all project partners continued to be cautious in implementing activities and campaigns, given the potential intimidation, harassment and violence. As preventive actions, partners carefully plan the venues of activities and related communication, i.e. taking pictures for social media. Several SASK's partner union activists regularly face intimidation and even fear for their lives. In the Philippines, identification of trade union leaders could lead to red tagging by governments or employers, which has been exercised intensively in the past years. Furthermore, unions in **Eswatini** continue to face hostility from the government. Union-led protests against anti-labour policies are leading to increased threats against trade union leaders.

**In India**, the risk of harassment and violence is seriously present. The implementing organisation in the Amazon warehouse organising project, KISLAV, has faced numerous attacks because of its work. In the interest of the leaders' and staff's safety, it was decided to close the organisation to reduce the attraction of harassment. As the new mechanism, UNI Asia Pacific will play a big role in storing and disbursing the project funds for activities.

Overall, risks related to financials are generally on the rise, also globally. Other solidarity support organisations (SSOs) are also experiencing the effects of economic instabilities, which are directly linked with the funding levels of the work of Global Union Federations (GUFs). Deterioration of GUFs' financial situation may cause challenges in their performance and operations with SASK. The risk level of the GUFs' financial situation was raised based on continuous discussions with GUFs and other SSOs. There is a perception that additional risks may appear due to this, for example, with possible new funding sources. The situation is closely and continuously monitored.

## 4.2 Risks Related to the Operations in Finland

Emerging risk levels for operations in Finland have been identified, especially for **financial-related risks**. The political and economic situation in Finland, and, for instance, the cessation of Red Nose Day funding, are foreseen to affect the entire funding base and operations of SASK. There are continuous efforts to ensure funding from the ministry and member organisations through advocacy efforts towards political decision-makers and by close collaboration with member organisations to secure membership fees and self-contributions. In addition, SASK is preparing a new fundraising strategy and reallocating resources to widen the income base in the future.

Another rising risk was seen in SASK's ability to **develop its expert role**, while the requirements and expectations of our role are changing. This risk has many relations to other risks, for example, financially related risks. It also relates to thematic work and private sector cooperation, which is a newer element in the programme. A new risk was identified in the 2024 periodic risk assessment, concerning mostly private sector cooperation, where a partnering organisation may intentionally use the cooperation with SASK for false purposes that are against SASK values. Designing new modalities for working with the private sector may pose various risks, which are further assessed and planned for mitigation in 2025.

## 4.3 Risks Related to Misconduct

SASK has several practices and mechanisms in place to ensure compliance with relevant regulations and to **safeguard** the implementation of programme operations. SASK's Code of Ethics<sup>14</sup> is reflected in all SASK's operations, procedures, and organisational culture. SASK has an anonymous **whistleblowing channel** for reporting concerns or suspicions of misconduct at SASK's operations. In 2024, SASK received one notification through the channel related to a workplace dispute in Finland. The reported misconduct did not concern SASK's operations directly, but the incident was reported to the respective trade union in Finland for possible further action.

At the end of 2023, SASK received a notification from its contractual partner, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), about possible financial misconduct in an activity of a transport sector project in Ethiopia. The suspicion was reported to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at the beginning of 2024. After a comprehensive investigation by the contractual partner, no evidence of actual misconduct was found, and the case was reported back to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in February 2024. The investigation revealed a dispute between the two local unions, which was ultimately resolved through mediation by the contract partner, ITF. The local

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.sask.fi/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/SASKin-eettiset-periaatteet-ja-ilmastoteot.pdf>

unions have committed to continuing the cooperation within the project, and ITF is closely monitoring the situation.

In early 2025, SASK received two whistleblowing reports from its partners. Financial fraud was detected during the audit procedure at an industry sector project in Malawi, which resulted in criminal charges against the general secretary of the local affiliate partner. Inappropriate behaviour was reported at a transport sector workshop in India, resulting in the termination of agreements of the project coordinators. Both incidents concern operations in 2024 and were reported to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in early 2025. Final reports and conclusions will be provided in 2025.

