



# Let's unite!

Strategic Plan

National Confederation of Eritrean Workers  
2009-2013

Draft

Asmara, September 2008

## Contents:

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Introduction .....  | 3  |
| 2. NCEW's development .....  | 4  |
| 2.1 History in short .....   | 4  |
| 2.2 Organisation .....   | 5  |
| 2.3 Mission NCEW .....   | 7  |
| 2.4 Main Achievements .....  | 7  |
| 2.5 Organisational assessment .....                                | 12 |
| 3. External environment .....                                      | 15 |
| 3.1 Social and societal aspects .....                              | 15 |
| 3.2 Economic aspects .....   | 15 |
| 4. Analyses of current challenges .....                            | 16 |
| 4.1 SWOT Analyses .....  | 16 |
| 4.2 Explanation .....  | 17 |
| Strong .....   | 17 |
| Weak .....   | 17 |
| Opportunity .....  | 17 |
| Threat .....   | 17 |
| 4.3 Important change .....   | 18 |
| 5. Proposed course .....   | 19 |
| 5.1 Essentials .....   | 19 |
| 5.2 Common ground .....  | 19 |
| 5.3 Agenda-input socio-economic agreement .....                    | 20 |
| 5.4 Sector development .....                                       | 20 |
| 5.5 Pilot Social Partnership .....                                 | 21 |
| 5.6 Other service-oriented developments .....                      | 21 |
| 5.7 Analyses of NCEW's mission .....                               | 22 |
| 6. Organisational development .....                                | 24 |
| 6.1 Outline investment programme .....                             | 24 |
| 6.2 Internal NCEW development .....                                | 24 |
| Annex 1 Actions to be undertaken .....                             | 26 |
| A.1.1 Organisational development .....                             | 26 |
| A.1.1.1 Systems & procedures .....                                 | 26 |
| A.1.1.2. Internal organisation .....                               | 26 |
| A.1.1.3. Healthy financial position .....                          | 26 |
| A.1.1.4. Zonal Offices .....                                       | 27 |
| A.1.2. ICT .....   | 27 |
| A.1.3. Promotion & PR .....  | 28 |
| A.1.4. Economic function .....                                     | 28 |
| A.1.6. Training .....  | 29 |
| A.1.7. Capacity building .....                                     | 29 |
| A.1.7.1. Coaching .....  | 29 |
| A.1.7.2. Socio-economic agreement .....                            | 30 |
| A.1.7.3. Sector development .....                                  | 30 |
| A.1.7.4. Social partnership .....                                  | 30 |
| A.1.8. Members services / growth .....                             | 31 |
| A.1.8.1. Civil Servants .....                                      | 31 |
| A.1.8.2. Other professional associations .....                     | 31 |
| A.1.8.3. Cooperatives, entrepreneurs and the informal sector ..... | 31 |
| A.1.8.4. Diaspora members .....                                    | 32 |
| A.1.9. International cooperation .....                             | 32 |

# 1. Introduction

Eritrea, gained formal independence in 1993 with a UN supervised referendum, after thirty years of war that ended in 1991. After Independence, until 1997, Eritrea showed significant socio- economic growth, which was expected to keep up and pick up. However, in spite of the high expectations, when the border conflict with Ethiopia erupted in 1998, the Eritrean economy was seriously disrupted resulting in reversing the attained socio-economic development. This effect on the socio-economic situation has continued, even after cessation of hostilities with Ethiopia, due to the following no-peace no war situation in which Eritrea is found until the present moment.

In spite of this drawback, however, considerable achievements are being made in terms of reconstructing the infrastructure base of Eritrea with the focus on creating a conducive environment for enhanced socio-economic development of all the Regions and promoting investment endeavours. These activities, being implemented by the Warsai Yikealo campaign are actively participated by the men and women members of the national service, through apprenticeships, in the process of which, they benefit directly from skills transfer and development.

Thus with the changing socio-economic circumstances in Eritrea, government, private employers and National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW) share a broad concern about the current economic development: the growth pace of national economy, inflation, private sector development, productivity, (un)employment and income development are becoming common worries. Apart from that, the different policy makers in the socio-economic field recognize the need of investments in potential sectors, education and the infrastructure. Eritrea has obviously great potential, considering the possibilities in mining, fishery tourism and as a transition country. Furthermore the desire of the Eritrean work force to develop their skills and employability and to be self-reliant, are obvious strengths.

It is with this backdrop that the NCEW leadership is assessing NCEW's current performances and mode of operation. NCEW had to acknowledge that results are affected because of the state of the economy. Assessing the mode of operations raised the question if the current methodology of a mainly decentralized focus on collective bargaining agreements on enterprise-level is sufficient to meet today's challenges. In the vision of NCEW leadership the actual situation calls for an additional forceful set of initiatives on national level, unifying the different economic forces in government, employers and trade unions.

The results of this assessment and the proposed course for the coming years are elaborated in the next chapters.

Chapter 2 describes NCEW's development, activities to date, the results and the profile.

Chapter 3 goes into the external environment NCEW currently faces.

Chapter 4 analyses today's challenges for NCEW and if the organization is ready to meet them.

Chapter 5 describes the proposed course for NCEW.

Chapter 6 goes into the proposed organizational development of NCEW.

## 2. NCEW's development

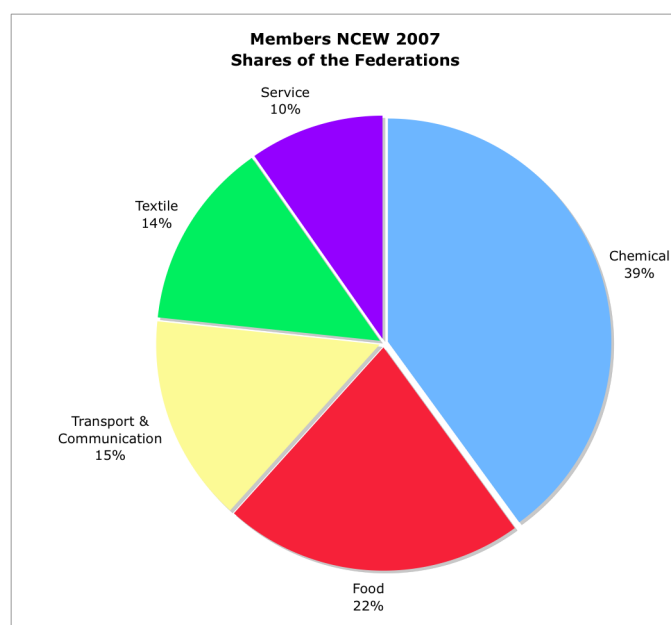
### 2.1 History in short

The National Confederation of Eritrean Workers was established<sup>1</sup> in 1994 in a congress consisting of representatives from base unions and Federations, ensuring a decentralised and independent structure.

NCEW was established as a confederation of five federations that constitute base unions, operating in the similar production or service areas. These five Federations are:

- Food, Beverage, Hotels, Tourism, Agriculture and Tobacco Workers Federation – FBWF
- Mining, Chemical, Construction and General Workers Federation – MCCGWF
- Service Industries Workers Federation – SIWF
- Transport and Communication Workers Federation – TCWF
- Textile, Leather and Shoe Workers Federation – TLSWF

| Members NCEW 2007 Men and Women |       |       |        |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|
| Sector                          | Total | Male  | Female |
| Chemical ea                     | 10425 | 7414  | 3011   |
| Food ea                         | 5611  | 2509  | 3102   |
| Transport ea                    | 3933  | 2887  | 1046   |
| Textile ea                      | 3514  | 715   | 2799   |
| Service                         | 2517  | 1773  | 744    |
| Total                           | 26000 | 15298 | 10702  |



<sup>1</sup> NCEW is considered as the successor of the NUEW (National Union of Eritrean Workers). NUEW was established in 1979, during the liberation struggle and was based on the principles of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. NCEW's founding was in fact the proof of new times arriving, in which a focus on more primary – traditional – trade union work became dominant.

