

VIVA NAFAU

**The History and Achievements of the Namibia Food and Allied Workers Union
(NAFAU)**

From 1986 - 2000

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Abbreviations

CC	Central Committee
CCN	Council of Churches in Namibia
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
EU	European Union
FAWU	Food and Allied Workers Union
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
FIET	International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, Professional and Technical Employees
IUF	International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Catering, Tobacco and General Workers
LaRRI	Labour Resource and Research Institute
NAFAU	Namibian Food and Allied Workers Union
NEC	National Executive Committee
NUNW	National Union of Namibian Workers
SACCAWU	South African Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UNI	Union Network International

Acknowledgements

This publication draws on the wealth of information contained in NAFAU documents and information provided by former and current NAFAU leaders, activists and shop stewards. The purpose in producing this booklet is to comprehensively document the collective efforts of the workers and leaders who have made NAFAU one of Namibia's first and strongest trade unions. Unfortunately, we cannot name them all here, but we wish to acknowledge and thank them, primarily, for their dedication and contribution to NAFAU.

A special word of thanks goes to the following people for setting time aside to share their experiences for the benefit of this booklet: John Pandeni, Matheus Libereki, Eliphaz Nangolo, Hafeni Ndemula, Paulina Maharero, Helena Helmut, Taaimi Nujoma, John Ya Otto Nangudhu, David Namalenga, Cuana Angula, Thabo Moncho, Joseph Shikongo, Alfred Angula, Abissai Angula, Americos Shikeshu and Katriena Ovambo.

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Foreword

The struggle of workers has started many years ago and still must continue in the spirit of unity. It is my belief that the political struggle in Namibia is over and that the time has come to concentrate on the economic struggle.

Now is the time to use our power, strategies and skills as workers to make sure that we take control of our country's economy so that workers enjoy the fruits of their work. None but ourselves can make this transition a reality.

NAFAU is alive and well and will play an active part in ensuring that the workers rights we have won are being implemented at all workplaces. This will remain a key focus of our work. It is our duty to further develop our strategies to achieve better living and working standards for our members.

We have learned from some of our mistakes in the past and are now preparing ourselves to face some of the new challenges like the ones posed by globalisation. This process has affected workers negatively in most parts of the world and we need to develop a response that will safeguard the interests of workers.

As we are facing these new challenges, it is important that the history of NAFAU is known by all its members. This is why we have asked the Labour Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI) to prepare this booklet for us. We hope it will also give the general public a better understanding of the history and achievements of NAFAU.

NAFAU will continue playing a social, economic and political role as we have done during the past 15 years. We must ensure that we liberate Namibia from its colonial legacies and build a society based on socio-economic justice, economic prosperity, equality and worker participation in decision-making. Improving our members' lives and equally sharing the available resources will be our aim for the years to come.

Long live the struggle of the working people!
Long live NAFAU!
Long Live NUNW!
A luta continua!

David Namalenga
NAFAU President

Introduction

In preparation for its 7th national congress, NAFAU has asked LaRRI to prepare a booklet that will summarise the union's history and achievements during its first 15 years of existence. There are indeed many achievements that NAFAU can be proud of and we hope that this booklet will help us to remember the battles that workers fought to win their rights that they had been denied for so long.

This booklet will also remind us how NAFAU started under very difficult circumstances and what role the union played during Namibia's liberation struggle. This will be interesting not only for our veterans but also for our younger members who joined after independence.

The booklet is, however, not just meant to recall NAFAU's history and achievements but it also shows some of the union's shortcomings and the challenges it is facing today. Maintaining and building a vibrant trade union means adjusting to changing circumstances and developing strategies to face new challenges. This booklet outlines some of the challenges NAFAU has to address and we hope that it will be useful in the process of building and strengthening the union.

Chapter 1 explains briefly how and why NAFAU was formed. It also covers the big strikes at Swavlesi, the breweries and Hartlief as well as NAFAU's contribution to the liberation struggle and towards building the NUNW.

Chapter 2 looks at NAFAU's regional and national structures and outlines some of the union's main achievements. These include financial self-reliance, education and training programmes for union members and staff, recognition and substantive agreements with several companies and setting up regional offices.

Chapter 3 looks at the challenges that NAFAU was facing after independence. It also outlines NAFAU's international relations, how the union deals with gender issues as well as HIV/AIDS. Finally, this chapter looks at some of the major challenges that the union is facing today.

We hope that all NAFAU members and the general public will enjoy reading this booklet and that it will stimulate debate around the achievements and challenges facing our union.

Chapter 1

Historical background to the formation of NAFU

During colonial rule, Namibian workers understood their struggle at the workplace as being linked to the broader struggle for independence. The class struggle waged by workers was seen as the same as the liberation struggle of SWAPO. The history of NAFU is therefore closely linked to Namibia's political history and its liberation struggle.

According to NAFU's first general secretary John Pandeni, the worker struggle started as a rebellion against colonialism that caused workers to be treated harshly and unfairly at their places of work. Workers were exploited and received starvation wages and they generally work in unhealthy and unsafe conditions. Workers were discriminated against depending on their race and the colour of their skin. The problems workers experienced at work spilled over into the household, as workers were unable to afford school fees for their children and had no access to decent housing. Workers were often unable to provide nutritious food to feed their children due to the low salaries received. Their poor working conditions affected workers on a daily basis.

Workers began to take their workplace problems (like unfair dismissals and low wages) to social workers at the Roman Catholic Church and the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) in the mid 1980's. These church workers contacted South African church and trade union activists for advice. They called together a group of workers for a workshop at the Catholic Church in Soweto, Katutura in early 1984. Almost 100 people attended and formed the Workers Action Committee (WAC). According to Matheus Libereki:

“The committee consisted of 5 workers and it was very difficult to start as we were not allowed to meet and workers met in different houses over weekends to discuss their problems. Activities were made more difficult as workers were not united”.

The release of Namibian political prisoners from Robben Island from 1984 onwards contributed to the emergence of trade unions. Some returned to Windhoek and began working for the SWAPO structures again. A decision was taken to reactivate the NUNW inside Namibia and by April 1986, a Workers Steering Committee had been formed. It incorporated the Workers Action Committee and all other efforts to organise workers around the country.

The struggle was waged against a colonial apartheid regime that was imposed on the Namibian people, who wanted independence, a living wage and the right to choose their own government. At the workplace workers were dis-empowered and suppressed and they started to spread the message that if they stand together in solidarity they become stronger and can address their problems as a united front.

This process started by calling workers together, discussing their problems and exchanging experiences. Workers also made suggestions on how their problems could be solved. John Pandeni remembers:

“We realised that we agreed on issues and that we needed to unite as workers as we experienced similar problems at different workplaces and that we needed to organise ourselves and strategise to solve our problems and to determine how we could reach our goals”.