#### 4.4 Functionality and Development of the Risk Management System

The risk management system is **evaluated annually** as part of periodic risk assessments. In 2024, similar challenges were identified that had already been identified in 2023. Several identified risks, creating an action plan, and processing of implemented measures, as well as assessments of the significance of risks, require resources, but also versatile risk knowledge, and understanding of different contexts. For the risk management process to be more manageable, streamlined and effective, areas for development were defined to be continuous follow-up of risk management measures, division of risks (e.g., to internal and external risks), reducing the number of risks (by e.g., separating them into active or non-active risks), and utilising better the signals from project partners' risk assessments.

The risk management system was planned to be included in SASK's programme management database in 2024, along with implementing the identified development areas. Due to the above-mentioned development factors and lack of personnel resources, the incorporation of the risk management system into the SASK's programme management database was postponed to 2025. The risk level for the organisation's resources and workload is still identified as quite high, with mitigation measures being implemented continuously.

However, in 2024, further discussions were held, and some steps were taken to **enhance the functionality** of the risk management system. The risk management guidelines and whistleblowing process were refined. Additionally, consultations with SASK's partners and sister organisations started. The consultations focused on risk management and due diligence processes, including obligations concerning sanctions and the prevention of money laundering and financing terrorism. The purpose is to identify, benchmark, and learn from the similarities and differences, and to avoid overlapping processes. The work will continue in 2025.

### 5. Evaluations, Audits, and Use of Recommendations

The **CSO review carried out by KPMG** was completed in 2024. SASK's review report identified a total of 10 minor or moderate risks, but no significant or critical risks. The implementation of the measures recommended in the review is reported separately in Annex 7. The monitoring and implementation of certain measures will also continue in 2025.

Transparency and accountability remain core principles in the work of SASK. In 2024, SASK took deliberate steps to strengthen these values by actively integrating insights from external reviews, such as the **Survey on Operating Methods**. This comprehensive review collected input

from over 30 stakeholders, including Global Union Federations, partners, SASK's member organisations, and its staff.

The Survey on Operating Methods highlighted the **importance of aligning operations with partner needs**, enhancing strategic planning capabilities, and increasing flexibility in cooperation models. Based on these findings, SASK initiated improvements. They include refining project selection for 2026–2029 to better reflect partners' priorities, promoting more flexible tools such as Quick Action Support (QAS), and encouraging peer learning through twinning and South-South collaboration.

Annually, SASK gathers information and **feedback from the volunteer network as well as from all its events**. The results of both are used in planning future activities and the content of training and volunteer operations. In addition, SASK gathers **feedback and wishes from its affiliates**, the Finnish trade unions, on the cooperation. This survey was conducted in 2024, but it didn't bring anything that would require attention this time around.

Every two years, SASK conducts **an impact study in Finland** to measure the support of the Finnish people for SASK's work on workers' rights. The study was conducted in March 2025. It reflects the attitudes of Finnish people on the SASK agenda and themes from the past two years. The support for the work is strong, and there is a clear mandate for SASK work from the Finnish audience.<sup>15</sup>

In 2024, SASK's **internal audit focused on domestic operations** (communications, advocacy, global education, volunteer activities). The key findings on strengths were the willingness and readiness for different kinds of cooperation, expertise and experience, ability to react successfully to changes in the operating environment, courage, and the use of networks to support advocacy. The most successful and important activities were considered the Cost of the Game campaign in 2022, as well as Solidarity Days and the Study Tour, which bolster the sense of community among SASK stakeholders. Recommendations for the future included focusing the communications on a few specific themes at a time, considering clearer indicators, measuring quality—not only quantity—and making better use of the impact study conducted every two years in planning the operations.

Many local and GUF-level project audit reports include **a management letter with observations and recommendations for the partners**. Partners are urged to address and, if necessary, fix these issues raised by auditors by the next annual audit. Generally, considering the number of projects, the total number of observations regarding financial or internal controls has not been high. Some of the observations—especially in GUF-led projects—get repeated annually, but these usually deal with issues such as the lack of a specific project bank account or separate work time monitoring, which are not required in SASK projects with GUF-partners. Other observations from 2023 management letters were already communicated to the partners during the 2023 audit process. The reports usually include a management response on how to cope with each observation.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.sask.fi/valtaosa-suomalaisista-suhtautuu-myonteisesti-ammattiliittojen-tekemaan-ihmisoikeustyohon-kehityvissa-maissa/>

## 6. Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

To understand the mechanisms behind the results and nurture similar ones in the future, it is crucial to acknowledge the major achievements of 2024 as well as identify good practices. To deepen the understanding of what worked well and what did not, some reflections on key operational challenges and lessons learned are invaluable.