NCEW and the five Federations have developed and decided about their own respective constitutions, elected their representatives, organised their administrative set-ups and implemented their respective programmes.

Congresses were held in 1994, 1998 and 2005.

Contrary to its predecessor, membership was initially only open to workers residing in Eritrea.

An established Committee on Women's Affairs ensured that women workers issues were given attention. The congress in 2005 elected many women in positions at the highest leadership level, including as a chairperson and secretary of Federations.

The NCEW and the Federations have become affiliates of regional and international trade union movements and workers associations, such as the International Trade Unions Confederation (ITUC), the Global Union Federations (GUF), ITUC - Africa, the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

From the moment of becoming operational NCEW strived (and strives) to play an important role as a national actor and civil society movement in the promotion of social dialogue with the government and the Eritrean Employers Federation, in order to create consensus about rights at work and socio-economic policies, including labour relations, standard collective agreements and the introduction of social security. NCEW views social dialogue as the most effective way of addressing the complex challenges of building economic competitiveness and social equity.

## 2.2 Organisation

NCEW consists of the following bodies: Congress, Central Committee and Executive Committee.

The Congress is the supreme body of the NCEW. The function of the Congress is to:

- Approve, change and/or modify the NCEW Constitution
- Chart NCEW's political, social and economic strategies
- Adopt and plan the objectives, plans and programmes
- Nominate and elect members of the Central Committee and approve their work

The Central Committee is composed of 55 permanent and 4 substitute members.

The Central Committee:

- Prepares the agenda for the Congress
- Oversees the implementation of directives, decisions and recommendations of the Congress
- Charts the work plans to carry these into effect.
- Examines and approves budget proposals submitted by the Executive Committee
- Nominates the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary and the 7 other members of the Executive Committee, chosen among the members of the Central Committee
- Executes other responsibilities as assigned to by the Congress.

The - 9 members – Executive Committee is accountable to the Central Committee.

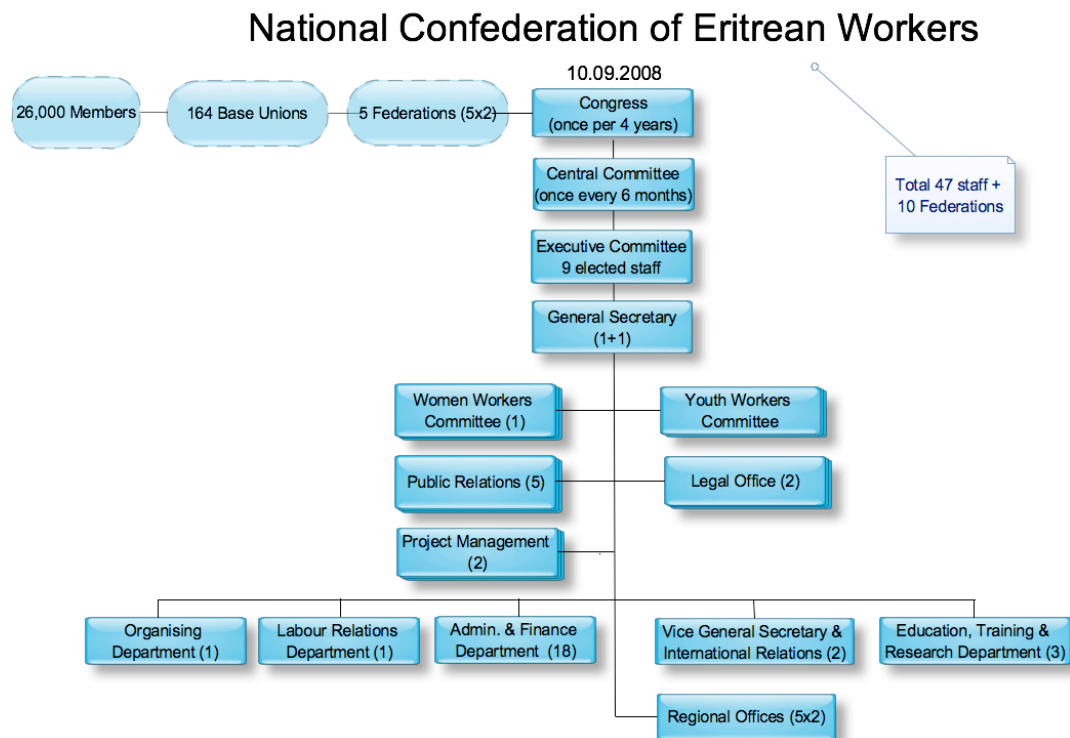
The Executive Committee:

- Executes or oversees the execution of decisions, directives and policies of the Congress and the Central Committee
- Executes and oversees the work programmes of affiliated Federations

- Provides appropriate directives.

The General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary and the 7 other members of the Executive Committee manage and lead the NCEW including the following departments, Offices and Committees:

- International relations
- Labour relations
- Research and Training
- Organisational affairs
- Administration and Finance
- Regional / Zonal affairs
- Public relations
- Legal office
- Project management
- Women Workers Committee
- Youth Workers Committee



- NCEW's methodological approach is based on a decentralised mode of operation, in which the base unions are the essential organs for services, both collective and individual. Activities and actions are mainly organised on enterprise level, rather than on sector- or national level.
- The strategic profile of NCEW is based on the following characteristics:
  - Reasonable – somewhat comparable with Nordic European trade unions
  - Responsible – choosing for a broad oriented trade union profile, considering all societal aspects
  - Loyal – in seeking balance between members' interests and economic development
  - Moderate – deliberation / negotiation oriented, rather than industrial action oriented.

## 2.3 Mission NCEW

NCEW's mission is:

To have a work force, whose rights are protected, which is disciplined, and is working to secure its social and economic role within society.

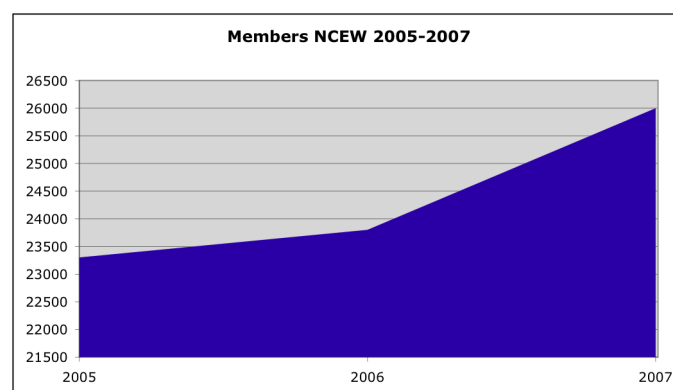
NCEW strives with its mission towards protecting and serving the rights and interests of all workers in Eritrea through:

- Participating and representing workers during national political, economic, social policy design and formulation as well as planning of programs as a watchdog of their rights as well as to ensure that workers contribute their share
- Promoting employment focused national policy and development through which social and economic interests and justice are achieved and working to reduce rates of unemployment.
- Promoting the respect of the ILO objectives and standards to contribute towards social justice, world peace, equality and Labour Rights
- Striving to build a united workers movement without discrimination based on race, colour, political opinion, religion, creed or sex.
- Ensuring the strength and unity of workers by unionizing the un-unionized workers to join their respective Federations and the Confederation.
- Raising the awareness of workers on the workers rights as enshrined in Eritrean Labour Laws and International Standards
- Promoting the protection of women's rights and youth workers' rights in respect to equal pay for equal work, equal opportunities, health and safety at work and skill development.
- Enabling workers meaningful participation in the activities and decisions of their workplaces. Creating an atmosphere whereby workers could express their voices through democratic channels.
- Upgrading workers capacity through educational programmes and seminars as a means of meaningful contribution to their workplaces.
- Uphold all forms of anti-labour activities.
- Working to achieve a proper standard for workers health and safety
- Working for industrial peace and increased production and productivity.
- Strengthening ties with International and Regional Trade Unions and organizations for solidarity and support.

