

**Glocalising Union Organising: How Access to Power Resources Enables and Constrains
Global Union Federation Campaigns in the Global South**

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Abstract

Global union federations' (GUFs') global campaigns are key institutions of labour transnationalism. They aim to enhance living and working conditions for workers worldwide, including in the Global South. However, existing theory does not fully explain observed patterns in campaign outcomes. In a context where many transnational campaigns fail to achieve substantive gains for workers, what makes some campaigns succeed? Why are such successes rare? This article addresses these questions by drawing on power resource theory as a lens to investigate the successes and limitations of two GUF campaigns in Nestlé and GSK in India. Campaign successes were the result of the *glocalisation* of the organising model of trade unionism. This means that campaigns adapted the organising model ideas and practices to local conditions by working with strong local partners. In doing this, they created associational power resources through the iterative development of coalitional and ideational power resources. Therefore, the overall contribution is to show how successful GUF campaigns build union power resources through the glocalisation of the organising model. It also highlights the structural constraints that make it hard for GUFs to scale this approach.

Keywords: Global Union Federation, glocalisation, global campaigns, Global South, union organising, the organising model

Introduction

Global Union Federation (GUF) campaigns aim to establish mutual support among workers, creating space for labour voices at different levels from global to local. With the rise of labour transnationalism, GUFs are increasingly involved in global campaigning. They organise to advance workers' interests in multinational companies (MNCs), supporting national affiliates. They also negotiate Global Framework Agreements (GFAs) with MNCs (Croucher and Cotton, 2009; Fichter and McCallum, 2015). Research shows that labour transnationalism has succeeded in bringing tangible and sustained benefits to workers and their unions (e.g. Gordon and Turner, 2000; Bronfenbrenner, 2007; Harrod and O'Brien, 2002). Yet campaigns that result in substantial and sustained victories for workers are rare (Brookes and McCallum, 2017; Brookes, 2019). The geography of global capitalism creates vulnerabilities that provide structural power resources for workers. There is evidence that bottom-up global union campaigns can successfully utilise these power resources to advance workers' interests. Why are such campaigns not more common? This is perhaps the key puzzle in the literature on transnational labour organising. Brookes (2019) develops a middle-range theory that goes some way to addressing this puzzle, but for reasons that will be explained below, these efforts are not wholly convincing.

In this context, this article utilises power resource theory (Arnholtz and Refslund, 2024; Levesque and Murray, 2010; Korpi, 1978) and Roudometof's theory of glocalisation (Roudometof, 2016) as lenses to explain how some global union campaigns can succeed while also going some way to explaining the limited scope and success of labour transnationalism. This study draws on evidence from an ethnographic study of two GUF campaigns to organise workers in Nestlé and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) factories in India. It argues that successful GUF campaigns "glocalise" industrial relations as GUFs sponsor the construction of local power resources through very careful adaptation of 'organising model' principles to local

circumstances. This involves using coalitional power resources to develop ideational power resources, which create and sustain associational power resources. Local action is combined with very precise forms of multi-scale pressure tactics (utilising institutional power resources) targeted at specific employer vulnerabilities around relationships with large institutional shareholders who value adherence to private governance arrangements (Mayer and Gereffi, 2010). Successfully developing and integrating these power resources requires significant skill, effort, as well as strategic capabilities. There is ample scope for failure due to factors beyond the control of the unions and workers. These challenges act as constraints on the ability and willingness of workers and unions to engage in the process. Local institutional power resources and structural power resources would mitigate the risks to workers and unions, but this type of campaigning is not able to generate those resources. Consequently, successful GUF global campaigns are possible but relatively unusual.

The article is organised as follows. It begins by analysing existing theories and evidence on labour transnationalism, introducing power resource theory and Roudometof's (2016) conceptualisation of glocalisation. The context and methodology of the ethnographic field study are explained. The next section highlights key findings that highlight how the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) campaigns succeeded through glocalising the organising model. The discussion contextualises the findings against the wider literature and suggests future research directions.

Labour transnationalism: evidence and theory

There is an empirical and theoretical consensus that globalisation has undermined and eroded national systems for regulating employment, weakening the bargaining power of workers (e.g., Blanton et al., 2015; Kim and Kim, 2003; Nichols et al., 2004; Hill, 2009;

Hyman, 2015). In this context, labour transnationalism is typically conceptualised as methods for allowing unions to operate across different levels of geographical scale to construct or reconstruct their power to improve working conditions. It involves combinations of bottom-up campaigning, seeded or supported by unions in the Global North through GUFs, solidarity actions co-ordinated by GUFs and recourse to legal or quasi-legal rules and norms that put pressure on multi-national businesses to make concessions to their workforces in the Global South (Brookes, 2013; Wills, 2002; Ford and Gillan, 2015; 2021). There is an extensive literature examining GUF global campaigns, primarily through case studies (key examples include Brooks, 2019; Bronfrenbrenner, 2007; Cotton and Royle, 2014; Evans, 2010; McCallum, 2013). However, there is no consensus on how labour transnationalism should be theorised.