### 6.1 Major Achievements

The most notable, as well as sustainable, achievements are **pro-worker legislation and judicial court decisions**. Their impacts extend beyond project scope to all workers in the respective country or municipality. These success stories are paramount in the current global context, where workers' rights are increasingly trampled, and many pro-worker legislative improvements have been long overdue despite the devoted efforts of the global and national trade union movements.

**In Indonesia**, the constitutional court's decision to modify the *Omnibus Law on Job Creation* in favour of workers' rights is a landmark improvement. All SASK's Indonesian partners contributed to this modification with their respective advocacy work. The achievement required years of relentless work, which started from opposing the law in the first place, and, after its enforcement, adapting strategies to show its unconstitutional nature.

**Domestic workers and community health workers in Asia**, representing two of the most vulnerable groups of workers on the continent, have respectively gained important legislative improvements. New key ordinances of the domestic worker law were put in place at the municipal level in **the Philippines**, including the biggest city, Quezon City, improving the labour rights and protections of the domestic workers and creating discounts on essential food and hygiene products in supermarkets – an innovative step toward economic relief for low-wage workers. Further, in **Nepal**, the community health workers gained increased access to social security. This positive development is the result of long and determined work. SASK's partner organisations IDWF and PSI are working to improve the legal status of these vulnerable groups globally, which enables a strategic, adaptable way of working. In certain countries, SASK supports the work.

Strengthening the voice of partner unions through facilitating dialogue with multinational companies and increasing coordination between unions, even across borders, has resulted in some cases in African unions entering national-level policy discussions on international trade, such as AfCFTA. For example, TUCNA, the trade union central organisation in **Namibia**, was successfully included in the *National Implementation Committee (NIC)* of the African Continental Free Trade Area negotiations. There was similar progress in **Kenya**, where COTU-Kenya (Central Organisation of Trade Unions of Kenya) was about to enter the NIC. The most robust groundwork had been laid through the combination of research, capacity building, networking, and various advocacy efforts by the central organisations. The achievements were secured by strategic advocacy visits to Namibia and Kenya by the leaders of the ITUC-Africa.

**In the private services sector in Africa**, strengthening the partner unions' capacity by training on organising, bargaining power, and gender equality led to successful organising across the participating countries. One of the partnering unions in **Kenya** won the UNI Global Union Breaking Through Award as recognition of an exceptionally successful organising campaign

conducted in the multinational supermarket chain Carrefour. The organisers and shop stewards, risking their jobs, managed to exceed the necessary 51% of total employees organised to reach a recognition agreement with the company.

**In Latin America**, establishing a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) for the first time with a multinational company, Teleperformance, in **Colombia** was groundbreaking. It is a result of the process of having the *Global Framework Agreement* between the company and the Global Union Federation UNI first, and only after that was it possible to proceed to signing a CBA. The CBA provides access to the union as well as rights and benefits to thousands of workers. The CBA empowers workers, strengthens their rights and bargaining power, it contributes to fairer and more stable employment and industrial relations across the Information, Communication, Technology and Services (ICTS) sector in Colombia and potentially in other countries, too.

**In gender equality work**, targeting men has been a successful strategy in many cases. For example, in **Uganda**, after participating in a training on the topic, male trade union leaders have taken the forefront in championing the fight against gender-based violence (GBV). This has been significant in breaking barriers to open discussions without facing resistance from male trade unionists. The Ugandan media has also taken a keen interest in discussing GBV, including coverage on national television, thereby gaining wider community attention and eliciting discussion among various constituents of the community. A mentorship program in **Malawi**, “Positive Girl Child”, organised by four partnering unions, played a crucial role in ending child marriages and ensuring that girls were reintegrated into school.