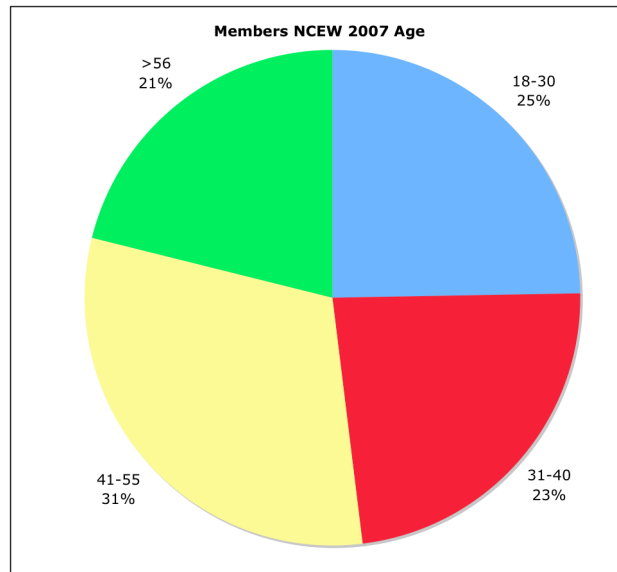
## 2.4 Main Achievements

NCEW's main achievements and values to date are:

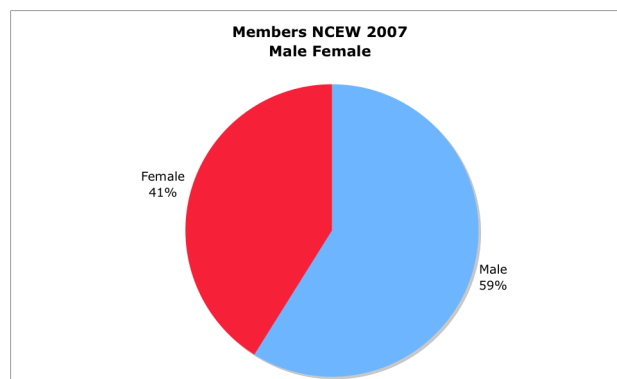
- Since its establishment, NCEW has introduced democratisation of the unions, ensuring members influence. For that purpose, approximately 160 base unions and five sector Federations were created, with a total membership of 26,000 workers.



- NCEW created one of the few civil society movement organisations and the only national trade union movement in the country with aim of building a strong and democratic trade union movement within the urban and rural areas of the country.



- NCEW enhanced growing involvement of women in the trade unions. Equality issues and improved working conditions for women have become part of key NCEW programmes. The union is encouraging women to play a more active role in trade union functions and leadership.



- NCEW promotes tripartite approaches and harmonious industrial relations. Modern industrial relations are new to many Eritrean Managers and Union Leaders. In co-operation with the International Labor Organization (ILO) and many international trade union organisations, NCEW organized major industrial relations conferences that promote modern and harmonious industrial relations in the country.
- NCEW has a training department that conducts and coordinates educational activities. Seminars, symposia, workshops and trainings are carried out to promote the principles and practices of free and democratic trade unionism in the country. These educational activities have enhanced and enriched the members' knowledge on trade unionism, industrial relations, Eritrean Labour Law, occupational health and safety, HIV/Aids as well as other relevant topics.
- NCEW undertakes human resource development and vocational skill development activities targeting its representatives, men and women workers as



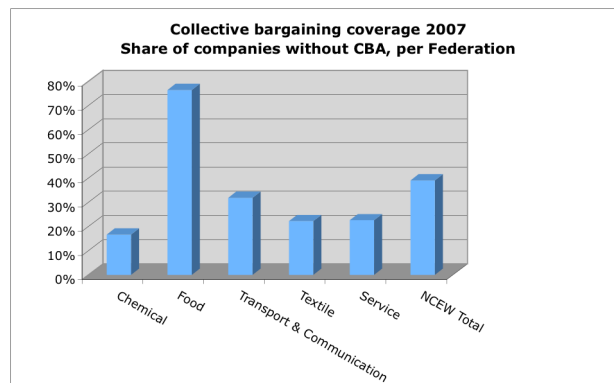
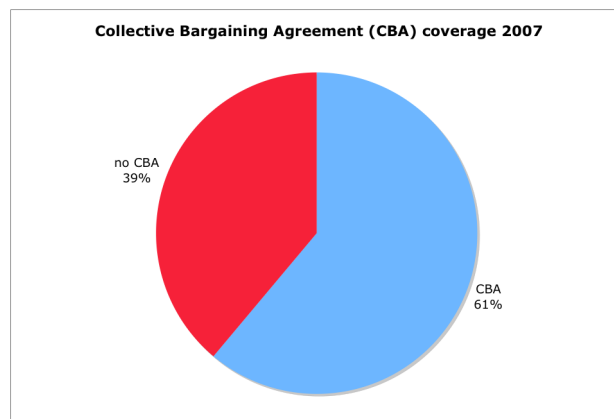
well as other citizens. Providing vocational training for 400 demobilized men and women workers in four different fields was one of the activities that was successfully undertaken in collaboration with the National Commission for Demobilization and Reintegration and service providers.

| Trainings NCEW 2007                                      |  |              |
|--|--|--------------|
| Title  | Topics   | Participants |
| Role of the trade unions                                 | International Labour Standards<br>HIV/AIDS awareness   | 56           |
| Rights of women workers                                  | Women and the trade union<br>Rights of women workers<br>Collective bargaining negotiations<br>Dispute resolutions<br>Equality at work<br>International Labour Standards<br>Awareness on HIV/AIDS | 45           |
| Tripartite workshop HIV/AIDS                             | Occupational Health & Safety<br>International Labour Standards   | 58           |
| Tripartite workshop Occupational Health                  | Occupational Health & Safety<br><br>Community capacity enhancement<br>Policy on HIV/AIDS at the workplace  | 70           |
| Training Commemoration Day of injured and dead workers   | Occupational Health & Safety<br><br>Policy on HIV/AIDS<br>HIV/AIDS awareness   | 78           |
| Training & Capacity building and trade unionism in Sudan | Trade Unionism<br><br>Informal sector employment<br>Decent work<br>Strategic planning  | 16           |
| ToT Occupational Health & Safety                         | Occupational Health & Safety<br>Labour inspection<br>International Labour Standards<br>Awareness on HIV/AIDS   | 72           |
| Peer facilitators training                               | Awareness on HIV/AIDS<br>Occupational Health & Safety  | 142          |

- After the forceful deportation of and denial of the basic rights of Eritrean workers and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin in 1998, NCEW represented the deported workers in a procedure at the International Labour Organization (ILO). A special ILO commission looked into the case and after two years the ILO presented a positive conclusion to look into the deported workers' compensation and rights issues, according to conventions, 111 (discrimination (employment and occupation) and 158 (Termination of Employment Convention). NCEW was also instrumental in looking and finding appropriate jobs for many deported workers.
- NCEW advocated successful for the Labour Code 2001/118 in which essential and basic rights for workers were regulated and free collective bargaining and other union rights were recognised.

- NCEW promoted and realised the adoption of all essential ILO conventions by the government.
- NCEW developed a process framework for collective bargaining agreements and provided support to members in negotiations and actively supports its affiliates in negotiations with their employers. To-date around 100 active collective agreements became effective.