A group of four field workers (Ben Ulenga, the late Jappie Nangolo, Gabriel Ithete, and Ruben Ithengula) began organising at different workplaces around the country. The response was tremendous despite a lack of funds and vehicles. There was only one car to travel across Namibia. By August 1986, 35 workers committees were operational in different parts of the country. Most committees were in the food and allied industries. However, the process of mobilising and organising workers was not an easy one as organisers were threatened by employers and police and were often chased away. John Pandeni, John Kamati, and John Ya Otto Nangudhu recall:

“Organising was a tough job, we often had to walk for miles we received threats, were imprisoned and we seldom received payment for the work that we have done, we relied on the goodwill of the workers. But for us the salary was not important, but the organisation and the improvement of worker’s conditions was important to us.’ We have done this because we believed in our cause and spreading the message was the most important aspect”.

After an intense campaign of worker mobilisation and organisation, the Namibian Food and Allied Workers Union (NAFAU) was launched as the NUNW’s first industrial union on the 20 September 1986. John Pandeni was elected as the general secretary of the union and served in this position from 1986 to 1992. Since then, he is the Governor of the Khomas region.

John Kamati recalled how they started in Walvisbay: *“We had no offices, we used a structure at the back of Hafeni Ndemula’s house and even got our electricity from there”.* Hafeni Ndemula added:

“We went from place to place, from factory to factory to meet with workers and to organise them in committees. We managed to set up a branch in Walvis Bay, mostly consisting of the fishing industry. It was difficult during those days. Walvis Bay was still regarded as part of South Africa and the state of emergency applied. We had no offices and normally met in churches. I was organising from my own sleeping room, which was also our office. My wardrobe had also shelves to put in books. Later on, we put up a structure behind our house which we called an office. It was difficult because when people know that our office is at home they came daytime and nighttime. You don’t have privacy”.

The trade union movement grew and developed in response to colonial labour policies and state repression which resulted in the gross exploitation of workers. Before independence, there were no laws to allow workers to join trade unions freely and no laws regulating the relationship between employers and employees. NAFAU took the initiative to organise workers in the food industries and it challenged the colonial dispensation by registering as a trade union after winning a legal battle against the Interim Government.

NAFAU was constantly under the observation and attack by the colonial regime and several union leaders were arrested on a regular basis, including John Pandeni.

Union offices were ransacked and files and equipment destroyed in an attempt to break the union's strength.

The union's work was made difficult by companies refusing union officials access to premises and the random firing of union members. This is what NAFAU's first president Eliphas Nangolo remembers:

'The founding years were very difficult and hard and we often met under trees to hold our meetings not to attract attention'.

NAFAU's early years were characterised by recruitment of members, organising of activities and trying to obtain recognition agreements from companies. The union focussed its attention on establishing structures and providing training to branch organisers to run their offices. Organisers also had to inform workers about the trade union and its role, they initiated the establishment of shop floor structures, and had to develop disciplinary codes and grievance procedures to guide employer and employee relationships.

The relationship with company management was fraught with tension and distrust. Workers were fired without cause and scare tactics were used to prevent workers from joining the union. Management often saw the activities of the union as political and not really in the interest of the worker due to the union's connection and support given to the SWAPO party. According to Thabo Moncho NAFAU's deputy general secretary: *"Joining trade unions immediately implied to employers that you are a troublemaker"*.

Yet despite repression by employers and the colonial regime, NAFAU doubled its membership in its first year of existence to 11 000 and formed 74 worker committees across the country. In its first years, NAFAU scored major victories in industrial disputes at Bak Paradis, Namib Sugar Distributors, Springer Schokoladen, City Produce, Okahandja Bakery, Gomex, Hartlief's and the fishing industry in Luderitz.

NAFAU is a workers organisation operating across Namibia. The union covers a wide range of industries including fisheries, retail, wholesale, food and the beverage sectors.

The union has the following basic aims:

- to build strong union structures at national and regional as well as branch and shop floor levels.
- The establishment of a solid communication network and transport infrastructure that will enable the union to coordinate its activities at regional and local levels.
- To provide workshops and education seminars about basic trade unionism and essential skills.

Signing of the first recognition agreements

Shortly after NAFAU's formation, it had its first big strike that was amicably resolved and the union signed its first ever recognition agreement in Luderitz with the Lalandi

Fishing Company in 1986. Fishermen in Luderitz had gone on strike for better wages and demanded to be paid per day and per kilogram. Union leaders (like John Pandeni, the late Anton Lubowski, Gabriel Ithethe and Peter Ilonga) arrived in Luderitz to speak to the workers and started the negotiation process with the company management. An agreement was reached that included workers receiving a wage per day as well as being paid per kilogram. With the strike being resolved, the Luderitz fishermen became the first members of NAFAU.

The recognition agreement regulated the relationship between the company, the union, and its members. It allowed union officials access to company premises and provided a code of conduct, disciplinary procedures, grievance procedures, and retrenchment procedures. The agreement included the election of shop stewards, holding of regular meetings between shop stewards and management and the deduction of workers' union membership contribution by the company. The company and union agreed to conduct annual wage negotiations.

The Big Strikes

The SWAVLEIS strike of 1987

One of the biggest strike in the food industry started on 14 May 1987 at the SWAVLEIS factories in Windhoek and Okahandja. It was triggered by failed negotiations for improved wages and working conditions and the demand for the reinstatement of 12 workers who had been dismissed because they did not meet their quotas. Workers demanded to know what the normal hourly rate as well as the overtime rates was. In addition, they raised the issue of transport to and from their homes.

Shortly after the strike began, management took drastic action. About 600 workers of the meat-processing factory in Windhoek and Okahandja were dismissed and threatened with deportation to the north. They were given a few days notice to vacate the compound premises and the company management refused to negotiate with NAFAU claiming that NAFAU was not a registered union.

The strike lasted for about two weeks and NAFAU scored a major victory when SWAVLEIS management in Okahandja and Windhoek agreed to reinstate the dismissed workers. However, management refused to reinstate the 12 workers who had initially been dismissed saying that this issue was not negotiable. A few months later, management dismissed two NAFAU members for instigating the strikes. The company, thus went back on the agreement that no worker will be dismissed or victimised because of the strike.

The Breweries boycott of 1989

Two hundred and seven (207) workers from the Southwest Breweries, owned by the Olthaver and List group were dismissed in September 1989. Workers were involved in wage negotiations through the shop stewards committee led by John Tjiramba. On 5 September 1989, workers standing outside company premises were shot at and attacked by the police resulting in serious injuries suffered by workers. Others were arrested. In protest NAFAU requested support from small businesses country-wide to boycott buying and selling the products from the Breweries, which was unwilling to negotiate with the union.

Several meetings were held with the Olthaver and List Group, and NAFAU tabled the following demands: to enter into a recognition agreement which would include the establishing of grievance procedures, dispute procedures, disciplinary and health and safety procedures. The company indicated that they would only agree if the beer boycott was called off, yet they failed to respond to workers demand of reinstatement. Instead, the company wanted workers to reapply for their jobs. This meant that workers would lose their benefits that were due to them. The company also said that it only had a limited number of 112 vacant positions. Many workers would thus remain without jobs. NAFAU rejected the offer by the company and the boycott continued.

Due to the length of the boycott and tough stance of all parties, President Sam Nujoma was requested to intervene. A meeting was arranged at State House on 15 March 1991 between representatives of the dismissed workers, the President and a representative of SW Breweries / Olthaver and List Group. During this meeting, all parties concerned expressed commitment to resolve the issue of reinstatement of workers. However, the company later retracted on the promises made.

