



SOLIDARITY

The Newsletter of the Unions Aotearoa International Development Trust

Issue 37 September 2024



NEW PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

UNION À LA
RAPIDITÉ
D'ENTREPRISES

FIJI: BOOSTING UNIONS AND BEATING SLAVERY

After a period of difficult challenges which included a hostile government and Covid, Fiji unions are launching new organising campaigns in the garment sector, managed by Jotika Sharma at the Fiji Trades Union Congress (see photo right). And with reports of "slave-like" conditions in factories - there is growing interest in signing up.

This new UnionAID project will focus on boosting union strength in two garment factories in Lautoka with over 1400 workers that specialises in woven apparel, with brands that are familiar to us such as Rodd and Gunn and Harley Davidson.

Through training on worker's rights and responsibilities and collective bargaining, and exploring issues faced in the workplace, this project aims to build membership, improve the wages and conditions in these factories by providing workers with an understanding of the role of unions, their rights and responsibilities, and the organisation of collective bargaining.



MYANMAR: TRADE UNION TRAINING FOR A NEW GENERATION

Predictions that it is only a matter of time before the junta in Myanmar will collapse have prompted efforts to build a new generation of workers ready to

step up and organise unions under a democratic government. Under this UnionAID partnership project with the Confederation of Trade Unions

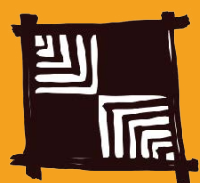
Myanmar (CTUM), 500 young workers will gain an understanding of trade union rights, organising and collective bargaining to bring into the workplace.



The long periods of military rule in Myanmar severely restricted civil liberties, including the right to form and join trade unions. It was only during the transition to a quasi-civilian government that union members were able to meet in groups and organise openly, though not without major challenges from authorities. This enabled the first Labour Organisation Forum to be held in 2013 with hundreds of delegates gathering in Yangon (see left), indicating the strong interest by workers in improving their lives.

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NZ EDUCATION UNIONS CHAMPION MYANMAR YOUTH

NEW ZEALAND EDUCATION INSTITUTE (NZEI): MORE GIRLS GET SCHOOLING

Since opening late last year with funding from NZEI, the Be Zine school roll has increased to 60, with more girls joining after the New Year break. This is the second school established as a UnionAID project in the Karen National Union administered area, after state schools closed when teachers went on strike after the 2021 military coup. Over 100 village children are now getting an education, thanks to one dedicated young leader alumna.

The two schools focus on child-centred education, a far cry from the rote learning typical of the traditional state system. Previously volunteers, teachers now access training, professional development and receive salaries. Parents and villagers support the school by joining meetings, education sessions and field trips, and volunteers help with school maintenance.



TERTIARY EDUCATION UNION (TEU): BUILDING GOVERNANCE CAPACITY



Collecting firewood for cooking meals

This year nine young women and five men joined an intensive training to prepare for roles in local government and the rebuilding of a post-junta Myanmar. The development of parallel structures in self-administered regions has blossomed since the military coup, requiring a new generation of young people with the capacity to contribute.

Funded by the TEU, this UnionAID project is now well underway, managed by one of our young leaders. The students live together during ten months of theory and skills development before doing internships with local government under the Karen National Union.

During their time in the training camp there is a focus on promoting teamwork and cooperation. They rotate leadership roles, and all participants share daily tasks such as cleaning, buying food and preparing their meals.

BECOME A KIWI SOLIDARITY MEMBER - TOGETHER WE'RE STRONGER

Kiwi Solidarity Members help provide the consistent support that's so crucial for the ongoing success of our projects. These recurring contributions - no matter how small - mean we can plan ahead, support more projects, and reach more workers across our region. www.unionaid.org.nz/kiwisolidarity



YOUNG LEADER PROGRAMMES (YLP) GROWING

With the introduction this year of a new Cambodia Laos YLP UnionAID now provides emerging young leaders from three countries with a six month leadership course in sustainable development.