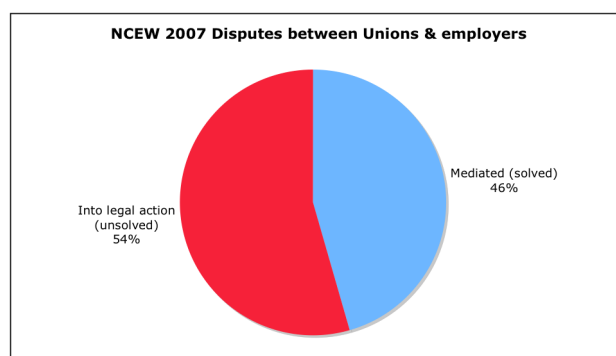
| Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) coverage 2007 |            |            |           |
|---|------------|------------|-----------|
| Sector  | Total      | CBA        | No CBA    |
| Chemical  | 42         | 35         | 7         |
| Food  | 51         | 12         | 39        |
| Transport & Communication                           | 22         | 15         | 7         |
| Textile   | 18         | 14         | 4         |
| Service   | 31         | 24         | 7         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>164</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>64</b> |



- NCEW provided support in dispute settlements. The affiliated Federations and the base unions are encouraged to settle disputes at the source. When any labour dispute arises in any enterprise, both the management and the representatives of the employee's associations are becoming responsible in resolving the dispute in a spirit of understanding.

| NCEW 2006 Disputes between Unions & employers |       |                   |                              |
|---|-------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Sector  | Total | Mediated (solved) | Into legal action (unsolved) |
| Chemical                                      | 26    | 12                | 14                           |
| Food  | 5     | 2                 | 3                            |
| Transport & Communication                     | 26    | 5                 | 21                           |
| Textile                                       | 6     | 6                 | 0                            |
| Service                                       | 9     | 7                 | 2                            |
| NCEW  | 7     | 4                 | 3                            |
| Total   | 79    | 36                | 43                           |

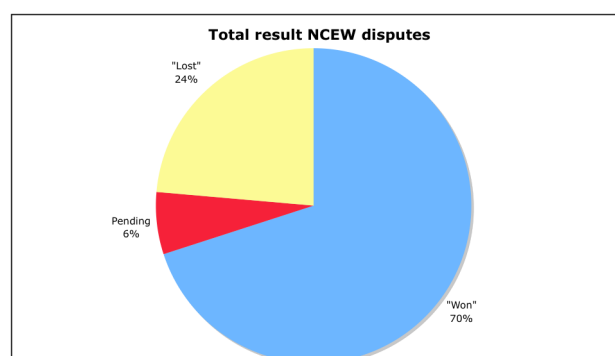
| NCEW 2007 Disputes between Unions & employers |       |                   |                              |
|---|-------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Sector  | Total | Mediated (solved) | Into legal action (unsolved) |
| Chemical                                      | 33    | 11                | 22                           |
| Food  | 6     | 2                 | 4                            |
| Transport & Communication                     | 50    | 16                | 34                           |
| Textile                                       | 9     | 6                 | 3                            |
| Service                                       | 7     | 6                 | 1                            |
| NCEW  | 20    | 16                | 4                            |
| Total   | 125   | 57                | 68                           |



| Dispute frequency per 1000 members |      |      |
|------------------------------------|------|------|
| Federation                         | 2006 | 2007 |
| Chemical                           | 2.5  | 3.2  |
| Food                               | 0.9  | 1.1  |
| Transport & Communication          | 6.6  | 12.7 |
| Textile                            | 1.7  | 2.6  |
| Service                            | 3.6  | 2.8  |
| Total                              | 3.0  | 4.8  |

- NCEW championed the establishment of a Labour Court. NCEW have campaigned successfully for the establishment of a Labour Board to handle individual labour disputes.

| NCEW Legal disputes 2006 & 2007 |       |           |         |          |            |           |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----------|---------|----------|------------|-----------|
| Year                            | Total | Mediation | Decided | Rejected | Unresolved | Next year |
| 2006                            | 38    | 16        | 11      | 3        | 0          | 8         |
| 2007                            | 45    | 10        | 13      | 2        | 7          | 13        |
| Total                           | 83    | 26        | 24      | 5        | 7          | 21        |



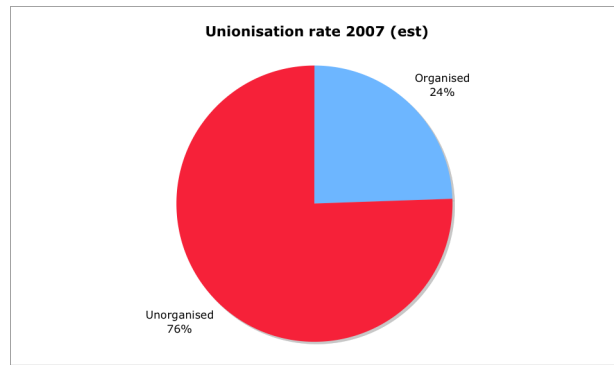
- NCEW has also taken the initiative to organize the development of co-operatives in the country with the aim to increase their participation in attaining household and national food security objective and improve the standard of living of rural and urban workers. NCEW, in collaboration with its social partners, succeeded in formulating and proposing a draft law for cooperatives, to be adopted with the adoption of the National Civil Service Code. Moreover, through services and support done through the Shemshemia farm is actively working to promote formation of cooperatives and pre-cooperative forms in the Gash Barka Region.
- NCEW designed, developed and conducted programmes for the awareness of the health risks of HIV/AIDS and the human right treats. In collaboration with its social partners, the NCEW has also drafted policy guidelines on managing HIV/AIDS at the Work Place.

## 2.5 Organisational assessment

An assessment of the current state of NCEW is shown below:

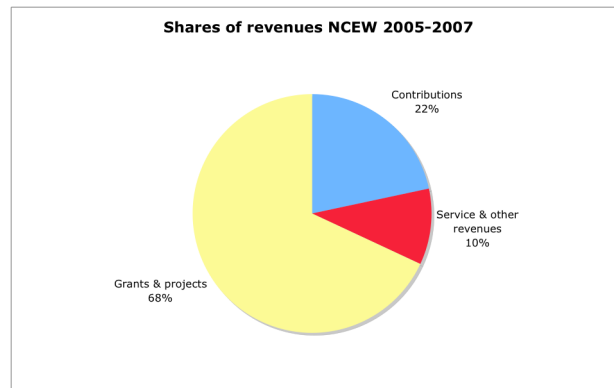
- Based on the structure and their constitution internal democracy and influence of members are ensured.
- The Labour Code 2001/118, NCEW's constitution and the lack of (financial) ties with government, demonstrate NCEW's independence from the government.
- With an estimated unionisation share of 24%, NCEW is to be considered as a representative trade union.

