



## U.S. Department of Labor, International Labor Affairs Bureau

# M-POWER - Multilateral Partnership for Organizing, Worker Empowerment, and Rights

Free, independent, and democratic trade unions provide workers the collective voice and power to influence the rules that govern their workplaces, communities, and nations. This type of empowerment helps workers defend their rights and advance their interests in their workplaces and engage actively in their societies. As the world emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, job insecurity, weak occupational health and safety protection, limited access to social protection, and inadequate support for family care have increased workers' vulnerability. These hindrances compound pre-existing legal obstacles, repression, and violence that erode workers' fundamental rights, including their right to associate freely, organize unions, and bargain collectively.

For democracy to thrive, the international community must work together to uphold worker rights, strengthen the capacity of democratic unions to organize and represent all workers, and facilitate conditions for unions to be active participants in a vibrant civil society. In support of this imperative, the United States has launched the **Multilateral Partnership for Organizing, Worker Empowerment, and Rights (M-POWER)**.

***"We're fostering greater worker power, because workers organizing a union to give them the voice in their workplace, in their community, and their country isn't just an act of economic solidarity, it's democracy in action."***

*—President Joe Biden at the opening session of The Summit for Democracy, December 9, 2021*

**M-POWER** is a global initiative that unites governments, unions, labor academics, and CSOs committed to working in partnership to uphold and promote worker empowerment and rights.

**M-POWER** will strengthen workplace democracy globally by supporting worker rights and empowerment through program and policy interventions that:

1. Improve the enabling environment for free exercise of worker voice, association, and participation;
2. Expand opportunities for worker voice engagement in social dialogue and policy discussions; and
3. Uphold and advance workers' fundamental rights.

### HOW DOES M-POWER WORK?

**M-POWER** centers worker rights in international democracy promotion efforts and recognizes workplace democracy as the key to inclusive and equitable recovery.

**M-POWER** multiplies the impact of labor capacity building programs, diplomacy, trade engagement, and multilateral cooperation through information sharing, program

coordination, action-oriented research, and joint strategy development to enable effective and efficient targeting of resources.

**M-POWER** recognizes the experience and expertise of workers and their organizations in promoting worker voice and worker rights; and convenes unions and other labor stakeholders to inform strategy, press for accountability, and drive action.

During the Summit for Democracy's Year of Action, **M-POWER partners** will launch or advance initiatives to strengthen workers' right to freedom of association and worker empowerment in two spheres of work: domestic action and international cooperation.

***In their own countries, M-POWER partners undertake actions such as:***

- Protecting and expanding civic space for workers to organize, bargain, and advocate;
- Respecting, promoting, and realizing the **ILO's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work**;
- Addressing barriers for workers to join unions and bargain collectively—especially marginalized groups: migrants, women, seasonal, gig, and informal sector workers;
- Expanding dialogue between government, employers, and independent, democratic trade unions on critical issues such as pandemic recovery and just transition;
- Strengthening labor inspection and enforcement of labor law;
- Extending labor law protection to informal, excluded, and marginalized workers; and
- Supporting access to labor justice for all workers.

***Beyond their national borders, M-POWER partners will cooperate to advance workers' freedom of association and collective bargaining in the global economy through actions such as:***

- Standing up for and standing with labor activists and worker organizations under threat;
- Funding programs that strengthen free and independent trade unions, support labor law reform and enforcement to enhance worker rights, and use worker organizing and collective bargaining to improve worker livelihoods, or protect vulnerable workers;
- Uplifting the voices of disenfranchised workers to advance gender and racial equity and eliminate gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work; and
- Coordinating with **M-POWER** partners to align advocacy, policy recommendations, and engagement to expand space for worker input in multilateral processes, institutions, and initiatives.



© ILO / M.CROZET

**WHAT IS THE U.S. DOING?**

Led by the Department of Labor, Department of State, and USAID, **M-POWER** is an essential component of the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal. U.S. actions under **M-POWER** include a two-year funding commitment of \$122 million—the largest such commitment in U.S. history—for technical assistance programs to empower workers and strengthen worker voice, support for new research initiatives, and revitalized diplomatic and trade action in support of worker rights. **M-POWER** will regularly convene domestic and global labor stakeholders to exchange knowledge and shape program interventions and policy strategies and coordinate with philanthropic organizations at the forefront of advancing worker rights in the global economy.