Drawing inspiration from Polanyi (2001), labour transnationalism is conceptualised as a constitutive part of a broader reflexive reaction against the power of global capital. Global capitalism seeds the conditions for workers to mobilise successfully against it. Workers' counter-mobilisation through labour transnationalism is part of a broader counter-movement that will go some way to correcting the excesses of global capitalism (Evans, 2008; Webster et al., 2008; Bieler and Lindberg, 2010). This conceptualisation is disputed by Burawoy (2010), who argues that the weight of empirical evidence is against it. Burawoy argues for “uncompromising pessimism”: he believes that global capitalism has systematically destroyed the ground on which any counter-movement could be built. There is a forceful logic behind Burawoy’s argument. However, the strength of pessimism makes it difficult to account for the successful examples of labour transnationalism. If, as Burawoy argues, the ground on which resistance to global capitalism could be built has been systematically destroyed, how can successful campaigns of resistance (e.g. Gordon and Turner, 2000; Bronfrenbrenner, 2007; Fairbrother et al., 2013) succeed? Labour geographers show how the rise of global production

networks creates structural power resources for union global campaigns, positing that labour transnationalism offers a better way of improving working conditions than voluntary action by business and other private governance arrangements (Selwyn, 2013). Focusing on industrial relations drivers of labour transnationalism, Lévesque and Murray (2010) argue that local union engagement in transnational campaigns depends on local union power resources, narrative framing, the orientation of the national union the local union is a part of, and the extent of international regulation. Sarkar and Kuruvilla (2020) argue that the success of GUF campaigns is contingent on the internal consistency of the campaigns and modes of articulation that give voice to local concerns. However, Brookes and McCallum (2017) argue persuasively that research and theorising to date do not really explain observed patterns of labour transnationalism, and new middle-range theory is needed for this task. Brookes (2019) posits that successful labour transnationalism depends on three preconditions: intraunion coordination, inter-union coordination, and context-appropriate power. If, as Brookes posits, successful campaigns are an outcome of these three factors, what is stopping unions from achieving more success by learning these lessons for themselves?

One answer is that a combination of internal union politics, bureaucracy and ideology stops union officials from learning and implementing the lessons. There are examples of union behaviour compatible with this explanation, for example, the response of the UK's GMB union to the GUF global campaign against G4S (Brookes, 2019). However, there are also many examples of labour transnationalism promoted by skilled, committed and ideologically motivated union officials. An alternative explanation, which will be developed through this article, is that workers and their unions have a degree of agency to establish successful campaigns. However, they also face considerable social structural constraints, which explains why successful campaigns are not more common. While it is important that the analysis of labour transnationalism is not over-determined in the manner of Burawoy's pessimism, it is

also important to avoid accounts that are under-socialised because they fail to allow for the social structural constraints on unions. Ideas from or closely related to power resources theory (Arnholtz and Refslund, 2024; Refslund and Arnholtz, 2022; Wright, 2000; Korpi, 1978) provide a solid basis for developing such an analysis.

Power resources are "the properties of an actor that provide the ability to reward or punish another actor" (Korpi, 1978: 35). Korpi posits that employers have a structural power resource advantage over workers, but organisations that coordinate workers' collective action are a major alternative source of power resources (Refslund and Arnholtz, 2022). Building on this insight, Wright (2000) categorises workers' organisations' power resources as "structural" – coming from workers' position within the production process, labour and product markets, and "associational", coming from workers' collective organisation. Since Wright's seminal analysis, there has been a proliferation of power resource constructs (Chun, 2009; Brookes, 2013; Schmalz and Dörre, 2014). Arnholtz & Refslund (2024) argue that this proliferation is not analytically helpful. Instead, they argue that most forms of power resources can be organised within five constructs: the structural, associational, institutional, ideational and coalitional power resources. Institutional power resources come from rules and norms that it would cost an employer to ignore. Ideational power resources are the ideas that motivate or demotivate workers to act towards associational power resources. Coalitional power resources come from unions building alliances with each other and other civil society organisations.

A power resources lens can be used to examine how different configurations of power resources are associated with different social and economic institutions and outcomes at a country (macro) level. It can also be used to understand how configurations of power resources are assembled and utilised in industrial conflicts at the local (microfoundational) level. The microfoundational perspective has overlaps and appreciative touchpoints with other bodies of industrial relations theory that aim to explain why and how workers engage in collective action.

For example, there is a degree of agreement and crossover between concepts of ideational and associational power resources and key aspects of mobilisation theory (Kelly, 1998). Applying a power resources lens to studies of labour transnationalism in the Global South, it is apparent that successful campaigns are those that are able to amass the power resources to blunt or block the power of MNCs (e.g., Thomas, 2021; Cotton and Royle, 2014; Selwyn, 2007).