The Hartlief's strike of 1995

Approximately 200 workers at Hartlief's went on strike in August 1995 after the company failed to meet their demands. Seven workers were dismissed after the strike and workers demanded that they should be reinstated. NAFAU and the company finally agreed on an N\$100.00 wage increase but it resulted in the termination of workers' annual bonuses. After the strike, four workers were dismissed and it took the labour court three years to resolve the case. The parties failed to reach an agreement and NAFAU felt that the company was trying to victimise union activists as all dismissed workers were shop stewards. Since then the relationship between the Hartlief's and NAFAU has improved as both consult and negotiate with each other on a regular basis.

During all these strikes, the union received moral and financial support from unions abroad which allowed the union to financially support its members. Although these strikes proved the muscle power of the union and its members when united, they also resulted in a loss of members. Some members lost their jobs and new or potential members felt intimidated and feared for their jobs if they joined the union. The breweries strike was the most devastating as the union lost many members due to retrenchments. There was even tension between member's militancy and union leaders' attempt to keep the strikes within the parameters of the law and to prevent members from losing more than they could gain from their actions. The strikes have also shown that some companies continued with union-bashing strategies after independence and that court cases are an ineffective way to resolve disputes. They take far too long and Namibia is in need of an effective system of dispute resolution.

NAFAU's Contribution to the liberation struggle

Any labour movement under conditions of labour repression is bound to be political. Namibian workers have a long history of struggle to improve wages and working conditions in spite of repressive labour regulations. Workers' militancy had been expressed through a number of industrial actions such as the strikes mentioned above. These strikes were successful to the extent that employers were forced to negotiate with worker leaders, thereby giving recognition to unions.

Workers' struggles in a pre-independent Namibia were on the one hand for improved economic conditions through better wages and working conditions and at the same time political in the sense that they demanded the abolishment of racial discrimination and colonial employment practices. Workers' struggles for better wages and living conditions were linked with the struggle for national independence. The pre-independence workers movement demanded freedom to elect their own government

that would be willing to listen to worker demands, freedom from exploitation and poverty. Workers' struggles in Namibia were not primarily aimed at just wage increases but at the destruction of colonialism. NAFAU thus pledged to improve workers political consciousness through various activities such as seminars and rallies as a SWAPO victory would mean advancement for the trade union movement in Namibia

Namibian workers wanted independence and up to independence NAFAU organised mostly around political issues. The union organised on two fronts, one being to fight injustice at the workplace and the second being the struggle for Namibia's liberation. According to Alfred Angula: "*NAFAU focussed on working towards independence and concentrated more on political issues*". The union concentrated less on 'bread and butter' issues like wages and conditions of employment. A speech delivered by NAFAU's second general secretary Kattuu Ipinge confirmed this:

"70% of trade union work was concentrated on helping SWAPO in organising and recruitment of workers for Namibia's liberation and we spent the first 4-5 years on political issues rather than real trade union matters".

NAFAU resolved at its third and fourth annual congresses to render its support for SWAPO in the coming elections and to contribute to the liberation struggle through worker information and education. The union used the SWAPO Party 's political programme as a guide under the slogan "Vote for SWAPO, Vote for Freedom". The union educated and informed workers by holding rallies and mass meetings and used the slogan "an injury to one is an injury to all" to build worker solidarity.

According to one shop steward "*NAFAU contributed very much to the struggle as I could not differentiate between NAFAU and SWAPO - they were one*". The union informed workers about trade unionism and the importance of solidarity, the right to choose their own government and about their rights as workers and human beings. NAFAU played an important and critical role during the elections and in the achievement of independence through its mobilisation of workers. The union assisted with voter education and monitoring the election process in 1989.

NAFAU's contribution towards building the NUNW

NAFAU contributed towards the building and sustainability of National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) through the sharing of ideas, and the provision of financial support via its affiliation to the federation. NAFAU is actively involved in the activities of NUNW and resolved at its fourth national congress to remain affiliated to the federation. According to NAFAU's president David Namalenga: "*the affiliate unions play a very important role as without affiliates there can be no federation*". NAFAU regards the federation as important, especially as the mouthpiece of Namibian workers at national level.

NAFAU also expects the NUNW to improve communication among the industrial unions. The federation should serve as a mouthpiece for the political feelings and aspirations of trade unions and therefore the NUNW should address national issues such as the land question and other socio-economic issues. According to NAFAU president David Namalenga "*the NUNW is the umbrella body of the workers*"

movement and it should be maintained at the highest level". Many felt that the federation should become stronger to address national issues and that NAFAU can play a leading role in this regard. According to NAFAU's general secretary Cuana Angula: "NAFAU is part and parcel of the federation, the one cannot exist without the other, and as such NAFAU needs to develop strategies to support and sustain the NUNW".

NAFAU believes that it should play a leading role in the transformation of the NUNW. The union should support the activities of the NUNW and ensure that NAFAU's concerns are taken into account at the highest level. In the words of Cuana Angula:

"NAFAU could play a meaningful role on the political front via the NUNW. For example, we could lobby to change legislation and play an advocacy role. This could be achieved if NAFAU members are elected into the structures of NUNW and as such could represent NAFAU interest in national structures".

NAFAU approves of the NUNW affiliation to the SWAPO party and considers it a tactical move ensuring that union member are involved in decision making at the highest level thus serving the interest of the worker.

Chapter 2

Worker Control – NAFAU's Decision-Making Structures

The union is based on three pillars namely: unity, solidarity, and democracy. Members' participation is based on equal opportunities; fair representation in decision-making, equal access to information, union activities, and structures; democratic elections and collective evaluation and assessment of the union's activities.

NAFAU set up structures to maintain ongoing contact with its members and to run its activities. These structures are necessary to collect membership fees, to give services to union members (for example to assist them in grievance handling or collective bargaining) and to organise union activities. Structures are important as NAFAU operates through elected shop steward committees at the shop-floor level and full time shop stewards acting as union organisers in the workplace. Through their structures like shop steward committees and branch committees at local and regional level, union members participate in developing their organisation. They discuss labour and other matters and forward their opinions and demands to the union's national structures.

The National Congress is NAFAU's highest decision making body and initially it was held annually. Due to the high costs and logistics involved, the time between congresses was extended –first to every two years and then to every four years. Worker representatives from branches across the country attend National Congresses, as well as members of the National Executive Committee (NEC) and union officials. They discuss past activities, decide union policies, and elect the leadership to lead the organisation and to run its daily business.

NAFAU has a NEC, which meets on a quarterly basis and supervises the daily running of the union. The Central Committee (CC) is the second highest body consisting of NEC and Branch Executive Committee (BEC) members. It makes decisions on the most important policy issues between National Congresses.

The National Executive Committee (NEC) convenes the meetings of the CC. Such meetings can also be held at the request of the president, or at the request of two thirds of NAFAU's branches. The NEC comprises all office-bearers, branch chairpersons, branch secretaries, and regional chairpersons.