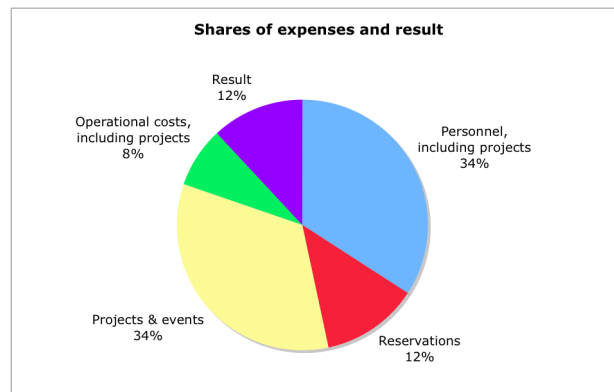
| Work force Eritrea 2007 (est) |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Population 15-64              | 1,500,000 |
| Participation                 | 750,000   |
| Unemployed                    | 37,500    |
| Mobilised                     | 75,000    |
| Civil service                 | 15,000    |
| Agriculture                   | 525,000   |
| Entrepreneurs & SME           | 27,000    |
| Other public & private sector | 70,500    |
| Of which unionized            | 26,000    |
| in percent                    | 37%       |



- Regarding the financial position of NCEW, the following should be noted:
  - Revenues and expenses over the period 2005-2007 are in balance; a small positive result could be booked.
  - Reservations made for maintenance and depreciations for buildings and equipment indicate a generally healthy financial policy.
  - Dependence of project contributions and grants to date is quite high and should be a point of future attention, in order to increase the level of structural revenues.

| Aggregated financial results NCEW 2005-2007 (Eurox1000) |     |                                       |     |
|---|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Contributions   | 237 | Personnel, including projects         | 375 |
| Service & other revenues                                | 113 | Reservations                          | 135 |
| Grants & projects                                       | 744 | Projects & events                     | 368 |
|   |     | Operational costs, including projects | 85  |
|   |     | Result                                | 130 |
| 1094  |     | 1094                                  |     |





- Systems and procedures for organisational and work planning, budgeting and monitoring, including managerial data regarding the development of the NCEW are mostly absent; this needs attention
- A consistent and logical sequence of activities (initial idea > discussion > initial decision > elaboration > policy formulation > planning > implementation > evaluation > adjustment) needs to be put in place.
- NCEW employs many people in relation to the number of members, compared to European trade unions; the share of personnel in overhead positions is relatively high, approximately 50%. NCEW has obviously the potential of becoming more effective by applying a more intense organisational efficiency
- One of the areas of potential efficiency is to improve network facilities, Internet access and to broadly increase the computer literacy of staff
- The structure of the professional organisation could need attention, in terms of closer cooperation between – or merge of – departments
- The physical infrastructure is in place: one head office in Asmara with 5 regional offices; communication and transport facilities need attention in order to reach and communicate with members and headquarters
- A specialised economic and policy formulation function is absent and missing
- NCEW is not yet closely involved in governments preparations for a national development strategy; a formal structure for socio-economic deliberation has not yet been established
- Basic collective services are in place, though it is questionable if they are optimal at the moment because of the current economic situation, which requires for NCEW to also and intensely develop activities on national and sector levels
- Basic individual services are in place, especially legal services seem to perform well. There is undoubtedly perspective for a further development and increase of individual services, for instance for entrepreneurs without personnel.

## 3. External environment

In order to indicate current and future challenges for NCEW, the confederation's "playground" – the external environment – needs to be charted.

### 3.1 Social and societal aspects

The relevant social or societal aspects are:

- Worker's rights are relatively fair, according to the Labour Code 118/2001; there is no urgent need for improvement in the legal position of employees: the Labour Code ensures the minimum rights
- There is – again regulated in the Labour Code – free collective bargaining on every level with mediation facilities
- Trade union rights are legally recognised
- NCEW is respected and appreciated, not only by their members, but also by employers and government on regional and national level
- The people NCEW represents – the labour force – should be considered as disciplined, service oriented, and having the ability to maintain good interpersonal relations and showing a desire for skills and economic development
- Eritrea should be recognised and renowned for the low crime rate, limited corruption, internal peace, without neither racial nor religious issues and Eritreans as having a strong desire to be/become self-reliant: truly competitive advantages.

### 3.2 Economic aspects

In economic sense there is reason for – generally with government and employers broadly shared – concern:

- The first concern is that data and statistics regarding economic development are not yet available, which hampers "taking up stock", defining policies and monitoring developments
- Due to decreased profitability and economic developments NCEW is confronted with limited opportunities in the growth of the financial provisions in collective bargaining agreements, i.e. wage increments
- Employment appears to be declining, there is fear for growing unemployment
- Due to limited possibilities for business profits and wage increments, income development does not seem to keep up with the rising prices
- Obviously, (the danger of) unemployment and inflation are related to a lower private sector development: productivity and profitability need to be brought back to satisfying and needed levels
- The balance between supply and demand on the labour market seems to need improvement in order to create sustainable conditions for a growing economy; this leads to a call for investments in education in order to meet the needs of employment / employers.

Apart from these concerns there is enough reason to remain constructive, with appropriate optimism: Eritrea has perspective and opportunities in the development of a variety of sectors:

- Fishery
- Mining
- Tourism
- Services
- Agriculture
- In developing as a transition country, optimising the function of the seaports
- Manufacturing and developing related industries.

## 4. Analyses of current challenges

Apart from general concerns about employment, inflation and development of the economic sectors, NCEW experiences stagnation in collective bargaining and labour conditions development due to deteriorating economic circumstances. These circumstances also endanger aspirations for a further development of social security and upgrading of education to meet economic demands.

Most certainly NCEW and its social partners in government and employers have to face challenges; challenges that should be addressed and dealt with on national and sector level in order to create the conditions to reverse the spiral of decline into sustainable growth.

This means for NCEW that in addition to its initiatives and activities in the enterprises, it will need to explore initiatives and activities on national and sector level, obliging the leadership to accept responsibility: This responsibility entails foremost to create a climate for shared national accountability of all social partners, boosting the economic possibilities of Eritrea, capitalising on the country's strengths.

In order to do so, the question arises if NCEW is currently fit to meet these new challenges. The analyses of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats as shown below will indicate the answer.

### 4.1 SWOT Analyses

| SWOT NCEW  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Strong</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic profile</li> <li>• Respected / appreciated</li> <li>• Legal position</li> <li>• Basic infrastructure</li> <li>• Legal services</li> <li>• Defense / protection</li> </ul>   | <b>Weak</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills and knowledge</li> <li>• Structured influence on national level</li> <li>• Organisational development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational orientation</li> <li>• Systems</li> <li>• Data collection &amp; analyses</li> <li>• Organisation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Opportunity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National socio-economic commitment / agreement</li> <li>• Pilots for Social Partnership in VET</li> <li>• Improvement, structuring and extension of services</li> <li>• Demobilisation</li> <li>• Growth members in private &amp; public sector</li> <li>• Development of individual services</li> </ul> | <b>Threat</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deteriorating economy</li> <li>• Growing informal economy</li> <li>• ("wild") trade union competition</li> <li>• Regional instability</li> <li>• </li> </ul>   |



## 4.2 Explanation...

### **Strong**

- The strategic profile of NCEW – reasonable, responsible and moderate – is extremely suitable for the current circumstances; it ensures building up relations and a negotiation position
- Being respected and appreciated by other social partners enables to strengthen the necessary relations and functional position
- The legal position of NCEW, which is recognized and mandated by law enables it to successfully organize members and negotiate their rights on an individual and collective basis. It also enables NCEW if necessary to successfully claim negotiations on national level.
- As described before, good results are accomplished in the legal services of NCEW
- Previous results show a strong experience in defending and protecting rights of members

### **Weak**

- NCEW needs to enter new fields, with different demands; apart from that – being a young trade union – knowledge, skills and techniques related to industrial relations, economy, collective bargaining processes, negotiations, legal positions and public relations need general upgrading to make the NCEW ready for its next phase.
- As explained in the assessment of the NCEW organisation, the organisational development of the confederation, both in policy development and management, needs attention.