Glocalisation is a term that captures how global products need to be adapted to local conditions to be successful. Roudometof (2016) engage creatively with the term to conceptualise local-global relationships within wider theories of globalisation. For Roudometof, globalisation is seen as a force for diffusion; diffusing ideas, cultures and institutions globally, erasing and replacing local and traditional cultures and institutions. Glocalisation refers to local social structures that collectively have the power to disrupt or prevent the diffusion of globalising ideas and practices. Glocality, or a multitude of different glocalities, represents the interaction of global forces and local social structures. “Glocalisation is globalisation refracted through the local,” (Roudometof, 2016: 399). The “thickness” (or strength) of local social structures determines the extent to which global forces are blocked or blunted to the extent that a new glocality that is different from the global norm is formed. In light of this analysis, this article argues that successful GUF global campaigns are exercises in glocalisation along two dimensions. First, and most obviously, the campaigns' aim, through the accumulation and creation of power resources, is to create glocalities of local social structures (unions and collective bargaining) that are strong enough to block the power of global capital exercised by MNCs. Second, successful campaigns glocalise organising ideas and practices. GUFs globalise ideas about union organising from the Global North (McCallum, 2013). *Successful* GUF global campaigns glocalise these ideas by passing them through strong local social structures (local coalition partners/affiliates). Therefore, local social structures and adaption to them are critical to the success of GUF global campaigns. At the same time, the

configuration of power resources that these campaigns assemble is difficult to create and sustain, limiting the ability of GUFs to achieve successful campaigns at scale. This argument is advanced through an analysis of data from ethnographic studies of two GUF global campaigns centred on India. The first was the ‘Stop Nespressure’ campaign to organise workers in four factories operated by the Swiss-headquartered multinational food and drink processing conglomerate. The second focused on a single factory operated by GSK, the Indian subsidiary of the British-headquartered multinational pharmaceutical company.

Methodology

Background to the campaigns

The decision to study IUF global campaigns reflected an expert consensus that the IUF was the GUF most focused on involving local workers and activists in their global campaigns (i.e., they are sites of glocalisation efforts). These were two of several IUF global campaigns in India during the late 2000s. Other targets were Coca-Cola, Tata-Global-Beverage, SABMiller, Ferrero Roche, and PepsiCo (Garver et al., 2007; Gallin, 2014; Sarkar and Kuruvilla, 2020). The campaigns and their context are also interesting when viewed through a power resources theory lens, displaying similar configurations of baseline power resources. Both were Indian subsidiaries of multinationals, but both focused on supplying the Indian domestic market. Therefore, they did not hold strategic positions within global supply chains, so they started with relatively low structural power resources, without the ability to disrupt global supply chains. National and state industrial relations legislation also provided little in the way of institutional power resources.

In 2008–2009, IUF established the ‘Stop Nespressure’ campaign to coordinate campaigns to improve workers' rights and working conditions in a number of countries in the

Global South. India was a key focus. A 14-month-long campaign in five Indian factories of Nestlé (in Moga in Punjab, Samalkha in Haryana, Ponda and Bicholim in Goa, and Pantnagar in Uttarakhand) ended with Nestlé India signing wage settlements with factory unions. The IUF campaign against India's GSK food division is a spinoff from the 'Stop Nespressure' campaign's success. The campaign lasted nine months, ending when GSK India agreed to regularise the employment status of casual workers in one of its largest factories (in Nabha in Punjab).

IUF's Nestlé campaign resulted in increased unionisation, the establishment of collective bargaining and tangible worker gains. By the end of the campaign in 2009, 6,500 workers in five of Nestlé's factories were covered by regular collective bargaining agreements and achieved a significant pay increase. In GSK, the union negotiated permanent jobs for all 452 casual workers employed at the factory by the end of the campaign in 2010 and later regularised a further 205 workers. These campaigns were fought in the context of unrelenting hostility from management. Both MNCs have a history of resisting unionisation efforts in the developing world. In GSK, union-busting activities, employment discrimination and "derisory" pay rises triggered industrial brawls, agitation, and flash strikes on several occasions in different countries (Palmer, 2016; Kansteiner, 2022). Nestlé also has a track record of union-busting (Mattera, 2010: 2). The first author of the article conducted ethnographic field studies of these two IUF campaigns. The initial field study was conducted over two years, between 2007 and 2009. Follow-up interviews to capture the reflections of participants and track the longer-term impacts of the campaigns were conducted between 2013 and 2020.

Data collection and analysis

The first author spent 36 days observing the Nestlé campaign across the five factory sites and 27 days observing the campaign in GSK between 2007 and 2009, making extensive field notes. Campaign activities observed included gate meetings, canteen boycotts, demonstrations and pickets. The company's refusal to participate in the research meant that the first author observed the campaigns without the company's consent. Ethically, this was considered acceptable because the purpose was to observe the actions of union officials, activists and workers who knew about the research and consented to be observed, not managers. No field notes or observations about managers who did not consent to participate were made. Data collection and analysis followed the grounded theory approach articulated by Thornberg and Charmaz (2014). The aim here is to develop new theory or concepts through iterative data collection and analysis, with initial data analysis resulting in provisional theorising, which is then developed further through subsequent data collection and analysis informed by the initial analysis. Initial themes were then refined abductively, drawing on the theoretical lenses explained above. The first author conducted post-fieldwork interviews with 43 campaign participants and interested campaign observers, focusing on understanding more about campaign dynamics and critical incidents. Interviews involved questions prompted by analysis of field notes and observations from other interviewees, so different interview schedules were used for different interviewees depending on their roles and perspectives. Campaign participants included elected lay officials of the Federation of All India Nestle Employees (FAINE), the GSK Union, and IUF-IOO officials directly involved in the campaigns. Additionally, two focus groups were held with rank-and-file members from FAINE from three of the Nestlé factories and from the GSK factory in Nabha. These interviews and focus groups took place in 2013–14. Full details of the interviewees, their roles, and perspectives are reported in Table 1. Interviewees and focus group participants were selected for interview because of their ability to shed light on 1) local campaign strategies and tactics,

