



**EQUALITY & JUSTICE**  
**THROUGH DEVELOPMENT AND**  
**MOVEMENT BUILDING**



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Strategy 2017-2020  
Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA



Indonesia: Asbestos. Not Here. Not Anywhere

## INTRODUCTION

Established more than thirty years ago by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA set out to provide practical solidarity to refugee communities and played an important role in solidarity with liberation struggles of South Africans, Eritreans, Kanaks, Palestinians, Filipinos, Bougainvilleans and Timorese, and against the postwar isolation of Indochina. From the start it aimed not to provide handouts, but to fund education and training for and by local people, with attention to the quality of teaching and learning, in work skills, adult basic education, community leadership, organising, workers' rights, gender equality, media, health, food production, environment and human rights. These education projects were conceptualised in the spirit of international solidarity: worker to worker, teacher to teacher, nurse to nurse, farmer to farmer, building ongoing linkages between workers in Australia and the Middle East, Pacific, South East Asia and Southern Africa.

There has been a growing focus on collaboration for trade union development beginning in the late 1980's and early 1990's in the Philippines, South Africa and Vietnam and from the late 1990's in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste. Today this trade union support work is in Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, Samoa, Myanmar, Zimbabwe and elsewhere, working collaboratively with global unions and trade union social solidarity organisations.

Our future work re-imagines our practical solidarity in a new global context. Inequality between rich and poor is increasing globally and the power of national governments to regulate across public life is under threat from transnational corporations in concert with many conservative governments. Our

ability to organise collaboratively with the Australian union movement in support of strategic and strong movements domestically and internationally becomes ever more necessary.

Since the 1990's a wave of transnational campaigns and movements emerged to challenge new inequalities and oppose policies that produce them. Union Aid Abroad has been part of new transnational campaign networks from the late 1990's. We now need to build on this with new practical worker solidarity links, focused on the urgent issues facing people today, from attacks on livelihoods and rights, forced austerity and climate change impacts.

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Australian unions working globally in partnership for the achievement of dignity at work, social justice, economic equality and the realisation of human rights.

We work to achieve this through strong unions and social movements, sustainable development programs, global solidarity and support in times of crisis.

# OUR VALUES



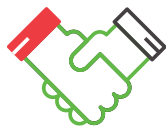
## Solidarity

Our approach is rooted in solidarity – solidarity that builds connections between people across borders as key to building organised movements for equality, development and justice. We recognise our solidarity with the working classes and marginalised people in the Global South can strengthen them, and we too are strengthened from campaigning with them. Our on-the-ground assistance aims to address the causes of injustice and inequality, not the symptoms.



## Movement-building

We seek to help build democratic civil society, social justice movements, and representative organisations of workers, women, farmers, young people, people with disabilities, refugees, and others – so they can define and fight for their rights and against power structures that seek to oppress them. Organised movements of people make change possible, by exerting political pressure for just solutions.



## Partnership

Working in partnership is the cornerstone of our approach. We aim for joint action with local partner organisations directed at meeting practical needs with movements on the ground – by supporting the building blocks that enable movements to emerge or become stronger, such as organisation, campaign capacity, education, research, and skills development.



## Equality & justice

We seek to challenge the dominant myths of development aid – that charity and depoliticised humanitarian assistance can somehow be adequate in addressing the root causes of poverty and injustice. Conservative or autocratic governments and corporations create a world in their own image, where the wealth and power of the global ‘one percent’, just 70 million people, grows hand-over-fist. By aiming to help build strong movements of organised people, we place the demands of the 99% in the centre of our work as together we challenge the structured power of the 1%.



## Accountability

Our systems of work aim to be accountable on multiple fronts. To the local organisations we work with internationally and the people they serve, to our own union activists and members, to the Australian union movement and to government donors. Where we receive public or private funds, in Australia or from elsewhere, we are fully accountable for these funds and support programs in line with the commitments we make and our goals and values. In all our work we seek the most effective and strategic way to deploy funding – by addressing causes not symptoms. We recognise the challenge of doing this in a meaningful way and seek to involve partner organisations in reviewing programs and work for continual improvement.

