



# Global Justice

## Case study #1

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### Our Global Justice Fund at work

#### **Project:**

Recruiting and servicing women workers, South Africa.

#### **Supported jointly by:**

CUPE National Global Justice Fund, Canadian International Development Agency, South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU).

#### **Goals:**

- Build expertise within SAMWU to better respond to the needs of women workers and members of SAMWU;
- Develop tools to integrate recruitment and servicing of women into SAMWU's general recruitment work;
- Improve the general work of the union, building a 'gender lens' into all of SAMWU's key campaigns (eg. fighting privatization, ending casualization of work, quality jobs).

#### **Activities:**

Activists in each of South Africa's nine provinces carry out the project. These provincial teams of seven women and men coordinate recruitment and servicing in targeted municipalities or companies.

Activists and organizers gather for national and provincial workshops to focus on project development, evaluation, planning, skill building and also to discuss and/or overcome challenges faced in the field. This work is carried out in addition to the regular workload of the participants.

Project participants engaging in strategic planning at national workshop.

(January 2007,  
Cape Town, South Africa.)



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### Background:

This partnership began in 2001 to investigate the extent of privatization and its impact on women municipal workers. Frontline, participatory research with privatized waste collection workers resulted in the publication *Dumping on Women*, coordinated by Melanie Samson in collaboration with SAMWU.

The second phase consisted of assessing needs, identifying recruitment targets and beginning to organize new recruits, bearing in mind the questions "where are the women?" and "what are their specific needs and interests?"

The next phases will focus on recruiting new women to the union (who work in the sector in an increasingly privatized context) and building skills for gender-sensitive recruitment and servicing. It will work to address the needs of women in the union.

### Issues:

Workers are being given shorter and shorter contracts to work for private companies hired to deliver privatized municipal services. SAMWU is working to overcome the major challenge of supporting people with as little as one month of job security at a time. Lessons from the experience will be critical for CUPE in our own struggles to resist privatization.

Some SAMWU members see organizing workers in privatized services as contradicting the union's policy of opposing privatization. But leaders understand that all workers deserve to be members of a union and that the only way to bring those services back in-house is to organize first.

### Outcomes:

In 2006, the project helped recruit 392 new members to SAMWU, 70 of whom are women.

In addition to attracting and keeping more workers including women workers, SAMWU will develop popular tools to assist both CUPE and SAMWU with gender-sensitive organizing and recruitment based on lessons learned over the course of the project.

Project participants engaging in strategic planning at national workshop (January 2007, Cape Town, South Africa).

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