

ALEN IN ACTION

The ALEN Program has been through many phases. The evolution from the APADEP program, AEN and now ALEN.

An evaluation was carried out in May 2010 which outlined the problems that the network had faced in the past which had contributed to its demise.

Some of the pertinent issues that arose from the evaluation were:

- Dissatisfaction with the coordination at the continental level.
- The Workers' College, which increasingly became stretched having to run their own programmes in addition to the coordination and facilitation of ALEN.
- The lack of proper hand-over, take-over processes, or their inadequacies, resulted in a new crop of national coordinators emerging that was not well versed in the ALEN programme and its procedures. Clearly, in all countries visited, the impression emerged that the national coordinators and the Workers' College were not on the same page.

However, as pointed out, the positive aspects of ALEN far outweighed the emerging challenges, which were believed, could be rectified.

In view of this, it was therefore concluded that the program should be relaunched and continued.

- The notion of a "network" had to be revitalised. It was decided that it should be clear that there can only be one type of members which are national trade union centres that are committed to undertake ALEN activities. It should be a network whose members are regularly informed about ALEN developments in other countries. In addition, it ought to be a network which frequently exchanges information amongst its members and extends support to those members in need. Such a network should not depend on expensive continental gatherings that yield impressive minutes only. If there are dedicated members, such a network can be maintained using modern information technology.
- A genuine culture of communication needs to be resuscitated. Participating national centres should contribute to such a revamped culture by providing information in time about their own progress and achievements.
- Whereas the ten-session package was highly commended, its availability left a lot to be desired. If grass roots education was to be taken seriously, every effort should be undertaken by ALEN to make this package available in every country of the network in more than sufficient quantities.
- It was also suggested that the continental coordination is placed under ITUC-Africa, which should ensure that the technical skills required for such a coordinating role are available (e.g. on a part-time basis). A fair estimation of

HR inputs will have to be made for which the experiences of Workers' College could be used.

With all these in place, the ALEN program was ready to take off on a new dimension.

Hence, in November, last year, a meeting was held in Accra – Ghana to:

- To critically assess the Evaluation Report of ALEN by the external evaluators
- How to carry the African Labor Educators' Network (ALEN) forward

Participants from ITUC-Africa, Workers' College, GTUC, MCTU, ZCTU, SATUCC, SASK and FNV were present.

It was at this meeting that coordinators brainstormed to set the strategic mission and vision for the relaunch of the program.

What was concluded, upon thorough consideration of work done by the Coordinators was:

Vision

Strong, democratic, independent and progressive trade union movement.

Mission

To provide education that empowers workers and mobilizes them to respond to challenges at the workplace and community.

In that meeting, roles of overall and National Coordinators were also set at this meeting and the decision to hand over the overall coordination to ITUC- Africa.

At the end of February, the members of the ALEN network convened at Workers College, Durban to conclude on a proposal for the next 3 years.

The overall coordination of the program was formally handed over from Workers College to ITUC-AFRICA.

Activities were drawn up by National, as well as Overall Coordinators, for the year.

A proposal is underway to be finalized and sent to FNV by June this year.

The ALEN Network is looking forward to a successful year ahead with the accomplishment of all its set activities.