National Congresses

National Congresses are convened to assess achievements and weaknesses, to review past activities and programmes, and to take policy decisions. In addition, new members are elected into national leadership structures and a new programme of action is adopted. John Pandeni emphasised: "*NAFAU is not about election of officials but about the effectiveness of the organisation at the workplace*". The Congress resolutions serve to guide NAFAU's activities until the next congress.

The first launching congress of NAFAU was held on the 20th September 1986 at the

Roman Catholic Church in Katatura. Topics discussed at the congress included the following:

- Trade Unionism and the rights of workers;
- Aims of trade unions, e.g. to fight against management harassment and for security at work,
- A living wage,
- Unity and solidarity,
- The combating of discrimination at workplaces and to pave the way to freedom.

The first congress decided that the National Congress would be convened every year and 35 workers were elected to serve on the Central Committee. Shortly after the congress, NAFAU signed its first official recognition agreement with Lalandi in Luderitz. The agreement gave shop stewards the right to take up workers problems and allocated 14 days paid leave for shop stewards training.

The second congress took place on the 20 September 1987 and its programme included messages of solidarity and support, a review of NAFAU activities of the past year. The role of the workers in the liberation struggle and the importance of worker education in the workers struggle featured prominently. The congress resolved to consolidate local and national structures and decided that NAFAU must appoint a full time education officer.

The Congress adopted resolutions on:

- Education for all,
- Paid maternity leave,
- Fighting for a living wage,
- One industry –one union, one country –one federation,
- All national and public holidays to be paid days,
- Worker and student alliances,
- Colonial war and UN resolution 435,
- NAFAU to be recognised in all food and related industries,
- Worker power and worker control.
- The appointment of the education coordinator.

NAFAU 3rd National Congress was held on 15-18 April 1989 in the Roman Catholic Church Hall in Katatura. The congress was attended by over 600 delegates from NAFAU branches and national structures as well as international guests from COSATU, FAWU, and the IUF.

- NAFAU resolved to participate in the national umbrella organisation (NUNW) in order to enable the federation to function efficiently. The federation was seen as important to coordinate activities of different industrial unions.
- NAFAU resolved to render its support for SWAPO in the upcoming elections using SWAPO's political programme as a guide. "Vote For Swapo, Vote For Freedom".
- NAFAU would fight consistently for a living wage for its members and ensure that health and safety concerns would become part of the workers education programme. Companies should accept full responsibility for workers health and safety at the workplace.

Achievements listed during the congress included pension, medical aid, transport, and accommodation negotiated by the union for its members. These benefits were secured from companies such as Hartlief's, SWAVLEIS, South West Breweries, and the fishing industries amongst others.

The fourth National Congress was held on 22-24 March 1991. Resolutions included the need to address the lack of human resources at the union and to appoint officials such as an assistant general secretary, a national education coordinator and a national organiser, a national legal officer and administrator. Congress resolved the following:

- To adopt and promote the introduction of a shorter working week of 40 hours;
- To demand training programmes by employers,
- To fight for the introduction of a living wage.
- To lobby for public holidays to be paid;
- To sign recognition agreements with companies with majority membership and to abolish all apartheid practices;
- To demand the provision of pension and medical aid fund for all workers;
- To educate workers through union structures.
- That NAFAU would remain affiliated to the NUNW.
- To introduce a 1% union membership fee structure which should be deducted from workers' salaries through stop order facilities. This would provide financial stability for NAFAU.

The fifth National Congress took place on 16-17 September 1994 and its theme was educate, consolidate advance to victory and reconstruction of industries and jobs now. The major resolutions adopted at the congress were the following:

- To launch a national campaign to curb high rate of retrenchments;
- To address the lack of human resources in NAFAU by employing union officials with experience.
- To implement a financial policy for NAFAU:
- To implement the resolution taken in March 1991 to provide in service training and education to workers.
- To again take up the challenge of a living wage for workers by calling for the establishment of a Wage Commission and the determination of a minimum wage in the food and allied industries.
- To fight for the improvement in workers living and working conditions.
- A resolution taken at the fourth National Congress about no affiliation to international bodies was amended and NAFAU could now affiliate to the international unions like IUF and FIET.

The sixth National Congress was organised on 29 May-01 June 1997 and its theme was to 'Organise, Strengthen, Build and Fight for a Programme of Transformation'. The congress proceedings were recorded on tapes, but the tapes were lost. According to the report of the General Secretary the key areas of the congress focussed on:

- Defining a new role for NAFAU;
- Rebuilding of NAFAU and NUNW;
- Ensuring that crime is ended;
- Taking the struggle for trade union unity forward;

- Building women solidarity
- Ensuring financial self-sufficiency

The Congress planned to emerge with a clear programme of action on the role of NAFU in the National Labour Movement and guidance to all workers.

Regional conferences and structures

NAFU's first regional conference was held in Keetmanshoop on 17 and 18 August 1991. The Conference elected a regional secretary and adopted resolutions to provide in-service training to workers, to launch a campaign against unreasonable retrenchments and to uphold workers rights against employers. The conference decided that worker education has to cover aspects of health and safety, grievance handling, literacy training, negotiation skills, recognition agreements, meetings procedures, pension fund, medical aid, as well as women's issues and recruiting of members.

However, developments in the regions were slow and union offices in the south found it difficult to sustain operations. By now, NAFU has expanded its operations in other regions and has acquired offices or office space in Rundu, Katima Mulilo, Oshakati and Gobabis.

Staffing, Training and Leadership

NAFU now has 17 full time staff members and most NAFU leaders have risen through the ranks of the union. The union had to change the staff structures with the introduction and appointment of national and regional organisers. This change was due to the need for improved service delivery and quality of services to union members. Many of NAFU's leadership regard the labour movement as their first source of education. They attended training courses and seminars arranged by the union and NAFU has produce several prominent and educated leaders occupying various positions of importance in government and the private sector.

Education and Training

During the fourth national congress in 1991 NAFU passed a resolution on workers education which was re-affirmed at the fifth National Congress in 1994. Education is a key factor in the strength of an organisation, in building of unity and for the development of an organisation controlled by workers. It is important for the advancement of the working class struggle. The principles of NAFU i.e., democracy, worker participation and worker control will be enhanced if these principles are accompanied by the development of practical skills and trade union education. During a national education conference, NAFU's former general secretary Kattuu Ipinge said :

“NAFU believes that workers education and training is the key in the process of empowering workers to improve their working and living conditions”.

Education, training and development of workers is a key activity of the trade union movement and is considered a tool to enhance worker's understanding of their role in the struggle for transformation. Trade union education is essential for the development of shop floor structures and shop floor activism. Strong union structures at shop floor level can contribute towards to achievement of workers basic needs. Workers receive training on their rights at the workplace and in the union. Members are educated about trade unionism and why it is necessary for workers to join unions. According to NAFAU's national education co-ordinator Helena Helmut:

“Workers need to know their rights, the law, company policies and knowledge of their responsibilities as workers”.

Education activities for shop stewards cover topics such as:

- Labour legislation,
- Disciplinary procedures, grievance handling, and dispute resolution.
- Concerns at the workplace and the constitution of companies.
- The threat and impact of HIV/AIDS,
- Equity and social security.
- Globalisation, privatisation, and its impact on workers.