### **Opportunity**

- Current socio-economic circumstances call for initiatives for a national socio-economic agreement, unifying all social partners
- The recently established six colleges for vocational education are an opportunity to experience with shared responsibility for improving the relation between education and business life
- Prospects for demobilisation will not only increase and enhance the quality of the labour force (economic), it will also have considerable social impact, and create new possibilities for membership growth.
- Trade union work has an interest in growing economic development: it opens new ways for a growth of the organisation
- Development and increase of individual services delivered by the NCEW, for instance related to entrepreneurs without personnel and cooperatives can strengthen the sustainability of the organisation

### **Threat**

- Obviously, a further deteriorating economy is a threat for the health, sustainability and development of NCEW
- Characteristic for the informal economy is its formal invisibility and the hidden social effects; enduring and sustainable growth is created in the formal economy.
- Lack of recording success in its endeavours, could create a situation for NCEW in which new and “wild”, more radical, trade unions arise.
- Evidently, regional instability has its economic impact.

### 4.3 Important change....

Essential in the change / development of NCEW's course is that its strategic approach shifts from a decentralised - base union - approach to a model in which centralised policy formulation is more prominent.

This is indicated by the current national circumstances.

This shift would mean a more intensified deliberation process with base union representatives.

## 5. Proposed course

### 5.1 Essentials

Essential in the proposed course of NCEW is to recognise that:

- There is a need for a national and possibly unified approach for the socio-economic policy
- This approach should be organised in a structure for socio-economic dialogue and deliberation
- This vision should be addressed and activities should be prepared to advocate the interests and priorities of NCEW and its members, in a manner characterised by the strive for tripartite harmony and constructivism
- As a result of this vision, more emphasis need to be put on developments at sector levels, for instance related to sector policies and collective bargaining
- This requires a different mode of operation, compared to the established decentralised practice, including a more intensified communication with members and cadres in the preparation and execution of these policies
- NCEW's internal organisational development should be directed towards meeting these new challenges and phase, meanwhile dealing with the identified points of attention and other essential opportunities

Further details of this course will be elaborated on the next pages.

### 5.2 Common ground

Important elements of this course could not come at a better time, since the government is also currently intensely working on the national development strategy and policies. In a joint meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers on 28 and 29 August 2008, President Isaias Afwerki presented a paper focusing on coping with current economic challenges.

The President stressed the need for “continuously streamlining the existing national economic mechanisms .... in a manner that minimises negative side-effects and ensures micro-economic stability.” The President also underlined the “significance of pursuing efficient management methods aimed at promoting stability and confidence in the people’s day-to-day living.”

Creating a structure for tripartite national socio-economic dialogue and policies is a form of “streamlining existing economic mechanisms” and unifying the economic power of government, employers and trade unions can be considered as “pursuing an efficient management method to promote stability and confidence”.

Obviously the NCEW-angle for a socio-economic agreement touches a common ground; there is a broad awareness that the country needs united economic powers in which the circumstances force for a *smart guided* economic development.

As stipulated before, creating a structure for this proposed tripartite-based socio-economic dialogue on national level seems not to require immediate and specific legislation, since article 90 sub 3 of the Labour Code 118/2001 already creates the possibility of such deliberation and structure.

### 5.3 Agenda-input socio-economic agreement

More important than a structure for the proposed dialogue, is the content of such deliberations. It is the view of NCEW that the focus of this dialogue would be directed towards creating common understanding and consensus about the shared socio-economic concerns.

Elements that would need to be discussed include:

- How can we stimulate private sector development
- What should be considered as prioritised sectors
- What should be the most prosperous investment programme
- How can we attract foreign capital and industry
  
- How can we come to essential forecasts regarding:
  - Productivity
  - Innovation
  - Employment
  - Social developments
  - Education
  
- How can we create circumstances for balance in the development of prices and wages and how can we maintain control
  
- What should be done to ensure food security
- What can be done to accomplish poverty alleviation
  
- How can we enhance sector policies and development
- What can be done to create effective labour market policies and (vocational) education
  
- Should we – in the current circumstances – come to a national framework for collective bargaining
  
- What kind of perspective can we create for social security on the middle and long term

### 5.4 Sector development

As motivated above, creating a national platform and deliberation is not the only new action to be undertaken; creating bi- and/or tri-partite levels of deliberation / negotiation for the different economic sectors in Eritrea is also important to enhance the economic perspective.

Main functions of these sector deliberations / negotiations are:

- To develop sector policies regarding:
  - Growth stimulation – what is specifically needed to stimulate growth
  - Diminishing blockades – are there specific sector barriers in trade or production circumstances that can be diminished or solved
  - Productivity & employment forecast
  - Vocational education, training & continuous learning – are there specific needs or gaps to be bridged
  - Human Resources Development – how can we upgrade sectors both economically and socially

These policies will be developed on a tripartite level: government, employers and trade unions, finding/negotiating common grounds.

In another manner this sector structure could be used for bipartite negotiations between employers and trade unions: to create Collective Bargaining variants for a sector. One could think of:

- A standard collective bargaining agreement for a whole sector
- Model collective bargaining agreements – comprising of the shared view of sector parties on the content of the different issues – to be agreed on enterprise level
- Basic or partial collective bargaining agreements on sector level, with “tailor made” possibilities on enterprise level
- A mixture of these different variants (i.e. regional or group levels).

There is one external condition to be fulfilled to make a sector structure successful: it needs sector organised employers and employers associations made ready for this approach. In that respect capacity building for employers associations could be necessary.

## 5.5 Pilot Social Partnership

Appropriate (vocational) education is a very important condition for increasing competitiveness, private sector development and sustainable employment/employability of workers.

As indicated before, the relationship between vocational education and training on one hand and employment on the other hand seems sub-optimal, despite previous efforts. There are however new interesting developments. Recently six colleges for vocational education and training<sup>2</sup> were established.

NCEW would like to investigate and consider the possibilities to create pilots for social partnership in these Colleges.

The content of this social partnership would be based on creating a (regional/Zobal) tripartite responsibility for:

- Improving the relation between demanded and supplied qualifications and skills of students/workers – therefore improving the job prospects (and employment) orientation of the education
- Improving the forecasting of future vacancies and their content, in order to enable the educational institutions to make appropriate preparations
- Relevant – labour market oriented – aspects of the educational curriculum development
- Facilities for continuous / continued training and education in order to improve competitiveness, private sector development and enduring employment/employability for workers
- Apprenticeship programmes.

## 5.6 Other service-oriented developments

Further desired developments in strengthening and broadening the services of NCEW are:

- To increase the coverage of collective bargaining resulting in more workers enjoying the benefits of collective bargaining

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<sup>2</sup> Information from the Ministry of National Development (MoND)

- To expand the membership base of NCEW and its affiliates; this development would need to be combined with extending the working area of NCEW. These possibilities are:
  - Opening possibilities for a membership for civil servants
  - Seeking and exploring cooperation with professional associations as the Teachers Association and the Nurses Association
  - To develop services for cooperatives in the agricultural sector, for entrepreneurs without personnel in other sectors and for the informal sector; services in terms of:
    - Business plan support
    - (Micro-) credit advice and mediation
    - (Collective) insurance mediation
    - Mediation in shared services for product / service development
    - Legal advice
  - Opening membership / combined trade union membership for Eritreans in the Diaspora.
- To intensify (Regional) international relations in order to:
  - Create / strengthen the inter-regional solidarity and the regional international cooperation with trade unions in Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Djibouti, in order to – by using the practical scope of trade union developments – contribute where possible to peace and cooperation.
  - Build further on the international cooperation with EU, UNDP, ILO, ITUC, OATUU, ILO and others
  - Establish and/or maintain bilateral relations with other national and international trade unions as well as International and national NGOs.

## 5.7 Analyses of NCEW's mission

It is important to see if this general indication for a change in course fits with the mission of NCEW.

First of all, one of the essences of the mission is to “ensure workers’ social and economic role within society”; that is exactly what this change entails: to ensure and promote the workers rights on a fair share in an eventually prosperous economy.

