



GLU

# THE GLOBAL LABOUR UNIVERSITY

AN INTERNATIONAL  
NETWORK





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# GLOBAL LABOUR UNIVERSITY (GLU)

**GLU is an international network of:**

**Seven universities –**

University of Campinas in Brazil,  
Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in India,  
Tata Institute of Social Sciences in India,  
University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in South Africa,  
University of Kassel in Germany,  
Berlin School of Economics and Law (HWR) in Germany,  
Penn State University in USA

**Global Unions and National Trade Unions,  
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and  
International Labour Organisation (ILO).**



# INTRODUCTION

The GLU is a unique network that provides university-level education for labour activists through a variety of programmes such as postgraduate degree programmes, a range of qualifications (online and university-based), and networking opportunities. The GLU provides high level training to trade unionists, labour activists and labour experts and as such is a progressive labour alternative to MBA programmes offered by business schools.

GLU opens up university access to workers' movements, workers and labour activists. It supports unions and other social movements to engage in the issues of policy and development, dialogue and debate in order to strengthen their bargaining position. GLU's unique approach is the way in which it integrates the university programmes with the labour-oriented partners. The ILO and unions are involved at the governance level, with scholarships, guest lectures and seminars,

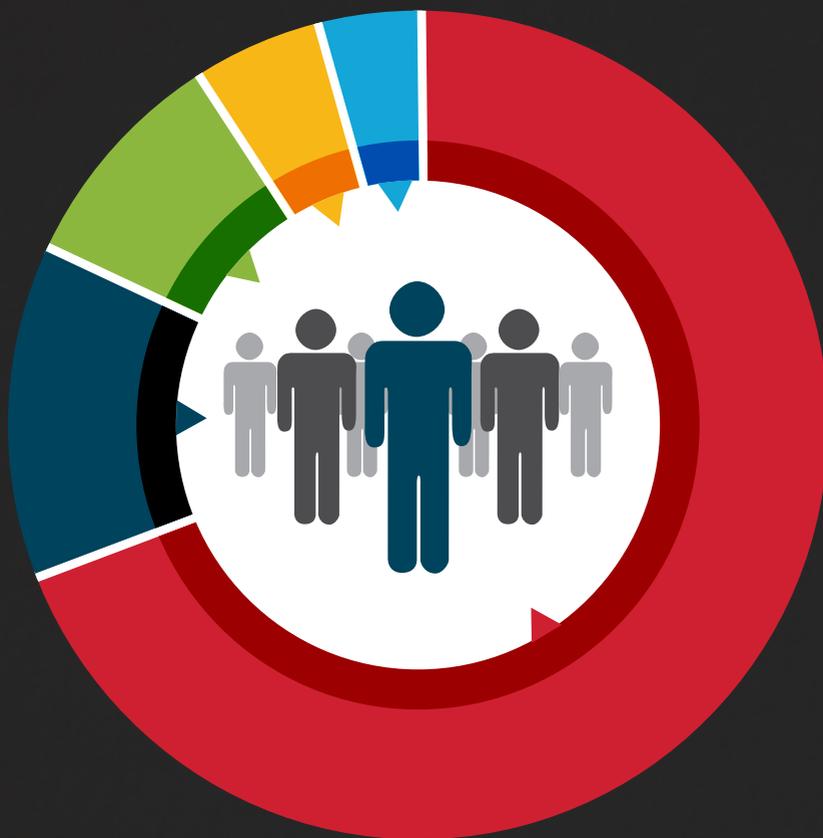
research partnerships, and advice and feedback. The intense cooperation with the many partners outside the universities ensures that the needs and interests of labour organisations and workers' movements are integrated into the programmes.

Over the last fifteen years, GLU has graduated approximately 600 postgraduate students, over 150 certificate course participants, and has over 12,000 participants in its online courses. One of the noteworthy aspects of GLU is its international composition with over 71 countries represented in the GLU alumni network with approximately 75% of alumni coming from the global South. The various certificate courses (such as ENGAGE, an annual two-month short course) and the online courses have increased GLU's footprint immensely. The overwhelming majority of GLU graduates remain in the labour movement.

# GLU ALUMNI IN % grouped by (home) regions



# GLU ALUMNI IN % grouped by “Field of Work”



**69%** Trade Union  
**13%** Labour Researcher,  
Consultant etc.

**9%** Other  
**5%** Unknown  
**4%** PhD Student

# GLU ACTIVITIES

Since its beginning as a Masters' programme, the GLU network has grown substantially to include a wide range of activities.

## POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES AND CERTIFICATE COURSES

### HONOURS AND MA PROGRAMMES:

The primary activity of GLU is the Honours and Masters programmes, which all GLU programmes offer through their universities. The programmes are tailor-made by each host university and address the various challenges facing workers in the twenty-first century. The programmes are interdisciplinary, combining social sciences and economics. The programmes have graduated over 600 participants across all the campuses.