As part of the **SASK global education activities**, the twinning pairs have been piloted twice, and SASK has learned a lot to develop the SASK peer-to-peer activities for the next programme. For these twinning pairs to function in the long term, they require facilitation by SASK. Whether this facilitation needs to come from a member of the SASK staff or whether it can be an experienced and committed SASK Ambassador, remains to be seen in the future models to pilot. There is great potential in this experiment based on the experiences stemming from the activities within the Ambassador network, where one can see that the south-north experience and knowledge exchange build the commitment and understanding of both parties to the next level. Utilising the unique networks of SASK to benefit mutual learning holds great potential when structured correctly.

## 6.2 Main Operational Challenges

While the programme implementation was overall on track, **variation** existed among a few partners in planning and executing their tasks. In those cases, project plans and budgets needed to be adjusted for the final programme year. Thus, SASK needed to provide more focused support to ensure the projects, and eventually the programme could reach their targets, and to ensure the actions are aligned with SASK’s strategic objectives. The **gaps in capacity** also led to some delays in getting some of the projects off the ground at the beginning of the programme phase, and in following the programme reporting schedule.

Some **implementation delays** were also due to factors outside the control of the programme. For example, there was a sudden shift in international cooperation arrangements, mainly by the U.S. Government, that required partners to quickly reallocate time resources to finalise audits and reporting for projects funded by it. This unexpected change in workload had an impact on the timely submission of necessary reporting documents for the SASK programme for 2024.

In other instances, delays were tied to the processes needed to finalise required project financial documentation and meeting related auditing standards. Even with early planning and starting the project reporting process on time, it took longer than expected for some partners to get all the required documents and receipts in order. However, partners maintained consistent and transparent communication with SASK, which allowed timely intervention and support.

Another hurdle faced during the year was related to **staffing issues** within one partner organisation. With reduced staff members due to reasons beyond SASK project funding, senior staff of the partner found themselves with a heavier-than-expected project workload, which made it difficult for them to manage the project effectively and on schedule. After discussions with SASK, it was agreed to undertake mitigation measures for the final year of the project, including scaling back the project's scope and budget, as well as the partner bringing in additional personnel to help with project management.

Additionally, the **effects of inflation** due to diverse global crises and regular fluctuations in currency exchange rates affected the implementation of some project activities. For instance, an abrupt 44% devaluation of the Malawian Kwacha in November 2023 saw a sharp surge in inflation in the country during 2024. Although the disbursements in Euros remain at the previously agreed level at the SASK end, these types of exchange rate and domestic price level fluctuations naturally influence the planning and implementation of project activities in local currencies in the countries facing such conditions. Project partners have in some cases needed to either reduce the number of activities or combine some activities to allocate funds more effectively.

### 6.3 Identified Good Practices

**In the Philippines'** education sector, paralegal training equips unionists with the legal knowledge and skills needed to document violations, file complaints, and defend against state-perpetrated attacks. By institutionalising legal mechanisms within unions, it strengthens their ability to resist repression, making it more difficult for authorities to suppress labour rights and empowers unionists to raise public awareness, engage with the state, and build national and international solidarity, amplifying demands for accountability and an end to attacks.

**In Malawi**, the Hotels, Food Processing, and Catering Workers Union HFPCWU took a comprehensive approach to promote gender equality. They successfully negotiated two workplace-level sexual harassment policies, which were translated into the local language, Chichewa, advocated for hiring women in sectors traditionally dominated by men, such as brewing, and set gender structures at national and branch levels to monitor related issues.

**In Indonesia and the Philippines**, the Domestic Workers' Federation IDWF introduced a creative strategy by creating and sharing multilingual comic books and animations to inform domestic workers about their rights, including ILO Convention 189 and access to social protection. This engaging and accessible method has effectively reached marginalised workers.

**In Zambia**, the National Union of Building, Engineering and General Workers, NUBEGW, which is affiliated with Building and Woodworkers' International BWI, negotiated a collective bargaining agreement clause that clearly defines gender-based violence and harassment. This rights-based provision serves as a practical model for integrating anti-GBV protections into enforceable workplace agreements.

**In Brazil**, public service unions took an innovative step by actively participating in national policymaking regarding artificial intelligence in the health sector. Their goal was to protect jobs and ensure equity as digital transitions take place, showcasing a proactive union role in shaping fair technology governance.