Furthermore, the first objective says: “Participating and representing workers during national political, economic, social policy design and formulation as well as planning of programs as a watchdog of their rights as well as to ensure that workers contribute their share.” This matches fully with the proposed change, moreover in the proposed way, NCEW not only acts as a “watchdog”, but also takes initiatives towards a growing economy.

Also “promoting employment focused national policy and development through which social and economic interests and justice are achieved and working to reduce rates of unemployment”, will be effectively done following this proposal.

“Raising the awareness of workers on the workers rights as enshrined in Eritrean Labour Laws and International Standards” will become effective if, as foreseen, the coverage of collective bargaining increases; the same logic applies on “unionizing the un-unionized workers”: if the service area of the NCEW and its Federation increases, one should expect growth in members.

A point of attention in the internal procedures of NCEW is to create “an atmosphere whereby workers could express their voices through democratic channels”. Shifting

policy development and levels of negotiation and deliberation could put pressure on the principles of the democratic process within the NCEW.

In order to deal with this possible pressure, it is therefore necessary to strengthen the role of the regional/Zonal offices in the sense that they become an important point of contact between the members and the leadership. Regional offices should therefore be able to consult with representatives and members about policies and developments. This approach will also upgrade “workers capacity” as it is a natural “educational programme” and should be considered as a “meaningful contribution to their workplaces”.

This approach will furthermore ensure “industrial peace and increased production and productivity”.

And last but not least “strengthening ties with International and Regional Trade Unions and organisations for solidarity and support” need to be part of this approach, since achieving regional international cooperation contributes to the necessary stability, which is a condition for socio-economic development.

## 6. Organisational development

Foremost, in the development of the NCEW are the strategic priorities as identified in the previous chapter:

- Accomplishing a socio-economic cooperation and agreement
- Creating social partnership
- Increasing collective bargaining coverage
- Broadening the possibilities for membership
- Extending services for cooperatives and entrepreneurs without personnel
- Establishing and maintaining regional international cooperation

Furthermore, dealing with the identified current weaknesses as described in the organisational assessment is essential. These weaknesses are related to the need to:

- Upgrade the knowledge and skills primarily of the NCEW personnel and also Federations staff
- Organisational development in terms of:
  - A logical setup of the organisation: efficient, effective, an optimal balance between resources and objectives
  - Introduction of systems for planning, budgeting, implementing and control of activities, processes and projects
  - Covering gaps in expertise

### 6.1 Outline investment programme

It is obvious that NCEW will need investments in order to deal with the new challenges and priorities as well as to give form to its organisational development.

On the basis of this plan, NCEW hopes to convince parties – such as the European Commission and UNDP – to provide means for the desired development in order to be able to strengthen the social dialogue, the socio-economic development and the regional international cooperation.

Support is sought for investments in:

- Upgrading of the staff with training and technical assistance
- Technical support in structuring the organisation, management and procedures
- (temporary) extension of specific qualified staff
- Facilities for ICT, communication and transport

### 6.2 Internal NCEW development

NCEW's internal development will consist of:

1. Creating an economic and policy development function within the NCEW organisation
2. Enhancing the general trade union & Human Resources policy support
3. Improving ICT facilities and the ICT literacy of all personnel
4. Upgrading the organisation and the (links between) individual departments
5. Upgrading the regional offices in order to enable them to undertake their new responsibility, strengthen their role as channel between the members and the leadership



6. Improving / structuring Promotion & PR, including accompanying campaigns for new services and new areas of service
7. Structuring management and administrative procedures
8. Creating sources for sustainable income and a consistently healthy financial position for NCEW

This programme will be realised using an approach of “building blocks”, making a new step after completion of the previous, enabling NCEW to focus on priorities.

Furthermore the programme will also include to prepare NCEW for “rejuvenation”, using the dynamic energy of younger NCEW-talents.

# Annex 1 Actions to be undertaken

## A.1.1 Organisational development

### A.1.1.1 Systems & procedures

Develop systems and procedures for organisational and work planning, budgeting, monitoring and control:

- Select Technical Assistance
- Assessment of current procedures
- Identification of needs
- Identification of gaps
- Feedback from management and staff
- Design procedures for planning, budgeting, monitoring and control
- Identification of internal data needs
- ICT aspects: what can be automated?
- Presentation for management: procedures & organisational consequences:
  - Planning & control cycle:
    - Policy planning process: initial idea > discussion > initial decision > elaboration > policy formulation > planning > implementation > evaluation > adjustment
    - Internal communication process: official organs, representatives, members, management, staff >>> what, when, how, how long
    - Budgeting process
    - Monitoring & evaluation
- Management decision
- Capacity building
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Evaluation & adjustment

### A.1.1.2. Internal organisation

Upgrading the organisation and the (links between) individual departments.

- (Select Technical Assistance)
- Assessment of organisation: division of responsibilities, work flow, relating with planning & control cycle
- Interviews with leadership, department heads & stakeholders
- Draft of possible alternatives
- Presentation for management
- Initial decision management
- Hearing department heads
- Hearing involved staff
- Management decision
- Planning of implementation
- Capacity building
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Evaluation & adjustment

### A.1.1.3. Healthy financial position

Creating sustainable income generation and a consistently healthy financial position for NCEW:

- Select Technical Assistance
- Assessing the different sources of income of NCEW

- Calculating breakeven points all current services
- Calculating breakeven points new services (cooperatives etc.)
- Development of in-source – outsource strategy
- Identify areas of efficiency profit
- Develop long term & midterm financial policy
- Management decision
- Planning of implementation
- Capacity building
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Evaluation & adjustment

#### **A.1.1.4. Zobal Offices**

Communication and transport facilities Zobal offices.

Intensified communication with members and cadres in the preparation and execution of policies, because of a more centralised approach. Upgrading the regional offices in order to be able to meet with their new responsibility, strengthen their channelling role between the members and the leadership:

- Improving general ICT and transport facilities Zobal offices
- Define needs on the basis of budget
- Purchasing process
- Purchase and install
- Select Technical Assistance
- Definition of changes in the communication with representatives and other cadre members on the basis of the planning & control cycle (P&C cycle)
- Definition of changes in the communication with members on the basis of the P&C cycle
- Definition of (additional) needs in terms of Zobal office and meeting facilities, communication, transport and staff.
- Presentation of mid-term investment plan for management
- Management decision
- Planning of implementation
- Capacity building
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Evaluation & adjustment

#### **A.1.2. ICT**

Improve network facilities, Internet access and broadly increase the computer literacy of staff.

- Appoint ICT staff (select Technical Assistance?)
  - Assessment of hardware
  - Assessment of available software and network facilities
- Assessment of computer literacy
- Investment plan hard- & software, including network facilities and internet
- Training plan personnel
- Presentation management
- Management decision
- Planning of implementation
- Training & exams
- Implementation, including purchases
- Monitoring
- Evaluation & adjustment

### A.1.3. Promotion & PR

Improving / structuring Promotion & PR, including accompanying campaigns for new services and new areas of service.