### ENGAGE:

An important outreach programme of GLU is the ENGAGE course, an eight-week certificate short course offered at Wits University in South Africa. The ENGAGE programme

includes a follow-up 'Transfer Project' in which participants take their research skills back to their home union. The course is popular with large numbers of participants coming from the global South, especially Africa. It brings 20 labour activists together and includes six weeks of classroom learning and two weeks of practical research projects. After the course, a selected number of participants engage in a Transfer Project in which they conduct research with their unions under the guidance of Wits staff members. The Transfer Project culminates in a workshop hosted in Johannesburg. It is a certificate programme, registered as National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 5 within the South African system.

### **INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AND DECENT WORK (ICDD):**

The GLU programme also partners with the International Center for Development and Decent Work that supports PhD students and research at various GLU campuses. One of the core programmes of the ICDD is the Graduate School of Socio-Ecological Research for Development. PhD projects are rooted either in the agricultural or social sciences and focus primarily on actor- and problem-oriented research on sustainable human-environmental relationships and decent livelihoods. Since 2009, 67 doctoral fellows from 23 countries joined the ICDD Graduate School, of which 23 have completed their PhD. In addition, five early career researchers received ICDD postdoctoral fellowships.

### **MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES (MOOCS):**

The Global Labour University is a pioneer in international online education through Massive Open Online Courses with over 12,000 participants. The online courses are designed in close cooperation between universities, the ILO, the FES and the international trade union movement. Participation in all online courses is free of cost to ensure that everyone can participate. Upon completion of an online exam, participants can get a Certificate of Accomplishment awarded by one of the GLU partner universities for €49. Participants from non-OECD countries and trade unionists from OECD countries can receive a scholarship to study in the Certificate Track for free.

## **CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS**

### **ANNUAL GLU CONFERENCE:**

Every year, one of the GLU campuses hosts the annual GLU conference bringing together approximately 200 labour scholars,

activists, unionists and practitioners from over fifty countries. The conferences foster ongoing engagement between academics and trade unionists.

**GLU ALUMNI SUMMER SCHOOL:**

The GLU programme hosts an annual GLU Alumni Summer School supported by the ICDD, which strengthens the network's links between former GLU students. The Summer School allows alumni to explore possibilities for future research collaboration, build a platform for discussing new and stimulating ideas to advance the global labour movement and enhance practical skills that help the alumni in their local work to advance workers' rights worldwide. More than 80% of the graduates have stayed with the trade union movement or are working as researchers or legal consultants on labour issues.

**ICDD PHD WORKSHOPS:**

Once a year all PhD students from the ICDD campuses on four continents meet to present and discuss their projects on issues of decent work (or rather, on the reasons for decent work deficits). These workshops expose students to new theoretical approaches and methods as well as innovative interdisciplinary perspectives. PhD students can also propose the topic for a smaller workshop once a year. For example, in 2016 the PhD students organised a conference exploring the relevance of class analysis for today's progressive struggles. The hosting of the workshops rotates among the participating universities.

**REGIONAL WORKSHOPS:**

GLU alumni host regional workshops, bringing together alumni and labour activists in particular regions. For example, alumni from the Philippines, Africa and Turkey have hosted regional workshops.

**SEMINAR SERIES:**

GLU programmes in all the host countries run guest lectures and seminars with leading labour scholars and trade unionists on a regular basis.

**SOUTH-SOUTH LECTURES:**

In 2015, the programme co-hosted a South-South lecture series between South Africa and Brazil.

**FILM SCREENINGS:**

The GLU programmes run film screenings where labour-related documentaries are shown to students. This initiative has had the secondary advantage of a social space for students to give feedback about the programme and form comradeship among the group.

**SOCIAL THEORY FOR SOUTH AFRICAN UNIONISTS:**

In 2017, GLU-Wits in South Africa launched a four-week certificate course targeting unionists and workers in South Africa. The course aims to raise the level of engagement around issues facing labour.



## RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

### **PUBLICATIONS:**

GLU steering committee members and a number of GLU graduates are active publishers with over 250 publications on a large range of labour issues.

### **GLU WORKING PAPERS SERIES:**

The GLU has a Working Paper series (twenty of which have been written by alumni and steering committee members), publishing article-length manuscripts that are directly relevant to labour issues.

### **GLOBAL LABOUR JOURNAL:**

The Journal officially associated with GLU in 2014, and two GLU network members (from South Africa and Germany) are on the editorial board.