Cover image - Myanmar:  
Garmet Workers rally for  
minimum wages.  
(image: Libby Hogan)



Asbestos roofing sheets, Vietnam [Image: Peter Caton]

# CHALLENGES OF OUR GLOBALISED WORLD

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International Women's Day March, Chiang Mai

Increasingly we in Australia are inter-linked with countries of the Global South through the crises generated through the severity of climate change, the reach of global capitalism and the refugee impact of conflict and war. Our union solidarity must envisage new ways to confront the impacts of a more-globalised world.

Interacting crises are driving key global dynamics:

- The climate and environment crisis, causing loss of food production, water shortages, cataclysmic weather events, desertification, rising oceans, changing pandemics and socio-economic adversities.
- The crisis of the international market economy, where the drive for higher profits means harsh austerity for working people in both high income and low income economies. Democratic governments at all levels are overruled by the corporate elite, resulting in privatisation of public infrastructure and services and minimal taxation for the rich, driving down wages, job security and organisation of all workers. While profits remain high the global market is becoming increasingly unstable, and unable to sustain basic living standards to the majority.

Rising inequality within countries, between countries and between men and women is escalating as a result. In the Global South food, water and energy insecurity exists in too many regions. Labour migration continues to increase as workers seek any kind of secure livelihood for families. The climate crisis and its impact on natural resources, together with conflict and repression has driven unprecedented refugee flows internationally.

In light of global dynamics, our work will be focused primarily towards four themes of work:

1. Trade union development, workers' rights and safety at work;
2. Climate justice, energy democracy and just transition;
3. Rights of migrant workers and refugees;
4. Women's rights and feminist movement development.

At home in Australia we see governments are openly anti-union and pro-corporate, advancing a privatisation agenda. The public sector and the social wage continues to be undermined with impacts on equality. Australian foreign policy is lock-step with historical allies such as the U.S, Overseas aid is cut and channelled to the private sector, creating a crisis of public confidence in aid, undermining a previous political consensus on 'international development'.

Across these fields and many others, the possibilities for progressive change for workers and communities in Australia are increasingly enmeshed in transnational contexts. As a result, how we undertake our practical union solidarity internationally to help build movements is challenged. In our solidarity work, it becomes vitally important to link what we do overseas with what we do 'at home'.

For example, the Australian union movement fought hard for the banning of white asbestos. As international markets for the trading of asbestos dried up in the 1990's and 2000's, those corporations which profit from the deadly substance found new markets in poorer countries of Asia where union movements were weak. Yet despite our country's ban, ongoing trading in asbestos anywhere means it is still a risk everywhere, including Australia via imported products which slip through our border controls.

Campaigns like these are not new – but are becoming more urgent. 21st century globalisation with the rise of transnational corporations and its influence on governments has raised questions of how we challenge the misuse of power in the struggle for equality and justice. In doing so, Union Aid Abroad's aim is to work through and with the Australian union movement, to support and strengthen labour and social movements, both 'here' at home and 'there' internationally, in concert with each other to maximise our collective impact.

The future of Union Aid Abroad depends on a stronger strategic relationship with Australia's unions and its members to execute a well-targeted program of international solidarity in key sites of struggle for equality and justice. To achieve programs with impact we will review our current program, re-direct resources in accordance with our movement-building aims and seek boosted levels of financial support

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2020

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Laos: Construction Workers in Training



## Goal 1:

### **Campaign for equality, justice and an end to poverty by supporting labour and social change movements internationally by working through effective local partnership programs.**

Organised social movements challenge power structures in society for justice and equality. Strong union movements are a cornerstone to reducing poverty through workplace wage negotiations and by campaigning for policy to improve the social wage. Trade unions are also leaders in fighting for democracy. Strong social movements are able to demand food sovereignty, women's equality, Indigenous People's rights, rights for people with disabilities, health equality, social justice, access to education and climate justice. Technology has changed the manner and method of communication for movement-organising and enabled global connectedness on a scale which supports easier collaborative campaigning.