**In Nepal**, the project implemented by the Liaison Council of UNI Global Union stands out as demonstrating a replicable and adaptable practice, having signed a memorandum of understanding with the employers' federation FNCCI to enhance working conditions in the commerce sector, as this process involved gender-balanced negotiation teams and a commitment to inclusive social dialogue structures.

In some cases, the implementing unions have started studying Chinese to better negotiate with businesses originating from China. This was the case, for example, in the Building and Wood Workers' International BWI project in **Namibia**.

**SASK Ambassador network**, SASK's trained volunteers, is a mode of operation that brings substantial benefits and added value to SASK and its affiliates. It also multiplies the impact and effectiveness of SASK's communications and global education. SASK is an NGO with a small staff and close to 700 trained volunteers who bring an important addition to the organisation's resources. Through this network, SASK is present at workplaces all around Finland, in the local chapters of its affiliates, and in many other networks where the Ambassadors are active. SASK's role is to ensure Ambassadors feel relevant, stay committed and informed, and have the support mechanisms and materials to play their role in creating impact and spreading information on human rights in the world of work. Since 2019, SASK has had a Volunteer Specialist focusing on supporting this network and developing the systems and structures to support these operations.

Based on this network, SASK is developing different forms of **peer-to-peer learning** within its operations in Finland and in the Global South. Twinning pairs have been piloted in a few models, and new forms are being prepared for the next programme period, where the Ambassador network will widen to include union activists from the Global South, from the SASK partner unions. This means there will be a new dimension to what kind of interaction, contacts, and learning SASK can offer to its volunteers.

SASK has also been involved with some of the embassies in the projects by inviting them to visit the activities. The embassy of Finland in **Indonesia** has visited SASK's project meetings and work visits with domestic workers and metal workers. In exchange, they requested SASK to provide contributions to their booklet and social media posts for the 50 years of Indonesia-Finland diplomatic celebrations. In **India**, the Finnish embassy invited SASK's project partners who work with Amazon warehouse workers to discuss the human rights violations issues that have been faced in the workplace.

## 6.4 Lessons Learned on Theory of Change

In 2024, SASK's Theory of Change (ToC) was **both affirmed and challenged**. Core assumptions—such as the legal recognition of trade unions and the existence of functioning tripartite structures—proved valid in some contexts but weak in others. In most programme countries, unions operate legally, but Eswatini remains a clear exception due to a restrictive legal environment. Similarly, the assumption that social dialogue among unions, employers, and

governments is operational often failed in practice; in many cases, it remained more aspirational than real.

The notion that decent work and inclusive economic growth are political priorities was also challenged. In countries facing shrinking civic space, rising far-right influence, or nationalist labour policies, these issues were often sidelined. Nonetheless, international frameworks continued to provide stability. Strong adherence by the ILO and OECD to labour standards reinforced global norms. While ratification of ILO Conventions and implementation of the *UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights* (UNGPs) supported SASK's work, programme success did not depend on them—support continued regardless of formal adoption.

Global trends further influenced the operating environment. Post-COVID labour markets remained fragile, with increased informal work and weakened protections. Technological disruption—more so than the digital divide—emerged as a key driver of inequality. Youth unemployment and demographic shifts deepened precarious working conditions. The war in Ukraine redirected donor attention and funding, limiting support elsewhere. Meanwhile, the rise of far-right and nationalist politics challenged union legitimacy and restricted civic space. The U.S. presidential election in November 2024 added another layer of geopolitical uncertainty, with potential implications for global labour policy and development cooperation.

Despite these external challenges, internal analysis **reaffirmed the validity** of the Needs and Outputs components of the ToC. Partners' needs—particularly in advocacy, capacity-building, organisational development, and participation in social dialogue—remained relevant. Programme outputs, including strengthened partner capacities and increased advocacy, continued to materialise as planned. SASK's flexible, partner-oriented approach enabled progress even where enabling conditions faltered. Integration of private sector collaboration and responsible business conduct studies also enhanced the programme's adaptability in both domestic and international arenas.

2024 provided critical reality checks that prompted reflection on foundational assumptions. **The expectation of operational tripartite dialogue and political commitment to decent work was often unfulfilled. These findings highlight the need for ongoing reflection and adjustment.** While many assumptions about the enabling environment no longer hold universally, the resilient and adaptive nature of SASK's approach has remained a strength. Going forward, regularly testing and revising the Theory of Change in light of shifting realities will be essential to sustaining impact.