### **GLOBAL LABOUR COLUMN:**

The Column aims at publishing online short analyses by scholars, activists and unionists on current issues. It has been enormously successful enjoying a readership of over 10,000 and having released four edited volumes.

### **LABOUR RIGHTS INDICATORS:**

The GLU, together with the Center for Global Workers' Rights at Penn State University, has developed the labour rights database with comprehensive information on country-level compliance with freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right to strike.

## INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

### **VISITING SCHOLARS:**

GLU campuses host dozens of international scholars from Africa, Europe, India, East Asia, Latin America and the United States.

### **ACADEMIC EXCHANGE VISITS:**

There are regular academic exchange visits across all the GLU campuses.

# GLU GOVERNANCE

GLU is governed by an International Steering Committee comprised of members from each of the host universities, trade unions and federations of the host countries, ILO, FES, Global Unions, and Alumni representatives. In addition, each campus has its own governance structure that feeds into the international steering committee. The steering committee meets approximately once a year and oversees the strategic direction of the network. There are also associate members of the GLU, who are individuals active in supporting GLU activities, but are not based at one of the host universities or union structures. Associate members are nominated annually and approved by the International Steering Committee. A list of steering committee members and associate members can be found on the GLU website.

## GLU International Network

### ILO, FES & Trade Unions

	GERMANY Kassel University & HWR	BRAZIL UNICAMP	USA Penn State	INDIA TATA & JNU	SOUTH AFRICA Wits University
Postgraduate Programmes (Masters & Honours)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Certificate & Short Courses	-	-	-	-	✓
Global Labour Journal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MOOC	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
Research & Publications	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Global Labour Column	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ICDD PhDs	✓	✓	-	✓	✓

**GLU International Network**  
International Steering Committee

**ILO, FES & Trade Unions**

<b>GERMANY</b> Kassel University & HWR	<b>BRAZIL</b> UNICAMP	<b>USA</b> Penn State	<b>INDIA</b> TATA & JNU	<b>SOUTH AFRICA</b> Wits University
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# SELECTED QUOTES FROM ALUMNI

“The GLU Programme offered me the best and rare opportunity to transform from an extreme patriarchal perception to a progressive gender-sensitive individual. I entered ... with extreme patriarchal tendencies and perceptions, and came out as a completely transformed gender-sensitive graduate, and adjudged with outstanding performance award in feminist theory. It was challenging and exciting for me to study as I battled with profound internalised patriarchal perceptions and experiences...and the progressive gender and academic environment of Wits. However, I succumbed to counselling and signed up for a feminist theory course and excelled with an outstanding performance award. I have been transformed into a logically balanced graduate, and an advocate of women in societal transformation...to the extent that I have influenced equal representation of women (four women) in the eight-member Regional Executive Committee of the trade union in which I serve currently in Ghana. My profound gratitude goes to the GLU Programme for the life-changing role...”

*GLU Alum from Ghana, 2013*



"The best thing about the course was building a network of international trade unionists. I now feel much more connected to the global labour movement and have a better understanding of international politics. When I see solidarity appeals or news reports I feel much more connected to what is happening as I now know people in many of the places that these appeals or reports are coming from. My year of study was, without doubt, one of the best things I have ever done. It was a huge adventure and whilst it wasn't always easy I learnt so much and made some great friends, that I know I will have for life. The GLU is equipping trade unionists with the knowledge to be able to challenge the dominant neoliberal ideology and the skills and networks to be able to organise locally and globally for a fairer society."

***GLU Alum from the U.K., 2013***

"The course not only equipped me mentally but has also groomed me to become a global citizen. I had the opportunity to meet with other students coming from all parts of the world and have been integrated into a very strong global academic family. While I did not go back to my country after completion of my degree programme, as a labour activist and researcher I have had the privilege to work and further develop and apply my research skills in the field of labour (trade unions). Again, I had the opportunity to work with progressive unions here in South Africa and possess almost ten years' experience working as a researcher in South Africa particularly on studies that are labour-related but not limited to social and economic enquiries. Since 2011 till to date, I have been conducting gender-related research for the COSATU Gender Desk including providing technical advice to other trade unions in the country."

***GLU Alum from Zimbabwe, 2007***

"Being a student under the GLU programme was both a challenging and exciting phase for me as it not only broadened my knowledge but also gave me an opportunity to meet and interact with other students from different countries, many of whom have become valuable networks. I especially benefited greatly from the workshops and seminars organised for post graduate students, the well-stocked libraries and above all the

hands-on dedicated guidance from the lecturers and support staff with GLU who were always at hand to assist both academically and personally. As a foreign student this kind of committed assistance towards my studies and general well-being was invaluable. Post-GLU, I have become a go-to person in the area of my research (domestic service) which has seen me contribute towards various studies for local students and organizations in Zambia & regionally. The research skills honed during my GLU days have inadvertently turned out to be my passion and source of income given the growing challenge of unemployment my country is facing.