negotiations with employers, and the longer-term impacts of the campaigns; 2) The behaviour and decision-making of local unions that decided to affiliate with the IUF and join the campaigns; 3) How IUF-IOO officials in India went about translating global campaigns to local conditions through engagement with local affiliates and their members.

Table 1 around here

Interviews took between one to three hours and were recorded, transcribed and analysed using MAXQDA. Interviews and field notes were analysed by the first author, beginning with short first-order codes that aimed to provide a brief description of what was going on, followed by a process of axial coding whereby first-order codes were grouped into theoretical concepts with the aim of building theoretical explanations.

When conducting ethnographic studies, it is important to reflect on the researchers' positionality in relation to the object of research. In this case, the first author was drawn to the study precisely because of his sympathies with the aims of the IUF campaigns. This study is an exercise in conducting research with and for oppressed workers (Brook and Darlington, 2013). Coding was developed iteratively through debate between the first and second authors. As the second author was not involved in the data collection and initial data analysis, he stood at one stage removed from the data. He therefore performed the role of challenging and pushing the first author to justify and explain his initial interpretive coding. The authors consider the process of interpretive coding to be an inherently subjective one; other researchers might look at the same data and make different interpretive codes and themes from it (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014). Significant new iterations of coding took place in response to challenges and feedback from anonymous reviewers to get to the final themes reported below.

Findings

This findings section explains the themes developed through the process of data analysis described above. The themes are: *strategic coalition building; glocalising the organising model; glocalising union organising; building associational and ideational power resources through collective action; putting associational power resources to work; Multi-scale pressure.*

Strategic coalition building: glocalising the organising model

“You start with a strong affiliate... not a weak one.” Former Coordinator of Transnational Corporate Campaigns, IUF Geneva.

The IUF’s strategy was shaped by its commitment to an organising model approach to labour transnationalism. The organising model is characterised as a “rank-and-file intensive organising strategy based on person-to-person contact.... union democracy and representative participation.... the use of escalating pressure tactics; and an emphasis on dignity, justice and fairness rather than on bread-and-butter issues” (Bronfenbrenner, 1997: 195; Bronfenbrenner, 1998). IUF recognised the need to glocalise the organising model, adapting it to local conditions by allowing strong local partners to adopt the model on their own terms. To do this, the IUF began to establish an institutional presence in India in 2005. Its first Indian affiliate was the Hindustan Lever Employees Union (HLEU), a factory union based at the Mumbai factory of Hindustan Lever Limited (HLL), the Indian subsidiary of the Anglo-Dutch MNC Unilever. HLEU had engaged HLL in an unsuccessful, 20-year struggle to establish a national collective bargaining agreement covering all HLL factories. The struggle was marked by intense and persistent anti-union activity on the part of the employer. Throughout this struggle, HLEU benefited from support and international solidarity actions, initially from the Dutch

trade union confederation, the Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging (FNV), and latterly from the IUF. Both FNV and IUF provided HLEU with the means to internationalise its national and local priorities. For example, FNV put forward HLEU demands for national collective bargaining in consultations about how to address child labour in cottonseed production facilities part-owned by HLL (Sukthankar and Kolben, 2007). By offering HLEU activists access to this sort of coalitional power resource, IUF started to build a trust-based relationship that would provide a strong basis for future collaboration.

In late 2005, HLL closed its Mumbai factory in the teeth of union resistance, with the result that the HLEU activists and lay officials lost their jobs. The IUF moved quickly to turn this crisis into an opportunity for further coalition building. It established an India Outreach Office (IUF-IOO) and appointed a cadre of four HLEU activists and officials as staff. By doing this, it immediately acquired a highly experienced staff, well-versed in the strategy and tactics of Indian labour organising. The four officials were also committed to a rank-and-file organising approach to building union power. They were well-networked with Indian NGOs, activists and the wider trade union movement.