## 7. Ownership, Accountability and Sustainability

As the programme enters its final year in 2025, ensuring that the achieved results are retained beyond the programme period through **strong local ownership and institutional capacity** is crucial. This chapter explains how the principles of ownership, accountability, and sustainability are embedded in the programme, and how SASK and its partners have advanced sustainability by building accountable structures and enhancing organisational self-reliance and resilience. The following examples illustrate how the principles have been applied in practice across sectors and regions. They highlight tangible progress—such as institutional capacity-building, leadership engagement, and policy-level inclusion—and offer insights into the conditions that enable long-term impact.

## 7.1 Local Ownership and Participatory Planning

Project funding for the Global Labour University (GLU) has been key in terms of providing quality trade union education for unionists from many **African countries**, coming from different sub-regions (East Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, and North Africa). This study programme reaches beyond the African continent, as it includes participants from some **Asian countries** (e.g., India and Indonesia). The element of ownership is visible in this programme, as in recent years, some trade unions and Global Union Federations (e.g., the International Transport Workers' Federation ITF) have decided to sponsor participants from their sector of activity. This shows their commitment to support this initiative as they have seen good results over the years.

**In Latin America**, SASK's key Global Union Federation partners, for example, PSI, UNI, and IndustriALL, are politically and organisationally very driven and proactive in pushing forward with policy advocacy and finding strategic openings. In **Brazil** and **Colombia**, the current governments are progressive and labour-oriented, which has given unions new openings to push for policy reform in areas such as labour, health, and pensions. Partners have included this advocacy work in SASK projects and revised the plans as matters evolve or encounter challenges. The fact that the parliamentary representation in both countries does not coincide with a progressive majority poses challenges that partners consider when finding solutions. They also include that work in the SASK projects.

**In Asia**, all SASK project partners in the respective countries have been facing governments that are not in favour of the workers. However, through the support of SASK, this difficult situation has created unity and solidarity among the trade union movement, which has been fragmented for a long time. Despite ideological differences between them, some of the SASK project partners have been working closely together to fight for a common labour agenda, like the Omnibus Law and Guidelines in **Indonesia** and **the Philippines**, as well as the social security and labour act in **Nepal**. All the project partners highly appreciated the support provided by SASK, including the tools to achieve a greater social impact. Subsequently, the public sector union in **Indonesia** and **the Philippines** began to show greater ownership in the project, for instance, contributing to transport (train, plane) and accommodation to attend training.

## 7.2 Examples of Increased Partner Autonomy and Capacity

As part of the preparation to sustain the project results, it is imperative to ensure positive progress toward the partner's autonomy and capacity. Although SASK doesn't expect partners to be fully ready in this regard by the end of 2024, several positive examples from Africa, Latin America, and Asia show they are on the right path to becoming **more accountable and autonomous**.

**In Africa**, the PSI and IndustriALL project partner organisations have been working to cover some of their costs. In practical terms, the self-contribution budget lines are visible in reports where partners choose to use their funds for project activities. This demonstrates their commitment and the desire to grow, as in some cases, local unions have been encouraged to reduce their dependence on project funding.

Another example of self-contribution is found in Education International's Africa project, where **South African** unions have been providing technical assistance to their counterparts in

**Mozambique** and **Eswatini** at no cost. For example, trade union educators from South Africa have regularly been training unionists.

In **Latin America**, in the IndustriALL **Brazil** project, unions have been encouraged to cover the costs of premises for sectoral strategy meetings and activities as an exercise of cooperation and autonomy, which they have carried out. That way, IndustriALL managed to save resources and strengthen the financial independence and commitment of the affiliates to the continuity of training and organisation after the project's end.

In **Asia**, because of continuous training and growing memberships, some of the project partners are gradually contributing more to the activities, according to their respective capacities. The contributions vary from small consumption contributions (e.g., in the BWI construction project in **Indonesia**) to the capacity to deploy self-finance for organising expansion (e.g., in the IndustriALL metal and mining project in **Indonesia**). The built capacity is not only benefiting the union, but also others, as can be observed from the case of SERBUK Union **Indonesia**, which was able to deploy one of its trained organisers to the Federation of Hotel and restaurant workers.