***GLU Alum from Zambia, 2012***

“The most valuable thing I got from the programme is being part of the GLU Network. The opportunity to engage with trade unions all over the world; the yearly GLU-organised activities which continue and sustain the link and engagements among the GLU alumni, professors and partners; the alumni network”

***GLU Alum from The Philippines, 2005***

“Through GLU-WITS, we appreciate how labour could be both a mobilising and counter-hegemonic force to the global onslaught of capitalism, both nationally and internationally. It is significant to also shed light on the nature of scholarship bequeathed to us in South Africa, which is quite innovative, and attractive to labour scholars globally. Here I wanted to share the idea of ‘Public Sociology’ which has been the hallmark of labour activists and scholarship in South Africa. We read literature produced by the sociologist in conversation with the activist in the communities. This form of scholarship has challenged the conventional metropolitan industrial relations that treat labour as only a collective bargaining enterprise rather than a political force, or source of knowledge. We see a conversation developing between Labour scholars and community activists on university campuses such as GLU-Wits, street protest and

publications such as South African Labour Bulletin. This is where labour scholars and activists relate on the principle of intellectual symmetry, where each partner is respected in the production of knowledge. This form of scholarship is an important counter-hegemonic current in the sociology of knowledge”.

***GLU Alum from Nigeria, 2012***



“One of GLU Masters’ Programme values to my mind is that it gives you “critical glasses” that you can’t get rid of once you put them on. Since then I don’t judge peoples’ wellbeing according to a country’s GDP growth; I listen to a country’s representative of workers, employers and government at the annual International Labour Conference each June to get a real view on what is going on. I can’t imagine what I would do now if I haven’t taken the chance to study in GLU. I have my knowledge and I share it with my union which I believe is getting stronger. I got all my readers from the university to look in for theory, I have all my GLU friends to ask for an advice, got tools, and many answers that I didn’t have before.”

***GLU Alum from Belarus, 2013***

"I was exposed to not just African experience of labour issues but globally. Apart from labour studies, I was also exposed to political economy, research methods as well as Cambridge English which were well-fitted to my studies. After qualification, I am able to advance workers' interest and this is seen in my Government Gazette appointments to the Tripartite Labour Advisory Council (TLAC) and Industrial Relations Court Panel. These are over and above many forums my federation and affiliate union requests me to represent them on. At my workplace I received a promotion to the position of Bank Manager. All these are in recognition of my qualification."

***GLU Alum from Malawi, 2015***

"As trade unionists we often talk about how to increase global solidarity, but inadvertently many of us remain inward looking. The programme provided an opportunity to reflect practically on the meaning of global solidarity especially as a result of the interaction with a diverse group of unionists. This means moving beyond the dominance of perspectives from global north unions and those historically considered social movement unions such as those in Brazil and South Africa. I have, for e.g., also become more conscious and critical of how South African trade unionists continue to marginalise our comrades from the rest of Africa. I think the impact is palpable in terms of exchange of ideas and experiences with persons you share a bond with. I have been able to tap into information and advice on research work for trade union and civil society activism from comrades, particularly in the International Union of Food Workers (IUF) who are GLU alumni. The GLU is building a network of organic intellectuals as the springboard for a new historical bloc within the trade union movement."

***GLU Alum from S.A., 2014***

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“The experience in the programme kindled and further enhanced my critical thinking and sharpened and broadened my interpretation of the socio-economic and political world in which organised labour exist. This offered me critical lenses to analyse the complex socio-economic and political context and to challenge dominant societal discourses, and deconstruct ‘taken for granted’ knowledge. This exposure provoked me to study further and sharpen my analytical skills”

***GLU Alum from Zimbabwe, 2008***

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*XII Global Labour University Conference 2017 JNU, New Delhi*

# THE GLU NETWORK



GLU

UNIKASSEL  
VERSITÄT



PennState



Hochschule für  
Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin  
Berlin School of Economics and Law



UNICAMP

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND  
JOHANNESBURG



FRIEDRICH  
EBERT  
STIFTUNG



ICDD  
International Center for  
Development and Decent Work



ITUC CSI IGB



CUT  
BRASIL  
CENTRAL ÚNICA DOS TRABALHADORES

CESIT  
Centro de Estudos Sindicais e de  
Economia do Trabalho



Global  
Unions



TUAC



COSATU



Industri  
all



Public Services International  
Internationaler Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft  
International de Services Publics  
Internazionale dei Servizi Pubblici  
International der Öffentlichen Dienste  
International Fødselsorganisation for Offentlige Tjeneste  
2004-2012

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European Trade Union Institute



UN global  
union