This meant the IUF-IOO took the IUF's commitment to organising but filtered it through their own previous experience and expertise to create a glocalised Indian version of the organising model. Following organising model principles, IUF-IOO prioritised working with and developing independent enterprise unions (not affiliated to one of India's 11 politically affiliated central trade union organisations) that were focused on making gains through collective bargaining rather than through political action (e.g., lobbying and advocacy). This involved careful research to identify both unions and companies where an IUF-IOO campaign was most likely to succeed. The point, as per the quote that opened this section, is that the IUF recognised HLEU as one of the stronger, better organised and militant of India's independent enterprise unions. The IUF's approach to global campaigning, from the bottom up

to internationalise/escalate the issues and concerns of affiliate unions, appealed to Indian union activists and built trust and confidence in the IUF. This trust provided the IUF with the opportunity to work more closely with HLEU. Although it was not articulated in these terms, the IUF strategy was one of glocalisation: thickening local social structures to block the power of global capitalism. In doing this, North American ideas about union organising strategy were glocalised by the process of passing through the local social structure of IUF-IOO as it evolved out of HLEU.

Glocalising union organising

“Nobody should go home and sleep peacefully until his demands are met through the campaign that he has taken part in against the company,” IUF-IOO Transnational Coordinator. In this section, the ways in which IUF-IOO went about building power resources in its affiliates are unpacked. It shows how elements of the North American organising model tactics and practices were adapted to Indian conditions to construct a new glocality, an Indian organising model. There were two elements to this process of power resource building. First, constructing new institutions of solidarity between unions and workers to build associational power resources. Second, educating activists on the ideas and practices of union organising in a way that was attuned to Indian conditions and traditions to build ideational power resources in a way that helped to strengthen the associational power resources.

The first element involved IUF-IOO officials working to construct alliances that connected previously isolated factory unions with each other, the wider labour movement, and civil society campaigners. For example, in the Nestlé case, IUF-IOO brought together union officials and activists from a number of independent single-factory unions. The Federation of All Indian Nestle Employees (FAINE) was founded as a federation of these independent enterprise unions in May 2008 by representatives from three factories (Moga, Samalkha and

Ponda). FAINE was registered as a trade union by October 2008, with two further factory unions (Pantnagar and Bicholim) joining. IUF-IOO officials facilitated discussions to agree on a constitution for FAINE and a charter of demands to be presented to management, the centrepiece of which was a demand for a 25% increase in wages and recognition of FAINE for collective bargaining. To do this, two IUF-IOO officials travelled to the factory locations and organised clandestine meetings with local union activists. The status and credibility the officials enjoyed in Indian trade union and activist circles as a result of their leadership roles in union campaigns in Unilever and Coca-Cola meant that local activists were willing to listen to and follow their advice in shaping FAINE, its campaign aims and action plan to force management to accept the charter of demands.

Beyond Nestlé, IUF-IOO constructed a broader coalition to provide solidarity and practical support. One aspect of this was the formation of the Punjab Food Workers Association (PFWA). PFWA brought together representatives from 20 unions from MNCs with factories or facilities in the province, including the GSK factory in Nabha, which was later to receive more formal support from IUF-IOO officials in the second case study campaign. This approach: bringing together previously disparate unions within the same industry and/or the same region, provided IUF-IOO officials with valuable intelligence about which campaigns to develop and prioritise, and provided those campaigns with means of practical and symbolic support.

The second element was to educate activists to provide them with the means to develop and sustain the associational power resources of workers in their factories through the development of ideational power resources. In developing and structuring this education, the IUF-IOO approach drew on IUF training materials, which took their inspiration from the US organising model, but these were reframed for Indian conditions. Around 32 FAINE activists went through IUF-IOO training in the months immediately following the establishment of

FAINE. The training comprised three modules. The first teaching about industrial relations and trade union law in India was so that activists were able to formulate and articulate demands based on legal entitlements. It highlighted the losses workers were suffering as a result of their previous lack of knowledge and how they could remedy these losses by putting demands to management and negotiating. It also provided an overview of what was involved in a campaign against an MNC. The second focused more on developing leadership and campaigning skills. This included union organising skills and tactics that would be recognisable to union organisers familiar with the organising model. For example, techniques and tools for identifying resources and mapping sources of power and pressure points. These techniques and tools were converted into educational materials written in local languages, supported by visual aids and illustrations. Tutors were drawn from IUF-IOO officials' wider network of contacts in the Indian labour movement and NGOs that organised and campaigned against poverty and hunger. They included labour lawyers, journalists, professional activists, as well as experienced union officials. There was a strong focus on tactics that were proven to work in Indian conditions: boycotting company canteens, demonstrations, picketing workplaces and wider company activities, mass insubordination and go-slows, wild-cat and short symbolic strike actions, producing leaflets, playing musical games to boost the morale of striking workers, posters and petitions. The third module was led directly by IUF-IOO officials, drawing on their own personal experiences from 20 years of activism in HLL and other companies. They focused on building ideational power resources that prepared activists mentally and ideologically for struggle: to instil in them an urgent belief in the campaigns they were about to enter into, preparing them for the risks, challenges and difficulties involved (as per the quote that opened this section). The training included motivational speeches from charismatic activists and videos produced by the IUF showing examples of successful IUF grass-roots-based global campaigns.