The principle of Decent Work remains key to our work:

- the right to employment with jobs that are fairly paid, secure and safe.
- rights to collectively organise, equality at work.
- social protections for all including health care, unemployment and retirement incomes.
- women's emancipation and development is fundamental to social justice and to stronger trade unions.

Working people and disadvantaged communities face similar challenges in the global North and South. Strong and informed labour and social movements can:

- challenge power structures that undermine worker safety, rights to organise and collectively bargain, defending strong public service provision of education, health and social services.
- build women's right to participate, lead and work, be educated, be safe at home and work, and in the community.
- win victories against corporate injustices, austerity, trade, debt and privatisation policies, so all working people have rights to food, education, transport, housing, health, water and energy.
- give leadership in struggles for democratisation, peace and national liberation
- create and contribute to an industrial transformation of energy systems that are safe for the planet to effectively reduce climate change, provide a just transition for workers and communities most impacted, and enable affordable energy access for those with no electricity.
- organise with migrant and refugee communities for work rights and broader human rights.

We will campaign as part of the Australian union movement, both 'here' in Australia and 'there' internationally - based on the premise we have more capacity to win if we campaign collectively across borders. Labour and social movements are a driving force for social change and more equal development.



Canberra: Australian Rohingya community rally outside Parliament House



## Goal 2:

### **Build a more financially independent organisation connected to the Australian union movement.**

In the context of a likely declining Australian overseas aid budget over the next three years, we will raise the income we generate from independent sources to more than offset any cuts from income from the Australian government. As an accredited overseas aid organisation for the Australian government, our income from government is invaluable to the local partner organisations we work with internationally. Using independent financial resources, we will contribute to campaigns to defend and extend Australia's overseas aid program to meet international standard of 0.7% of Australia's GNP and call for an overseas aid program which places poverty alleviation at its core purpose, not the expansion of Australian business interests.

We aim to increase our current independent income levels over the next three years by increasing our individual membership, and increasing our sponsorship program and funding through international grants. We will also seek to develop a new funding model for international work with the Australian union movement.



## Goal 3:

### **Continually improve on the quality and accountability of our work, our staff skill and capacity, and impact we make in Australia and internationally.**

With staff across six offices in Australia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Palestine and Timor Leste, we have a skilled team assisting a program of work with international unions, community organisations and government agencies. Ongoing training and development will ensure our staff is able to drive effective movement-building for social change. Together with our local international partner organisations, we aim to continually improve our work, both nationally and internationally with an outcomes focus.

We will develop a new structure for member involvement and engagement, in order to build upon the existing Union Aid Abroad activist groups.

# OUR KEY STRATEGIES

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Timor Leste: Gardamor Security Workers on Strike



## One

**Identify opportunities for movement-building with existing union and community partner organisations internationally. Seek opportunities with new partner organisations who are engaged in movement-building.**

To build a stronger focus on movement-building work, we will:

- Review our current international program and assess its contribution to, or possible opportunities for, movement-building.
- Re-shape our international program to more strongly support projects that contribute to the building of strong labour and social movements.
- Create more opportunities for supporting movement-building work both internationally and in Australia, and ensure our organisation is capable of responding to new opportunities.
- Make our own contribution to movement-building by developing an organised membership of individuals who act for global justice.