Last year, the training department launched a shop steward's training manual to support the work of the departments and to serve as reference material for shop stewards. Additionally, NAFAU staff members participate on a regular basis in education and training courses offered by the NUNW. However, many members felt that training should be done more systematically, with a clear strategy especially for the training of shop stewards. Although NAFAU's training programme has contributed towards improving the industrial relationship at shop floor level, a more concerted and systematic training programme is required to improve members and shop stewards knowledge of existing legislation and new developments.

The education programme is dependent on donor funding thus making it less systematic with little or no follow –up done. Although NAFAU allocates 1% of its annual budget for training purposes, this is often insufficient. Training courses that were planned and budgeted for are only implemented if they are approved by the union management and if there are sufficient funds. Training is usually sponsored by NUNW, and donor organisations such as Friedrich Ebert Foundation, NORAD, IUF and UNI.

Financial autonomy and resources

NAFAU as a non-profit making organisation, regularly assesses its financial performance at NEC meetings, and looks at strategies to improve the union's financial condition. The NEC is guided in this process by a financial policy and the constitution of NAFAU. The workers in accordance with the NAFAU constitution must control the union's finances. NAFAU relies mostly on membership fees and the union's financial position depends on its ability to recruit and organise workers and to retain them by providing quality services. According to David Namalenga:

“Manpower has been increased to address problems, yet challenges exist in recruiting the right people for the job. Money is needed to recruit qualified and competent people for the jobs”.

Despite the need for more qualified and competent people, the union's financial stability is hampered by factors such as the cost of employment, lack of continuous recruitment of members, sometimes poor monitoring of income and expenditures, poor management of union properties and the absence of a computerised membership data base.

Employment and service conditions

NAFAU adopted a financial policy during the 1994 National Congress. The policy includes the establishment of a financial committee to discuss and manage the union's finances. The financial policy also includes the employment policy and benefit packages for NAFAU employees. However, the NEC takes the final decision about wages and benefit packages for union officials. Draft job descriptions and contracts were circulated to staff members but currently union officials still work without job contracts and job descriptions. This situation requires the urgent attention of the union leadership. In the early years, staff did not receive a fixed salary but an allowance if funds were available. As the union's financial situation improved, NAFAU could afford to pay regular salaries and introduced medical aid and pension benefits for its staff members. This reduced the rate of staff turnover significantly.

Membership fees

Initially workers only paid a monthly membership fee of N\$1.00 directly to organisers or shop stewards. Fees were collected by hand and paid over to the head office. This situation resulted in financial instability for the union and a congress decision taken in 1991 introduced the deduction of one percent (1%) from worker salaries via a stop order agreement. The list of members whose fees are deducted by the companies is then forwarded to the NAFAU head office. This is currently the only means the union uses to determine the size of its membership. The fees received from paid-up members practically fund all of NAFAU's activities and the union is financially self-sufficient. However, NAFAU receives additional donor funding for specific educational activities.

Investments

NAFAU recently launched the NAFAU Investment Trust, as the business arm of the union. NAFAU leaders serve as trustees and manage manages the trust. NAFAU implemented the business venture to achieved financial autonomy and sustainability. According to David Namalenga:

“The union needed to develop strategies to sustain the organisation, to be able to provide security for staff and to implement benefit packages such as pension and medical aid packages”.

The union currently owns shares in the Ituyeni transport company as well as the Old Mutual Investment Trusts. The union is in the process of establishing its own companies. The unions already manages a catering company in Luderitz and is considering the option of becoming involved in a joint venture with another organisation.

Recognition and substantive agreements

NAFAU has two different types of agreements with companies. These agreements are the recognition and procedural agreements as well as the substantive agreements. Recognition and procedural agreements regulate certain aspects of the union-company relationship. The agreements state that sound and fair labour relations are essential for the promotion of goodwill and economic well-being of employee and employers. The agreements provide union officials with access to company premises and union members. The recognition and procedural agreements include the implementation of union stop-orders facilities through which the company agrees to deduct union membership fees. They state that union and employers want to use dialogue, discussion, and negotiations to conduct and regulate industrial relations. The recognition agreement gives the union sole bargaining status for workers who are members of the union.

These agreements also set out policies for dealing with grievances, disciplinary cases, industrial action, as well as dispute and retrenchment procedures to be followed. The agreements provide for the election and training of shop stewards to represent workers at different levels. They also include aspects of health, safety and hygiene standards and adherence to its procedures.

Substantive agreements follow after the conclusion of the recognition agreements. They cover the outcome of negotiations on wages and benefits between companies and the union on a yearly basis. The substantive agreements stipulate the yearly increment for workers as well as other employment benefits negotiated for such as housing allowances, transport, pension, and medical aid. The negotiations and its benefits vary from company to company and from year to year depending on the company's financial status and the skills of the union negotiators to secure a good deal for their members.

Until now, NAFAU has signed recognition and procedural agreements with the following companies:

Companies	Dates
Lalandi Fishing Company	12 April 1989
Seaflower Lobster Corp. Ltd	08 November 1990
Atlantic Sea Products Groups of Companies	01 March 1991
J.F. Luderitz t/a Kapps Hotel and Bayview Hotel	16 August 1991
South West warehousing (Pty) Ltd.	28 October 1991
Taurus Atlantic Seaweed	26 November 1991
Namibia Wines and Spirits (Windhoek)	02 June 1992
Namibia Beverages (Pelican Mineral Waters)	24 June 1992
Namibia Beverages (Central and Southern Regions)	08 June 1992
Namibia Beverages (Northern regions)	07 July 1992
Hartlief's	31 August 1992
Pescabova Fishing Industries (Pty)Ltd & Skeleton Coast Trawling (Pty) Ltd.	19 January 1993
Namibia Wines and Spirits (Walvisbay)	30 March 1993

Pelagic Fisheries Agreement [covering Gendev Namibia & Consortium Fisheries Ltd, Etosha Fisheries Holding Co (Prop) Ltd & United Fishing Enterprises (Prop) Ltd and Namib Fisheries (Ltd)]	03 November 1993
Feedmaster (Pty)Ltd	21 May 1993
Kalahari Sands (Pty) Ltd	08 April 1993
Safari Hotel (Pty) Ltd	10 November 1993
Seaflower Lobster Corp. Ltd & Seaflower White fish Corp Ltd	18 February 1994
Seaflower Lobster Corp. Ltd	22 July 1994
Seaflower Lobster Corp. Ltd	04 & 15 November 1994
Springer Schokoladen Fabrik	20 June 1994
Distillers Corporation Ltd	28 March & 16 May 1994
VDB Foods Namibia (Pty) Ltd	11 March 1994
MEATCO Namibia	16 December 1994
Hanjo's Back Stube	24 July 1994
Skeleton Coast Trawling (Pty) Ltd	12 September 1994
NG Jeug Sentrum	07 February 1995
Namib Mills (Pty) Ltd	10 May 1995
Freddie Fisheries (Pty) Ltd	27 June 1995
Walvisbay Market (Pty) Ltd	12 July 1995
Theo's Mini Mark	17 July 1995
People Stores (Namibia) (Pty) Ltd	24 July 1995
Swakopmund Hotel & Entertainment Centre	08 August 1995
Maxirama	23 August 1995
Otavi Spar	25 September 1995
Atlantic Meat Market	28 November 1995
Arechanab Fishing and Development Comp (Pty)	02 November 1995
Erongo Footwear	23 November 1995
Foodcon (Pty) Ltd	15 December 1995
Sentra Supermark	08 March 1996
Otavi Fruit Shop	11 April 1996
Enduro Milk CC -Walvisbay	24 April 1996
Makalani Sugar Company (Pty) Ltd	21 May 1996
Trek Restaurant	17 June 1996
Windhoek Schlachtereier (Pty)Ltd	14 August 1996
Edgars Stores Namibia	05 September 1996
Benguella Sea Products (Pty)Ltd	18 December 1996
Namibia Sugar Distributors (Pty) Ltd	02 January 1997
Okapuka Tannery	01 March 1997
Pacific Best Namibia (Pty) Ltd	19 April 1997
Continental Hotel	21 April 1997
Kalahari Sands Hotel & Casino	18 July 1997
BONMILK (Pty) Ltd	20 August 1997
Windhoek Country Club & Resort	28 August 1997
Walvisbay Pelagic Fishing Factories	05 November 1997
Klein Windhoek Schlagtereier	13 November 1997
Walvisbay Market	04 January 1998
Northern Fishing Industries (Pty) Ltd	19 January 1998