Building associational and ideational power resources through collective action

“Through the ‘community kitchen’ run by spouses of boycotting workers to serve food to workers who have boycotted the canteen, we embedded the local culture of collectivism in our movement” (IUF-IOO official). The campaign was able to build associational and ideational power resources because the IUF employed local officials deeply rooted in the Indian labour movement. This enabled campaigns of industrial and extra-industrial action. Specifically, IUF-IOO officials encouraged FAINE and GSK Union activists to undertake activities that built a sense of solidarity among the workforces they were organising. Some of these activities were generic tools of union organising deployed the world over: holding meetings outside the factory gates, providing funds to replace lost earnings arising from union activities and shunning workers who refused to support the union action. Other critical actions provide examples of the glocalisation of union organising: activities and tactics rooted firmly in Indian experiences and institutions. For example, workers’ distinctive sense of collective identity was cultivated by shouting slogans that drew on local folklore in local languages. The unions set up regular community kitchens, run by the spouses of activists, in close proximity to the factories and encouraged workers to boycott the works canteen on days that community kitchens were operating. Community kitchens also meant that the employers made a loss on the operation of the works canteens. IUF-IOO officials coordinated solidarity, drawing on their wider national and even international networks. For example, two South American activists who had been dismissed from a Nestlé factory in their home country because of their union activities travelled to one of the Nestlé factories to offer solidarity with IUF support. These solidarity actions were important for maintaining morale.

Putting associational power resources to work

IUF-IOO officials encouraged the affiliate unions to exercise their associational power resources strategically, imposing costs with the aim of forcing negotiated concessions. In the Nestlé campaign, FAINE held joint meetings fortnightly throughout the campaign. Tactics that were successful in one factory were quickly transferred to others through FAINE. After 5 – 6 months of union militancy involving protests, rallies and demonstrations, canteen boycotts, and short-duration wildcat strikes, FAINE's actions provoked a strong response from Nestlé management. Key union activists were dismissed or suspended. This led to workers blockading managers in the factory and violent confrontations between FAINE activists and gang masters providing casual non-union labour to the Nestlé factories. In response to the violence, Nestlé management locked out workers in the Pantnagar factory. FAINE responded with an all-out strike across all five factories. Production ground to a halt as mass FAINE pickets stopped casual and contract workers from entering factories to replace strikers. However, IUF-IOO officials had a keen sense of the limits and limitations of the associational power resources they had accumulated. In the GSK campaign, which had developed over a shorter period than Nestlé, without the same level of preparatory education, IUF-IOO officials advised against escalating strike action because they did not think the GSK Union had accumulated the ideational power resources necessary to sustain industrial action effectively.

Multi-scale pressure

“Frankly, we caught them (management) from both sides; they had no way to escape. Our regular gate meetings, canteen boycotts, picketing and demonstrations planned secretly turned local factory managers restless and jittery, while the pressure from [head office in Switzerland] on the India office kept employers on both ends in a tight spot. HR was tight-lipped to the media, Nestle in India was on tenterhooks,” IUF-IOO Transnational Coordinator.

Central to the success of both campaigns was the IUF's capacity to scale the campaigns beyond the factory gates through national and transnational extra-industrial action. In Nestlé, once the strike was underway, FAINE coordinated demonstrations by 400 Nestlé workers at Nestlé's India Head Office in Gurgaon. This helped shift the campaign's focus from factories to the head office, where key decision-makers were located. IUF-IOO encouraged GSK Union to stage protests at shareholders' meetings to target the company's Indian top management, including the board members, and make shareholders accountable for poor working conditions. GSK Union analysed GSK's balance sheets and circulated materials explaining GSK's financial position in the local language to show that the company could afford to meet worker demands. Workers with their families rallied and made door-to-door visits to local residents to draw attention to alleged malpractices by GSK. Workers and their families blockaded shareholders during the company AGM at Nabha. After several weeks of open campaigning with associated media coverage, there was a significant drop in the GSK India share price.

Because both companies are headquartered in countries that adhere to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct, the IUF was able to take cases against arbitration through the UK National Contact Point. Although the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct are a form of private governance with no coercive legal force behind them, they nevertheless acted as an institutional power resource. After three weeks of all-out striking in the Nestlé factories, IUF identified specific guideline breaches: the suspension, the dismissal of union officials and the lockout of union members, and filed complaints against Nestlé. After the mediator-led investigation and mediation process, Nestlé's global management instructed Indian management to recognise and negotiate with FAINE. Although a relatively weak form of institutional power resource, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct were effective in these cases

because being found to be in breach of them creates reputational risks for MNCs, for example, in terms of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) ratings, which could affect the parent company share price. Exploiting this vulnerability was central to the IUF's strategy.

Once initiated, negotiations resulted in management agreeing to FAINE's demands, and the strike was called off. The same process was followed with GSK. Once again, the complaint to the UK-National Contact Point prompted GSK's global management to direct its Indian subsidiary to negotiate a settlement with GSK Union, which resulted in GSK regularising the employment status of 452 casual workers (although union demands for better wages were not acceded to immediately). The point here is not that recourse to the UK-National Contact Point forced management to capitulate, but rather it forced management to negotiate instead of trying to bulldoze through the industrial action using aggressive anti-union tactics. The outcomes of these negotiations depended on the associational power that IUF-IOO had managed to build before the complaint.