- Select Technical Assistance
- Definition and development of campaigns related to:
  - Socio-economic agreement
  - Increase collective bargaining coverage
  - New services for members
  - New areas for members
  - Regional international cooperation
- Development of campaign strategies, including use of “free publicity”
- Management decision
- Planning of implementation
- Capacity building
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Evaluation & adjustment

### A.1.4. Economic function

Creating an economic function within the NCEW organisation, including data collection, initial surveys and statistical analyses:

- Ensure temporary financial support
- Organise coaching (see training & capacity building)
- Select and appoint staff
- Development of indicative price /wage/cost of living surveys, different Zobas
- Selection of economic related policies to be developed:
  - Forecasting economic developments
  - Wage policies
  - Social security
  - Support to collective bargaining
  - Implementation
  - Monitoring
  - Evaluation & adjustment

### A.1.5. Trade union policies

Creating a policy development function within the NCEW organisation, enhancing the general trade union & Human Resources policy support:

- Ensure temporary financial support
- Organise coaching (see training & capacity building)
- Select and appoint staff
- Selection of policies to be developed:
  - The preparation of - more centralised - collective bargaining-models for enterprises
  - Preparation of issues related to Socio-Economic Council
  - General collective bargaining policies
  - Job grading systems
  - Retirement / pension systems and development
  - Support to collective bargaining
  - Implementation
  - Monitoring
  - Evaluation & adjustment

### A.1.6. Training

NCEW needs to enter new fields, with different demands; apart from that – being a young organisation – knowledge, skills and techniques related to industrial relations, economy, collective bargaining processes, negotiations, legal positions and public relations need general upgrading to make the organisation ready for its next phase. Upgrade the knowledge and skills foremost of the NCEW staff, the Federations staff and talented NCEW cadre members.

- Select a training provider with dedicated training programmes and preferably African experience
- Select Technical Assistance for the capacity building
- Identify the group(s) to be trained:
  - 30 persons, consisting of current NCEW and Federations professionals
  - 30 persons, selected out of the voluntary representatives, with talent and ambition to become professional
- Assess their current knowledge, skills and expertise
- Design on that basis:
  - A group training programme
  - Individual training programmes
- Suggested subjects training programme
  - History TU movement and social partnership experiences
  - Macro & micro economy
  - Collective bargaining processes
  - Negotiating
  - Dealing with the press & PR
  - HR policies and systems
  - Job grading systems
  - Labour law
  - Health & safety
  - Social security
  - Vocational education instruments
- At the end of the programme re-assess the knowledge, skills and expertise
- Report to the candidate and the management about the progress and the perspective
- Create a cooperation with the training provider
- Set up modules of training to be carried out within NCEW
- Make these modules also applicable for other groups of cadres/representatives in NCEW
- Research the possibilities to establish a regional international trade union training centre

### A.1.7. Capacity building

Next to upgrading the knowledge and skills of NCEW staff, the Federations staff and talented NCEW cadre members via training, supporting them in their practical work with capacity building activities, consisting of coaching and technical assistance, is also essential for sustainable development.

#### A.1.7.1. Coaching

- Selecting 4 groups of 15 negotiators, professional or volunteer, both with practical experience on national level
- Coach them in:
  - The preparations for a package of proposals with members
  - The preparation of proposals to employers
  - The preparations of negotiations

- The negotiations
- The communication with members and representatives
- The communication with other stakeholders, such as the media
- Select other areas of negotiation such as: collective lay off, restructuring, social dialogue
- Organisation of the negotiation process
- Organisation of the communication with members
- Using the media and other sources of influence

#### **A.1.7.2. Socio-economic agreement**

There is a need for a national and possibly unified approach for the socio-economic policy. This approach should be organised in a structure for socio-economic dialogue and deliberation.

- Select Technical Assistance
- Preparation of a short paper about the motives and objective for a socio-economic agreement
- Contacts with EFE and government (highest level) about the idea for strong socio-economic cooperation
- Development of the initiative to gather with government and EFE; make sure the government is represented by the socio-economic triangle /or the Eritrean quadrant (Finance, National Development, Economic Affairs, Labour & Social Affairs)
- Information gathering about government and employers' policies
- Preparation of a paper about the content of what needs to be achieved in the view of NCEW
- Deliberation with (top) NCEW representatives
- Preparation of the negotiation/deliberation strategy: what can be used as a basis for deliberation, what are priorities, what is negotiable – what not negotiable, indicate a possible outcome, indicate the process, think about how to create an optimal atmosphere.
- Preparation a common accepted agenda and time frame
- Deliberation with NCEW representatives
- Start and commencement of negotiations
- Preparation of the initial principle socio-economic agreement, including agreements about future / follow up deliberations
- Consultation of the (representative) members of NCEW
- Finalisation, implementation and updating of a socio-economic agreement
- The preparation of a structure for tri-partite socio-economic deliberation (including sector organs)

#### **A.1.7.3. Sector development**

The preparation of sector policies and collective bargaining processes on sector level in selected sectors:

- Select Technical Assistance
- Preparation of the subject for bilateral consultation with government and EFE
- On the basis of the result of that consultation, preparation of a feasibility study on the possibilities for implementation, the fulfilment of pre-conditions, selection of pilot-sectors and the implementation process.
- Preparation of a strategy to increase the coverage of collective bargaining agreements

#### **A.1.7.4. Social partnership**

The setup (both organisation and content) of pilots for social partnership in 6 colleges:

- Select Technical Assistance
- Preparation of the subject for bilateral consultation with government, EFE and the 6 colleges.
- On the basis of the result of that consultation preparation of a selection format in order to select the college with the highest possibility of success
- Selection of a college
- On the basis of a consultation with employers, selection of a group of employers with the most relevant vacancies and needs for (continued) training.
- Setting up the structure for social partnership in the pilot
- Setting up the content of the pilot
- Setting up the planning
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Evaluation & adjustment

### A.1.8. Members services / growth

An element of capacity building is also to provide technical assistance to the development of services in the NCEW organisation.

#### A.1.8.1. Civil Servants

Opening possibilities for a membership for civil servants in the public sector

- (Select Technical Assistance)
- Development of a strategy for extension of the working area of NCEW, especially related to civil servants
- Preparing and advocating for a change of law, if deemed necessary (relate to soc.econ. agreement)
- Research whether a separate Federation for civil servants is necessary
- Analyses of current individual and collective services to consider if they need to be adapted to the special position of civil servants
- Development of a campaign targeting possible civil servant members
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Evaluation & adjustment

#### A.1.8.2. Other professional associations

Seeking and exploring cooperation with professional associations as the Teachers Association and the Nurses Association:

- Preparation of possible areas of cooperation with related national organisations as the Teachers Association and the Nurses Association
- Assessment of possible partial (individual) services to be delivered by NCEW
- Definition of a “growing cooperation strategy”
- Planning
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Evaluation and adjustment

#### A.1.8.3. Cooperatives, entrepreneurs and the informal sector

To develop services for cooperatives in the agricultural sector, for entrepreneurs without personnel in other sectors and the informal sector; services in terms of:

- Business plan support
- (Micro-) credit advice and mediation
- (Collective) insurance mediation
- Mediation in shared services for product / service development
- Legal advice

Actions:

- Select Technical Assistance
- Identification of needs for support of cooperatives and entrepreneurs without personnel
- Development of possible services
- Cost calculation / break even calculations
- Management decision
- Planning
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Evaluation & adjustment

#### **A.1.8.4. Diaspora members**

- Research possibilities for direct Diaspora memberships
- Research possibilities for combined memberships with foreign trade unions
- Report to management
- Cost calculation / break even calculations
- Management decision
- Planning
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Evaluation & adjustment

### **A.1.9. International cooperation**

Create / strengthen the inter-regional solidarity and the regional international cooperation with trade unions in Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Djibouti, in order to – by using the practical scope of trade union developments – contribute where possible to peace and cooperation.

- Identification of areas for (practical) cooperation
- Setting up a centre of expertise for regional international cooperation
- Gathering comparable data and facts re trade union and socio-economic developments
- Identification of target groups for Standing Committees, working groups and seminars
- Organisation of 1<sup>st</sup> “Horn of Africa Trade Union Cooperation in Peace Congress”
- Monitoring
- Evaluation & adjustment

Build further on the international cooperation with EU, UNDP, ILO, ITC and OATUU

- Continued task

Establish and/or maintain bilateral relations with other national trade unions

- Continued task