FRJ Marting	25 February 1998
Shoprite and OK Bazaars	05 June 1998
African Hide Trading (Namibia) Pty Ltd	16 July 1998
Namibia Breweries-Windhoek	25 August 1998
Namibia Diaries	15 January 1999
Shoprite Namibia & Checkers Supermarkets & OK Furniture	25 February 1999
<u>Namibia Breweries (Regions)</u>	
Northern regions	15 April 1999
Hansa Brauerei	
Le Bistro	31 May 1999
Nutri Foods (Pty) Ltd	11 May 1999
TRé Liquorama	09 June 1999
Freshmark Namibia (Pty)Ltd	29 June 1999
Marco Polo (Pty)Ltd	00 July 1999
TRE ROUTE 66 Restaurant &	01 July 1999
TRé Sentra Supermarket	
Namib Sun Hotels	24 September 1999
Nando's Chicken Land	20 October 1999
Spar Gobabis (Omuramba Trading cc)	00 December 1999
Ostrich Production Namibia (Pty) Ltd	9 March 2000
Coastal Marine Industries (Pty) Ltd	6 April 2000
Etosha Fisheries Holding Company (Pty) Ltd	26 October 2000
Outjo Backerei	06 November 2000
Theo's Spar Otjiwarongo	07 November 2000
Hippo Lodge	29 November 2000
Cresta Lodge Ondangwa	30 November 2000
Model Pick n Pay Family Supermarkets	28 November 2000
Karibib Fisheries Limited	15 March 2000
Hangana Seafood (Pty)Ltd	03 November 2000
Alfa Co-OP	00 August 2000
Etale Fishing Company (Pty) Ltd	18 January 2001
CADILU Fishing (Pty) Ltd	9 January 2001
Ongava Game Reserve	02 March 2001
NOVASHIP (Pty) Ltd	31 December 2001

Chapter 3

The changes after independence

On the eve of independence, workers were randomly dismissed and their employment conditions worsened significantly as business owners sold their businesses overnight leaving workers stranded and unemployed. In addition, workers belonging to NAFAU were threatened with dismissals as new owners refused to recognise the union. According to John Pandeni: *“before independence union activities were overshadowed by the political activities and goals of the liberation struggle”*. As a result, trade unions were poorly prepared for their new role in an independent Namibia. According to Alfred Angula: *“NAFAU was caught offside about what their role should be after independence”*.

With independence, the union had to reorganise its operations. Although the country had achieved its liberation, workers' problems remained. They were not resolved with independence and unions still had to face the same employers as under colonial rule. John Pandeni pointed out that:

“Workers have to know their rights when waging the economic struggle just as they had to know their rights during the political struggle”.

After independence, NAFAU demanded the development of appropriate legislation to improve the living and working conditions of workers. The Labour Act was passed in 1992 as a compromise between workers and employers. Union pressure contributed to the promulgation of the new Labour Act, the Social Security Act of 1996, and the Affirmative Action Act of 1998.

NAFAU realised that it needed to formulate a new approach towards improving workers living and working conditions. The union was confronted by changed circumstances and had to redefine its role. Trade unions in an independent Namibia had to shift their focus from political mobilisation towards redressing income gaps and unemployment and towards fighting for economic independence and a living wage for workers.

Despite the achievement of independence, there was also disillusionment for the Namibian workers and their leaders. They had expected immediate changes and that exploitation and injustices in the workplace would end. However, changes were slow in coming. This resulted in a decline of union membership and many of the founding members of the union leadership were co-opted into the new government and the private sector. Consequently, NAFAU had to make a concerted effort and re-launch itself during 1992. According to Cuana Angula:

“The re-launching involved a role change for NAFAU; from being a political movement to a organisation representing the workers, fighting for economic freedom”.

In the process of redefining its role, the union focussed more on workers rights in the workplace and the signing of collective bargaining agreements. NAFAU now organised workers to fight in an orderly and organised manner for the improvement of workers living and working conditions and place less emphasis on political aspirations. Under the new dispensation, all unions had to comply with new

regulations, including union registration and the provision of audited financial statements annually to the Ministry of Finance to show how workers monies were spent.

In the process of adapting to the changed circumstances, NAFU had to give more attention to workers rights and education. In support the general secretary was due to travel around the country to speak to workers and assist organisers in drawing up collective bargaining and recognition agreements as well as draw up specific programmes and activities for their respective branches. This proposal was short-lived due to the financial difficulties the union experienced. In addition, NAFU also experienced a series of resignations of union leaders who went to work in government and in the private sector creating a vacuum of experienced leaders to guide the union.

According to Alfred Angula, NAFU decided to focus on influencing national policies, to improve the socio-economic conditions of its members, and to support government efforts in the national interest. NAFU also realised that it needed to address challenges such as increasing unemployment, inequality and to work towards the empowerment of workers. NAFU also improved the service conditions of union employees by offering fixed salaries and benefits. In addition, NAFU could now provide transport and office equipment to enhance and support its service delivery to their members. However, NAFU realised that it needed to do more to monitor the implementation of the various acts such as the Labour Act and Affirmative Action Act for the benefit of its members.

NAFU's National and International Relations

During the 1991 Congress, a decision was made not to affiliate to any international organisation, for political reasons and because of the fees involved. However, this decision was changed in 1994 and NAFU is now affiliated to IUF and FIET (UNI). The affiliation with the international organisations created positive results as NAFU officials can participate in their activities, and NAFU has also benefited from joint education programmes.

Being affiliated means having support during hard times such as strikes as international unions provide solidarity support. They also help with sharing of information and as an affiliate, NAFU can influence decision-making. For example when it comes to dealings with the European Union and free trade agreements, affiliates of international unions can make positive contributions by putting their agenda forward and contribute to the protection of the interest of their members. In the words of Cuana Angula:

“The affiliation and links reduce the union’s isolation and they support us by shows of solidarity. For example, when a strike occurs at Hartlief in Windhoek, the affiliates lobby their members to pressurise the mother company based in the US. The links also have a positive result with regards to the increase of information sharing between unions”.