The regularisation of contract workers that resulted from the campaigns was a huge achievement for FAINE and the GSK Union and was widely recognised as such. That the victories were achieved through the use of associational, ideational and coalitional power resources with only limited institutional and structural resources is particularly noteworthy. At GSK, campaigns extended beyond Nabha to GSK's Sonipat and Rajahmundry factories, where 205 workers were regularised in 2011. The victories led to the establishment of sustainable workplace union organisations in all five Nestlé factories, as workers whose status was regularised retained union membership on an ongoing basis. FAINE moved on to win organising campaigns in other Nestlé factories in India, which resulted in regularising the employment status of casual workers in those factories too. FAINE subsequently merged with the All India Nestle Workers Federation (another IUF affiliate) in 2015, and a successful round

of collective bargaining over pay in all factories organised by the All India Nestle Workers Federation followed in 2015.

Discussion

This article answers two closely related questions: First, what makes GUF campaigns succeed? Second, why are successes rare? Drawing on the theoretical lenses of glocalisation (Roudometof, 2016) and power resources theory (Arnholtz and Refslund, 2024), it is argued that the answer to the first question is that GUF global campaigns succeed when they glocalise the organising model. This process involves building trust-based relationships between a GUF and local activists in industries that align with the GUF's areas of operation. These relationships need to be built up over a sustained period of time, in which the GUF shows it is willing and able to support local activists by taking on their agenda at levels of geographical scale that the activists cannot reach alone. Once built, these relationships give the GUF the strategic capacity to act by developing affiliates in countries in the Global South and building associational power resources (local affiliates and coalitions of local affiliates). This strategic capacity is translated into action by glocalising the organising model through the education and training of local trade unionists, passing Western ideas about how to practice grassroots-driven trade unionism through strong local affiliates, so that the principles are adapted to local conditions. The process of glocalising the organising model was qualitatively different to the globalisation of organising model ideas witnessed in other GUF global campaigns, notably the UNI/G4S campaign, where the organising model was implemented in a top-down fashion (Brookes, 2019; McCallum, 2013; Sarkar and Kuruvilla, 2020). Glocalising the organising model in this way creates ideational power resources, which strengthen associational power resources. Associational and ideational power resources are then further strengthened through militant collective action driven by local affiliates. In the cases studied here, while the GUF and its

affiliates were inclined towards militant action to build power resources and exercise power, their militancy was tempered by a shrewd appreciation of the limits of what the available power resources might allow unions to achieve.

The impact of local collective action is then magnified by GUF-coordinated actions across different levels of geographical scale. In the cases studied here, IUF supported local affiliates in challenging employers through a private governance mechanism. Although the private governance mechanism in question (the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct) is by any objective assessment a relatively weak form of institutional power resource it was effective because it targeted a specific employer vulnerability; the desire to maintain good standing with investors by being seen to adhere to normative good practice in addressing social concerns and corporate governance (Mayer and Gereffi, 2010; note that although this private governance mechanism was important in the campaigns studied here, academic research on this mechanism is limited, suggesting a promising opportunity for future researchers) This institutional power resource was not in itself enough to bring campaigns to successful conclusions, but it created the space for success by bringing employers to the negotiating table. The outcomes of negotiations depended on the combination of local ideational and associational power resources; i.e., local power resources moderated the impact of transnational institutional power resources. Of the two campaigns studied, outcomes were less favourable to the unions in the GSK case. At the root of the relative differences between the campaigns were differences in the level of ideational power resources the IUF has been able to build.

This latter point is a significant part of the answer to the second question: why are successful GUF campaigns not more common? Building the type of power resources necessary for victory is time-consuming and resource-intensive. One of the critical resources needed is expertise in union organising in local conditions, combined with a reputation and profile that

commands local respect. Expertise of this kind is rare and difficult to create quickly or at scale. Further, local campaigns are complex social systems with inherently uncertain outcomes. The need to invest significant resources and effort for uncertain outcomes is likely to deter many workers from participating because social-psychological theories of participation in collective action stress the need for individuals to perceive positive benefits from participation (Kelly, 1998). Consequently, different groups of workers will respond to similar campaign inputs (education and training, rallies, speeches, collective and solidarity actions) in different and difficult-to-predict ways. Without significant institutional power resources provided by the state or structural power resources embedded in production networks and the labour process, power resource advantages will always lie with the employers (Korpi, 1978). Workers, their unions, and by extension GUFs have the agency to reshape working conditions in workers' favour, but the social structures under which they operate make this a formidable undertaking. Therefore, the emergent nature of grassroots union organising based on this particular combination of power resources (associational and ideational power resources without significant structural or institutional power resources) is a significant constraint on the ability of GUFs to practice campaigns of this sort on a larger scale or replicate them in different social conditions. Ford and Gillan (2024) have recently conceptualised this state as “constrained agency”.