### 7.3 Sustainability Mechanisms: Financial, Institutional, and Policy-Level

In SASK, sustainability refers to the **continuation of the achievements** after the period of external support has ended. Important reference points include ownership by beneficiaries, financial viability, and institutional and management capacity. *SASK Project Planning and Reporting Guidelines* and related tools stipulate measures for promoting and ensuring the sustainability of project results from planning to exit phases. Sustainability mechanisms implemented among SASK's partners can be seen on many levels.

At the union level, the basis of financial sustainability is on **membership dues collection** and having **well-functioning financial systems** in place. This work is at the core of SASK's partners' work, with some sectors more vulnerable than others.

For domestic workers' organisations, financial sustainability is a constant struggle. For many years, the domestic workers union of **Mozambique**, SINED, has been trying to convince its members to pay affiliation fees. The challenge is that dues collection in this sector is challenging mainly due to two reasons. First, the salaries are low and paid inconsistently. Second, the check-off system, the automatic deduction of union fees from the salary, is not applicable because employers are individuals, not companies, and there is no payroll. However, recently SINED has been reporting a significant increase in members who adhere to dues collection. If this trend continues, it will contribute to the union's financial sustainability. Additionally, SINED has been discussing several possibilities for income-generating projects. In this regard, a national workshop was organised to share views from different national leaders, and the national leadership of the union is now analysing the best option in terms of location and type of business.

In **Colombia**, the domestic workers' union UTRASD faces similar challenges in building its financial sustainability due to a fragile membership base with a weak capacity to pay dues. Recently, UTRASD has created an *institutional growth and sustainability strategy* to build its sustainability. This is similar to what happened in **Indonesia**, where domestic workers are aware they cannot rely on dues collection to sustain their movement. Instead, the plan is to diversify the income through cooperatives and other fundraising activities.

Building sustainability can also be **linked to long-term CBA results, solid social dialogue, or broader institutional policy reforms**. In terms of the sustainability of the results achieved, policy and legislative reforms can be considered the most sustainable ones, along with CBA provisions. In addition to them, there are several less sustainable practices that, nevertheless, are beneficial for workers, such as seats at decision-making tables and diverse workplace committees and agreements.

For example, establishing CBA with the company Teleperformance in **Colombia** guarantees the sustainability of the results reached in the project over several years. The CBA contributes to more stable and sustainable employment and industrial relations across the ICTS sector in Colombia, and potentially in other countries, too.

Policy reforms related to social security often build sustainability much beyond the actual reach of the project work, especially for informal workers who are outside of protection coverage. Through the support provided by SASK, unrecognised informal workers have started to receive social protection from the governments. An example of this is the **Nepali** community health workers' access to social security in several provinces, just like the inclusion of social security for Indian and Nepali migrant construction workers. Although the Nepali community health workers' case is not yet translated into a national policy, the progress paves the way for including all informal workers in social security in the country.

## 7.4 Inclusion and Voice of Marginalised Groups

In addition to persons with disabilities and sexual and gender minorities, the programme conducted activities and **addressed the rights of several other marginalised groups**. Young workers represent a significant portion of the workforce in many sectors in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and are actively engaged in unions' activities. This is also the case for young internal migrant workers. Unions have actively ensured their participation, for example, in **Nepal** with those entering informal work and in India with those entering e-commerce and delivery work. They were involved in union education and leadership development.

In **the Philippines** and **Indonesia**, unions supported young cross-border migrants to ensure their protection and inclusion in union activities. On the other hand, older workers were included in activities in Nepal, especially in the health sector.

In **Latin America**, people marginalised and discriminated against due to race and ethnicity participated in the union activities.

Informal workers at large were involved in activities across several projects in **Africa** and **Asia**, and at times led them—for example, domestic workers in **Mozambique** and community health workers in **the Philippines** and **India**.

Several projects incorporated an **intersectional lens**, recognising how overlapping vulnerabilities—such as age, gender, informality, disability, and migration status—compound disadvantage in the world of work. These intersecting factors were considered in the context of broader social, economic, and environmental conditions that shape workers' rights and labour market inclusion. For example, individuals in precarious or temporary employment—often youth, women, migrants, persons with disabilities, sexual and gender minorities, and members of racial or ethnic minorities—are particularly exposed to the adverse effects of climate change and

structural labour market transformations. They also face systemic exclusion from participatory digital governance processes.