NAFU has close ties with unions in South Africa since 1988. They assisted with several training activities. For example, FAWU provided shop steward training, whilst SACCWAU assisted with training of NAFU’s staff. Similar links with sister unions in the SADC region resulted in cross-border exchanges of shop stewards,

which increased sharing of information, knowledge and networking between unions and officials.

Gender

Women make up 40% of the global workforce today. Most women perform double workloads as they do most of the household work (which is unpaid) in addition to their paid work. Women on average work longer hours and earn less than their male counterparts. NAFAU's majority members are female yet, the majority of trade union officials and almost all union leaders are men. According to Thabo Moncho, "*women members outnumber male members in NAFAU*". However, the union has no accurate figures available as to the gender breakdown of its membership. A NEC decision made in 1999 called for the establishment of a database that would contain complete information of each member. Such a system still needs to be implemented.

Women employed in the retail, food, beverages, and commerce sectors, are concentrated on the lowest wage bands, and are often in casual, temporary, part-time, and seasonal jobs. Women generally work in industries, which pay low wages, with no security or benefits and they often forms a large proportion of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of workers. According to Joseph Shikongo: "*When members are recruited no distinctions are made between the sex of workers*". Alfred Angula felt that trade union activities are about workers and women as workers have a role to play.

Members of NAFAU had differing opinions on the topic of gender equality and the advancement of women within the union and some admitted that they still do not have sufficient information on the subject. Very few women reached the leadership structures within the union yet NAFAU's constitution makes provision for a gender policy based on its constitutional stipulation of non-discrimination based on sex.

However, NAFAU has had a female general secretary, which is an achievement as men normally occupy the position. The current national education coordinator is female too and women in NAFAU generally occupy the positions of administrators and branch organisers. The Luderitz branch organiser Paulina Maharero said:

"Women don't want to take up challenges as women are in the majority, but they are the ones voting for men during elections. But I believe that there are a lot of chances especially within trade unions for women to rise through the ranks".

It is important to note that women are often constrained by child rearing and domestic duties and according to Joseph Shikongo:

"Women's involvement is made difficult by tradition and cultural attitudes. Married women have to ask their husbands permission to join the union and if women are elected and their husbands were not consulted, they would withdraw".

NAFAU has no arrangements at present to provide for or childcare facilities during meetings, or conferences to enhance women's increased participation. According to Matheus Libereki:

“Women should be encouraged and informed about their rights and that they also have a voice in the issues of the country. Women should receive training and be encouraged to attend and play a role in NAFAU congresses and that they have a right to be elected as well.”

Paulina Maharero explains how she was perceived and treated by male members:

“I was often told that this job is not for women. Men believe that a woman cannot be a leader or chief and that the work of an organiser can only be done by men. Therefore, I had to show them what I could do. I was already a leader and a supervisor at my place of employment and a chairperson of NUNW. I always heard them (members) complaining, even over the radio that women were not good enough and that they wanted men in the office. Members are used to listening to men speaking as men occupy leadership posts and they often think that a woman cannot do the work. Yet, NAFAU’s first recognition agreement was signed in Luderitz in a branch managed by a woman. I believe that women can make a difference”.

A NEC decision in April 1999 mandated the establishment of a national gender structure that should co-operate with the NUNW gender structure. NAFAU’s women’s desk is currently operating from the education desk, though no activities are running, as the programme has no funds. Additional funds need to be secured as gender activities are not included in NAFAU’s national budget. . Although awareness courses and gender training has been conducted, it is still regarded as women’s issue and relayed back to the women’s desk to be handled only by female employees of the union. Most gender related activities are directed at women only. According to Helena Helmuth:

“I believe that women are different from men, women have to do double duties and women have to be trained to improve their living standards. We have to remind women that education is the key to empowerment.”

The union achieved some successes as they negotiated with companies to pay the additional 20% of salary not paid by the Social Security Commission to women workers on maternity leave. Some companies provide for paternity leave for men, and in addition certain companies continues to pay women’s contributions to the pension fund, medical aid and housing subsidies whilst on maternity leave. NAFAU is in the process of negotiating for childcare facilities at some companies as an additional benefit for women workers.

In Luderitz some fishing companies have been encouraged to offer induction programmes and women are provided with the opportunity to learn more about company policies and documents. This created a sense of responsibility and ownership in women and according to Paulina Maharero: *“Since this course has started, incidence of theft has declined to zero and women regards themselves as owners of the companies”.*

Despite some achievements, NEC, CC and Congress resolutions on gender equality it is often not implemented because gender is still not regarded as a priority issue for the union.

Dealing with HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS has become a major concern since after independence and is linked to unemployment, related social problems such as housing, alcohol abuse, and violence. The problem is made worse by low wages, illiteracy, and dangerous working conditions. NAFU has recognised the impact and importance of HIV/AIDS and has started with education and awareness programmes for its members. The programme is managed from the education desk with donor funds. Discussions about HIV/AIDS are now incorporated in every training session. HIV/Aids committees exist at branch level, and they work in consultation with social workers and health officials.

NAFAU has no official HIV/AIDS policy but operates according to the guidelines of the National Aids Control Programme. NAFU is committed to non-discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS and pledged to fight all forms of discrimination. NAFU entered into HIV/AIDS agreements with companies to protect workers jobs and devise strategies to keep workers employed until they are now longer able to work. Several companies with which NAFU has agreements have their own policies in place undersigned by the unions to protect member's interests. NAFU signed an agreement with several fishing companies in Walvisbay in 1995 to abolish mandatory testing for HIV/AIDS and to retain the services of HIV positive employees. According to Paulina Maharero:

“The union needs to look at more ways to address this pandemic as part of its social responsibilities and if it continues without systematic support from the union, its stand to loose its base in coastal towns”.

Major Challenges

NAFAU has achieved successes over the years, but realised that it needs to continuously improve the quality of its service delivery to members. NAFU convened a strategic workshop early in 2001 to address shortcomings and to develop aims and objectives as well as a mission statement that would serve as a guide to NAFU for the years to come. According to Thabo Moncho:

“The issue of rival unions requires advance planning to ensure NAFU's continued existence. The workshop aimed to provide guidelines to strengthen administrative functions, and to strive for the more effective functioning of the organising department as they are the ones effectively dealing with the workers”.

NAFAU needs to develop policies on specific social and economic issues. The lack of a research department limits the union's involvement in lobbying and advocacy on policy issues.

Competition and rival unions

Trade union growth is linked to service delivery and rival unions especially in the fisheries and retail sector increasingly challenge NAFU. According to David Namalenga:

“NAFAU needs to improve the quality and quantity of services to its members and it requires a strong research facility to provide statistical and logistical information to assist with decision-making”.

NAFAU regards rival unions as a challenge to improve the delivery of services to its members. However, NAFAU recently lost out to a rival union during a ballot held in Luderitz among fisheries workers. NAFAU ascribed this to various factors such as lack of moral and logistic support to branches concerned, lack of proper communication and channels of communication, and lack of commitment from union leaders.