This line of argument is at odds with attempts to develop a middle-range theory that can predict campaign outcomes based on studying the inputs to a campaign (e.g., Brookes, 2019; Bronfenbrenner, 1997). The analysis presented above suggests that GUF global campaign outcomes cannot be credibly theorised in this way because the outcomes are too uncertain. However, this pessimism of the intellect should be tempered with optimism of the will. Successful campaigns are possible, and it is important to recognise the patience, determination, skill and courage of those involved. At the same time, it is important to

recognise the implied limits of what GUFs might achieve by glocalising the organising model. Workers' victories on a larger scale are unlikely to happen without institutional changes that increase the institutional power resources of workers and unions in the Global South, so transnational activists from the Global North need to push states as well as corporations to protect and enhance workers' rights (Gill, 2009).

Conclusion

This article answers two questions. First, what makes global union campaigns succeed? Second, why are worker victories in GUF campaigns not more common? It answers these questions in the light of a field study of two GUF campaigns. Findings suggest campaigns succeed when GUFs invest in building long-term trust-based relationships with highly skilled and experienced local activists and empower those activists to develop campaigns on their own terms to develop associational and ideational power resources. They draw on ideas of grassroots organising encapsulated within the organising model, but pass these through strong local unions so that a version of the organising model embedded in local practices and traditions is constructed (glocalising the organising model). Local efforts are supported at different levels of geographical scale, drawing on institutional power resources provided by private governance and other institutions of civil society. The campaigns are complex, emergent processes. Successes are rare precisely because of the complexity and uncertainty involved. The inherent uncertainty about outcomes means that it is not possible to predict outcomes based on campaign inputs. Furthermore, the skills and experience needed for a campaign to have a chance of succeeding are in limited supply and difficult to create on a large scale. This explains why, despite the opportunities for workers' resistance offered by reputational and strategic supply chain vulnerabilities faced by MNCs, successful examples of GUF campaigns remain relatively unusual.

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Table 1 – details of interviewees (all interviews conducted in 2012-13 and 2018 unless stated otherwise)

	Interviewee	Role in campaigns
1	IUF Global officer, dairy, plantation, and beverage sectors (3 interviews in 2012)	Responsible for coordinating with IUF affiliates in India
2	IUF Regional Programme Officer, Southeast Asia	Responsible for IUF transnational campaigns in the region covering India
3	IUF Asia-Pacific co-ordinator	IUF-IOO officials involved in Nestlé and GSK campaigns were reporting to him
4	FAINE (Federation of All India Nestlé Employees) elected office bearers who get elected from one of the five factory unions, Moga	All are directly involved in the Nestlé campaign.
5 & 6	FAINE officials, Moga	
7, 8 & 9	FAINE officials, Pantnagar	
10 & 11	FAINE officials, Samalkha	
12 & 13	FAINE officials, Ponda	
14 & 15	MFFWU (Mill Food Factory Workers' Union) elected office bearers elected from one of the member unions	Involved in the GSK campaign
16 - 22	Worker representative, GSK factory (official/member of GSK union)	All those directly involved in the GSK campaign
23	Secretary, Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Sangha (IUF-affiliated union, one of the long-standing IUF affiliates involved in organising agriculture workers)	A veteran trade unionist organising informal workers and associated with the IUF in India.
24	IUF-IOO affiliate organising women working in the informal sector with WEIGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising)	Worked closely with IUF-IOO as an IUF affiliate
25	General Secretary, IUF affiliate New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI)	
26	Vice President, IUF affiliate NTUI	
27	Director of IUF-IOO (former secretary of Hindustan Lever [Unilver India] Employees' Union, IUF's 1 st affiliate in India) (3 interviews in 2013)	
28	IUF-IOO Transnational Corporation Coordinator (TCC) (3 interviews, in 2013 and 2018)	
29	Campaign coordinator, Dairy Employees Federation of India	campaign observer

30	Senior campaign coordinator, Hotel Employees Federation of India (2 interviews in 2015)	campaign observer
31	IUF-IOO National Officer for Supply Chains (2 interviews in 2013)	
32	IUF-IOO National Officer for hotels and restaurants	Campaign observer
33	Liaison personnel (liaison with Punjab Food Workers' Alliance/PFWA) (3 interviews in 2013 and 2018)	
34	Liaison personnel (liaison with PFWA)	
35	Veteran trade unionist (Secretary of the Trade Union Solidarity Committee, which is a coalition of independent trade unions in various corporations in India)	Campaign observer
36	Veteran trade unionist (Program Officer, Committee for Asian Women)	Campaign observer
37	Trade unionist (General Secretary, Centre of Indian Trade Unions, Uttarakhand State, where Nestlé has a factory)	Campaign observer
38	Trade unionist (Vice President, Indian National Trade Union Congress, Uttarakhand State)	Campaign observer.
39	Program Strategy and Innovation Director, AFL-CIO Global Solidarity Centre	
40	Asia Regional Program Director, AFL-CIO Global Solidarity Centre	
41	Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union official	International campaign observer
42	Service Employees International Union official (2 interviews in 2013)	International campaign observer
43	Academic expert on IUF global campaigns	International campaign observer

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