In **Zambia**, social dialogue initiatives were launched using a monitoring tool, with campaigns raising awareness about PWDs' rights, and media outlets such as Hot FM and Radio Maria played a role in disseminating key messages. Engagement with media included media workshops with Livingstone Press Club, capacity-building for town planners, engineers, and local authorities, and professional development workshops with informal sector representatives.

## 8. Contribution of the SASK Programme to Finland's Broader Political Agendas

Finland's development policy focus areas were renewed in 2024. SASK work continued to contribute to these focus areas: **climate, education, rights of women and girls, and the rights of sexual minorities**. The programme also contributed to many **Sustainable Development Goals**, particularly *SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth*, *SDG 5: Gender Equality*, and *SDG 10: Reducing Inequalities*. All of them are at the core of the SASK programme, and all the projects were aimed at reaching them.

SASK has been part of the movement **advocating for the EU Directive on corporate sustainability due diligence** for many years, and this continued in 2024. In addition, SASK has conducted research for some time now on the human rights risks in the value chains of a group of Finnish companies, and the results of this research were published in 2024<sup>16</sup>. SASK also created new concepts for cooperation with Finnish private sector actors to ensure workers' rights are respected in their value chains and operations in the Global South, and to guide the companies to meet the requirements of the CSDDD, utilising its expertise and networks. Regarding Finnish trade policy, SASK has profound and extensive cooperation with the African trade union movement to advocate for workers' rights to be included in the *African Continental Free Trade Agreement*. The results of this cooperation level the playing field and enable responsible Finnish companies to enter the African markets.

SASK is part of the Finnish **CSOs coordination on climate finance and climate justice**. Through the CSO collaboration, SASK is part of advocacy efforts targeting the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, with a focus on climate finance issues. Through the CSO work, SASK can provide support to the Finnish trade union confederations, the main advocates of worker-related aspects in the climate change discussion in Finland.

As part of its projects, SASK plays a vital role in supporting and safeguarding the important work of the local trade unionists in **defending human rights in high-risk contexts**. Countries like **Colombia, the Philippines, and Eswatini** are examples of countries where trade unionists are regularly threatened, harassed, and even killed for defending human rights in the world of work. By cooperating with unions in these countries, SASK can participate in making their efforts for human rights a little safer.

Finland has ended some of its country programmes in 2024. SASK continues its work in some of these countries, like **Mozambique**, and by doing so is, in its part, ensuring that the presence and impact of Finland continues in these countries where Finland has long been present, and by

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.sask.fi/suuret-suomalaisyritykset-eivat-puutu-ihmisoikeusriskien-juurisyihin/>

doing so, keeping up the relations and networks built between the countries for years, if not decades.

In **Mozambique** and **Nepal**, teachers' unions were strengthened to advocate for decent work, social security, gender equality, and improved employment conditions. This was in tandem with actively engaging in social dialogue to influence education policy and legislation. Through campaigns like *"Go Public! Fund Education"*, collaboration with partners on education funding, and promoting *SDG 4* on education, the projects complement broader education reforms by empowering teachers as rights-holders to shape systemic changes in the sector and benefit from them. Capacity building done in areas such as paralegal skills, collective bargaining, and just transition equips education union leaders and members to develop and sustain advocacy and policy engagement, reinforcing Finland's wider education development investments and cooperation in both countries.

SASK, its affiliates, and its **volunteer network** of almost 700 workers' rights advocates are a strong part of Finnish civil society. By offering opportunities to participate in the human rights work of SASK, it strengthens civil society and opens an avenue for Finnish activists to have their voice heard in the public discussion in Finland.

In Helsinki on August 26, 2025

**Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland (SASK)**



With support from  
Finland's development  
cooperation

**Juska Kivioja**  
Executive Director

**Ville Hirsikangas**  
Head of Finance



Picture 4. The Macoha sewing factory in Malawi trains people with disabilities and employs them under fair working conditions. Well over half of the employees are union members. Photo: SASK