Nineteen participants have just arrived, nine in Auckland from Indonesia and ten in Wellington from Mindanao in the Philippines, after completing the first part of their course online. They will spend the next three months learning about our institutions in New Zealand. In October the two groups will meet up together in Wellington to share experiences and learn about government.

INDONESIA: CLOSE COLLABORATIONS KEY TO PROJECT SUCCESS

When Yusri (IYLP 2022) decided on the issue of child marriage for his action project, he used a co-design process to examine this from a wide range of perspectives - talking to parents, children, community leaders and local government officials. He found that main drivers were parents' lack of knowledge of the harmful effects of child marriage and a limited understanding of child protection laws.

But the research process also revealed new and unexpected findings. Yusri learnt how various beliefs and traditions in the community seemed to condone child marriage; these were often based on interpretations of religious teachings or cultural practices. This discovery led to close collaborations with supportive religious leaders with moral and

During this time, ten students from Lao and Cambodia will be learning online before they arrive in Auckland in March 2025 to complete the Sustainable Development Programme.

Unfortunately due to the uncertain situation, there are no plans at present for the Myanmar YLP (which ran from 2009 until 2020) re-starting in the near future, but MFAT has generously funded nine alumni action projects which are currently underway in Myanmar.

We are proud to showcase a project from each programme below and we encourage you to read more about the Young Leaders Programmes on our website [by following this link](#).



Radio Republik Indonesia: L-R Andi Imran Bate (Presenter), Muhammad Asad (Religious Leader) and Nur Mawaddah Bur (Representative of Child Forum)

spiritual authority in the community to develop appropriate material. These educational messages have been shared in religious forums, on

social media and in discussions on Radio Republik Indonesia (see photo) which has extensive reach into remote communities.

HOT OFF THE PRESS

You can read about our achievements for 2023-2024 in the UnionAID Annual Report by [following this link](#).

LABOUR DAY CELEBRATION

Join UnionAID and the Maritime Union of New Zealand on 30 October 2024 for a get-together, film screening, and panel discussion on conditions in the Indonesian fisheries industry – marking Labour Day 2024. Tickets and details by [following this link](#).



At a recent meeting with a leadership delegation from the Ministry of National Development and Planning (BAPPENAS) UnionAID was presented with an award which noted the Indonesian Government's "appreciation for supporting the development of Indonesia"

MYANMAR: THOUSANDS BENEFIT FROM ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT



Meeting with farmers

In an ambitious environmental project, 139 farmers from four villages in the Dry Zone of Myanmar came together in groups to design and build small dams, ponds, terraces, and canals to prevent soil erosion and retain rainwater for their fields. 2800 trees and grasses were also planted. Labour was provided by over 3000 family members and their wages were subsidised by the villages.

When the monsoon arrived the infrastructure they had built protected their farms and crops from water damage and boosted their harvest. But this project, managed by one of the Myanmar young leaders, did much more for the participants. While both men and women participated in the farmers' groups and management committee, the women's leadership was particularly strong, with young women in one village taking the lead in most of the field work.

MINDANAO: CLEAN WATER FOR LA FLORA COMMUNITY

Community participation, capacity building and practical planning underpins Hannah Bertonia's action project from start to finish. One of the 2023 Mindanao young leaders, her priority was to engage young local volunteers to co-design the project. After learning about environmental protection and indigenous research, these enthusiastic youth went into the villages to hear what the community had to say about access to safe drinking water. These discussions highlighted inadequate infrastructure and a



Hannah Bertonia talking to villagers



concerning prevalence of waterborne diseases due to contamination from poor waste disposal and deforestation.

Drawing on traditional knowledge and local resources, the community have ambitious plans. These include building deep wells, harvesting systems for rainwater, improving waste management, providing hygiene and health sessions, and establishing partnerships with government and NGOs to get advice and funding for water purification systems for households.

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