## Two

**Connect to core national and international priorities of the Australian union movement. Seek opportunities to organise in areas of mutual interest with workers and communities domestically and internationally.**

- Identify key areas in global supply chain organising where we can provide valuable information and assistance to the efforts of the Australian union movement and/or labour and social movements internationally.
- Provide opportunities for education and exposure to international unionism and social justice through targeted exposure tours to Union Aid Abroad program work. Develop a structured education program in conjunction with the ACTU to be offered to unions.
- Support campaign efforts of Australian unions by connecting links with our partner organisations internationally.
- Identify countries, regions and priority areas of trade union development in conjunction with the ACTU.
- Lobby for the introduction of trade union development within the Australian overseas aid program





Myanmar: Runningtex Garment Factory strike



### Three

**Develop a campaigning orientation to assist in movement building and key demands of international partner organisations.**

- Develop *Asbestos: Not here, Not anywhere* as a major focus to contribute to the collective, global, movement of people taking action to see asbestos banned and eradicated.
- Link in with Australian unions and communities to campaign on issues of mutual interest as they arise and within resource capacities.
- Connect our fundraising strategy more strongly to our campaigns and towards our goal of building a larger organised membership.
- Build a robust digital campaign strategy focused on movement building.



### Four

**Build a large and active membership that donates regularly and acts in solidarity with union and community struggles internationally and at home.**

- Consolidate Union Aid Abroad membership amongst staff and officials of all Australian unions.
- Increase our individual membership to 10,000 by 2020 with an overall goal of 20,000 by 2025. We will do this by seeking whole-scale sign-up arrangements with individual unions.
- Develop a workplace activist structure for Union Aid Abroad in conjunction with unions to assist with building an individual membership base and to support campaigns.
- Look for opportunities to build supporter bases in countries where we have an office or in other linked countries internationally.



Philippines: Tondo urban poor children display the coal dust on their hands [Image: Manila Today]



## Five

**Raise our income that is independent of the Australian government through increased individual membership, maximising international grant opportunities, seeking further sponsorship in Australia.**

- Work towards a new model of union funding and seek advice from models of funding from national trade union centres of Europe.
- Seek new sponsorship arrangements with support of the ACTU.
- Build an organised membership of 10,000 Australians by 2020 and 20,000 by 2025.
- Extend the fundraising capacities of staff and seek new international development funding opportunities.
- Acquisition of new international grants from government and private sources.



## Six

**Improve on our program impact, quality and accountability in all aspects of our work in conjunction with our members, Australian unions, and our international partner organisations.**

- Maintain a high quality program which delivers strong outcomes.
- Establish a program of improved staff development and review for all staff across all offices.
- Review processes for impact assessment with international partner organisations to look for improved ways to contribute to movement-building work.
- Build systems and capacities to deliver on organisational goals.
- Increase advocacy efforts with Australian Council for International Development, other Australian NGOs and political parties on the role and direction of the Australian aid program.

## WHO WE ARE

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Union Aid Aboard-APHEDA is the global justice organisation of the Australian trade union movement.

We aim to assist the organisation of strong labour and social movements internationally and also contribute to movement-building in Australia.

Our governing body is comprised of five appointees of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and four persons elected from our membership every two years. As such, we are the only international development organisation in Australia which is accountable to the trade union movement. The global union movement with hundreds of millions of members committed to equality, is the largest democratic civil society organisation in the world, and the union movement in Australia with its unitary federation, the ACTU, is the largest democratic movement of organised people in Australia. Many other organisations support human rights, and some campaign for labour rights, but our connection with the union movement in Australia and internationally is organic.

We hold accreditation from the Australian

Government as an overseas aid delivery organisation. We are a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and a signatory to the industry Code of Conduct. We hold Donor Gift Recipient status from the Australian Tax Office, allowing Australians to make tax deductible donations to us for our international development work.

## WHO WE WORK WITH

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We work with local unions and community organisations to campaign and support development and organising of movements. Currently, we work in 16 countries with 60 projects across countries in Asia, Pacific, southern Africa and the Middle East.

### **Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA**

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*Many hands make light work'. Participants of Ma'An Development Center training program, Ramallah (West Bank)*