NAFAU officials uphold the belief in democracy and freedom of association but state that members, who constantly change their union membership, cause major administrative problems as well as financial problems for unions. Division of workers into rival unions also threatens worker unity, which is an important element of workers strength. Joseph Shikongo, expressed the following sentiment which is shared by others:

“Rival unions seem to have no clear structures and are not accountable to their members and is often area/town bound, whereas NAFAU has offices, branches and structures in place across the country. NAFAU also has a constitution which guides its functions and possesses the skill and experience to represent workers interests”.

Administrative and general challenges

The union faces an administrative challenge concerning the setting up of a membership database. Though some officials received training and software programmes were donated for this purpose, the union does not have access to sufficient computers nor does it have the staff to conduct such an exercise. NAFAU has equipped most of its offices and branches with computers, telephones, and basic office equipment for effective functioning. Computerised offices could improve and contribute to a better distribution of information among union structures.

Due to the shortage of staff, union leaders are often requested to deal with issues such as grievance handling, organising and recruitment and representing workers in court cases. These functions form a large part of the daily activities of union officials. Plans are underway to equip shop stewards through education programmes to deal with more of these issues. Problems experienced include worker frustration, as staff members are overworked and not always available to deal with member’s concerns. For example, Windhoek alone covers more than 200 companies with only two branch organisers to deal with all of them. Training shop stewards to take over most of these functions would give more time for union officials to carry out tasks that are often neglected.

Finances and budgets

The budgets allocated to regional offices and branches are often too small to cover all activities. The size of the budget often restricts union activities. For example, the petrol budget is often depleted making it difficult for staff to travel and carry out their duties. Organisers should be encouraged and supported to conduct ongoing recruitment campaigns, as a growing membership is the union’s main source of income and power. Ongoing administration and budgeting skill training should be

provided to branch officials to ensure proper functioning. The union should review how workers' money is spent and workers need to take control over how their money is spent.

Member's Concerns

Many workers are still faced with racial discrimination at work and often feel intimidated. Despite the fact that elected shop stewards are available, workers sometimes do not take such issues to their representatives as they feel nothing would be done about the situation. Some of the union members expressed feelings of isolation and said that they lack knowledge of the Labour Act and their rights as workers. Members also said that they wanted to be informed of the content of recognition agreements.

Communication and leadership

NAFAU faces serious communication problems between the union leadership and union officials internally and between the leadership and the members. Matteus Libereki and several others stated that:

“The leadership of today is no longer the same. Workers have less trust in new leadership and they are now longer turning up at meetings that have been arranged for workers. This is a result of the gap between leadership and workers and because leadership are no longer being seen by workers. Regular visits from leadership would tell workers that NAFAU still cares. The union leadership is only seen during wage negotiations, members do not know them, and this affects the union's ability to function effectively”

According to John Pandeni; *“NAFAU needs to remain in touch with the workers and they should receive ongoing training as the worker struggle is not over”*. NAFAU should convince members that they are still the best union to represent workers interests at the workplace. To do this, shop stewards need to be well trained. The union needs to do more to improve workers level of understanding through training and literacy programmes and special attention should be given to women.

Challenges in the regions

NAFAU is expanding and opening offices and branches in the regions. Regional activities need attention, as union activities in regions are underdeveloped. Workers need more education and training to promote understanding of trade union activities. For example, regions have a higher percentage of illegal strikes taking place due to lack of information. According to Thabo Moncho, regions offer a challenge in terms of the provision of education and training, information about the Labour Act, trade unionism, and workers rights.

Conclusion

The anti-colonial struggle influenced the development of Namibia's trade unions, including NAFAU. Much of the unions' activities before independence were

politically motivated to win support for a SWAPO victory and less attention was given to workplace issues. Colonial labour relations were strained and characterised by detention of trade union leaders and victimisation of workers. Despite this repression, trade unions won some concessions from employers through strikes when negotiations failed. The immediate causes for strikes were dispute over wages and conditions of service, and dismissals of workers. The concessions included recognition agreements that provided access for union officials to workers at places of work and the election of shop stewards and later on the deduction of membership fees through stop order agreements. Subsequent agreements outlined disciplinary procedures, codes of conduct, strike procedures, and arbitration and mediation procedures. However, Namibian workers had to achieve political independence first before a fair and just legal framework could be introduced to guide industrial relations. In addition, the strikes before independence showed employers that it was time for a change in the employment relationships and that the government should take note of the trade union movement and its concerns.

With the achievement of independence, workers and unions had high expectations of what could be achieved and were eager to redefine the power relations within the workplace. However, NAFU was unprepared for what should happen after political independence has been achieved. Workers and union leaders were disillusioned with the slow pace of change and many leaders left the trade union movement for greener pastures. In addition, workers no longer attended union meetings in large numbers and fell into a state of apathy. NAFU had to work harder to revive member's interests, as individual members no longer attend meetings, because they felt that they had won independence.

Confronted by the changed circumstances NAFU had to redefine its role and formulate a new approach that focussed more on workers needs and concerns at the workplace in order to improve workers living and working conditions. NAFU experienced a decline in membership after independence and it had to convince workers that although political independence has been achieved the struggle for economic independence was far from over.

NAFU needs to address challenges such as promoting employment, greater equality, and the empowerment of workers. NAFU needs to be creative and produce new solutions and it should remain in touch with workers' needs and concerns. NAFU should continuously strive to improve its effectiveness at the workplace. This effectiveness can only be achieved through the building of strong union structures at shop floor level. Strong union structures are built through organising workers coupled with education, training, and active worker participation.

Increasing competition from rival unions and internal division within union structures and leadership threaten NAFU's stronghold in various sector. Efforts to solve some of these problems resulted in the calling of a strategic workshop, to provide a strategic plan and a mission and vision statement to guide the union for the years to come. NAFU also needs to convince workers that they are still the best union to represent workers.

In addition, the union is plagued with financial concerns, which requires an urgent solution. NAFU started an investment programme in an effort to secure its

financial position. Additionally NAFU needs to invest in ongoing recruitment campaigns as its financial security is based on membership fees.

Linked to NAFU's financial concerns is the administrative problem, which is caused by the absence of a computerised database of its members. Absence of a data base means that NAFU cannot determine the exact size of its members nor the sex and age of its members. The lack of reliable gender statistics is reflected in the absence of women in NAFU's leadership structure and lack of programme and activities to enhance women members' involvement in union activities. NAFU has no clear gender policy and the gender desk is not yet operational.

NAFU has no official HIV/AIDS policy, but works in consultation with other social stakeholders. NAFU has achieved certain concessions with several companies, which provide protection to members who have contracted the disease. However, NAFU needs to do more at this is one of its social responsibilities towards its members.

Despite NAFU's achievements, increasing rivalry shows that it cannot afford to rest on its laurels. NAFU needs to be visible and active and have functioning structures that facilitate members' participation. Union leaders need to be seen and known by members. NAFU must ensure that it has a clear vision and understanding of its own role in the process of transforming the Namibian society and the empowerment of its members. This will only be possible if NAFU is able to build on its existing strengths, has a committed leadership as well as active rank and file members and the capacity to secure financial stability.