



# The **work** of the AEU's

“The highlight of 2007 was the organisation of rallies and demonstrations bringing together thousands of teachers from the [Indonesian] provinces...”

By Darcel Russell

The AEU's international assistance and trade union development program is administrated by the AEU International Trust Fund (ITF). Members of the ITF are elected for two year terms by the AEU's Annual Federal Conference.

AEU policy states that Branches and Associated Bodies should voluntarily contribute 0.7 per cent of membership income to the Fund. The figure of 0.7 per cent accords with the UN and Education International (EI) recommended amount that developed countries should allocate to overseas aid.

ITF projects are funded on a programmatic basis, in order to give the programs a direct relationship with AEU and EI priority areas of policy and provide a policy alignment for the decisions that are taken.

The programs are Education Union Development (including training courses, capital equipment, etc); Development of Women in Teacher Organisations; Professional Development Assistance; Emergency/Humanitarian Assistance; Human/Labour Rights Activities (including child labour) and Administration.

Programs and projects are then implemented either directly under the banner of the AEU,

through the ACTU's humanitarian aid agency APHEDA, or through EI, the global union of teachers.

What follows is a brief overview of some of the major ITF projects.

### John Thompson Fellowship Program (Asia)

The ITF funds a range of Education Union Development projects across the Asia Pacific region, one of the largest of these being the John Thompson Fellowship program. In this program, the AEU partners with the CTF (Canada), SNES (France) and the NEA (USA) to fund leaders from Asian country unions to receive training across a range of areas. These include union-building, structures and decision-making, team-building and negotiation, conflict resolution, communication, human rights, Education for All, HIV AIDs and a range of other topics. The AEU also provides a resource person to the program. This person essentially acts as a trainer, writing and reviewing curriculum and training materials, but is also a strong mentor and guide for many participants.

### Council of Pacific Education

The ITF provides project funding to the Council of Pacific Education (COPE) in order to enable the funding of teacher union development programs

throughout the Pacific region. Projects which are funded contribute towards union capacity building, organising, recruitment, training and activism. The ITF also contributes administration funding to the COPE office.

Of particular interest in 2007 was the provision of funding to the Solomon Islands National Teachers' Association (SINTA). The SINTA pilot recruitment project which aimed to increase the number of members from 2800 teachers to 4,000 over a 10 month period. The total number of teachers in the Islands is approximately 6,000. In early November, SINTA had recruited 3,500 members and was well on target to reach the goal of 5000. This project will form the basis of a roll-out of similar projects in Tonga and Vanuatu in 2008.

### PGRI Consortium Project, Indonesia

The ITF works through the EI regional office with a consortium of unions, including Lararforbundet (Sweden), NEA (USA) and SNES (France) on a union development project with PGRI (Indonesia). The project is run at a provincial level representing 25, out of the 33 provinces in Indonesia.

The highlight of 2007 was the organisation of rallies and demonstrations bringing together thousands of teachers from the provinces of West Java, Banten, DKI Jakarta, Central Java and East Java to

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protest outside parliament in Jakarta. Rallies and demonstrations were also organised in South East Sulawesi and North Sumatra.

One of the outcomes of this program resulted in the PGRI taking the Government to the "Constitutional Court" in 2006 for failing to fulfil its obligation as specified by the Constitution. The PGRI won the case, as the constitution requires the government to allocate 20% of the budget to education. At the time of prosecuting the case only 8% was being allocated to education. As a result of the win the level of education spending was increased to approximately 11.8%. The matter is again being referred by the PGRI to the "Constitutional Court" to pursue the ultimate aim of 20%.

To further capitalise on this initial legal success ongoing campaigning will be required, which in turn will require the mobilisation of union members and winning the support of the broader community.

## India

The ITF provides funding to the All India Primary Teachers' Association to support a range of projects being run by the women's network. These projects include the development of women's leadership and activism within their union, through the framework of campaigning.

These projects aim to engage women in the union through various activities, including trade union training conducted by women's network coordinators at the workplace.

The projects aim to:

- promote the status of women in education and teachers unions;
- establish communication structures such as women's committees, women's wings for women;
- establish constitutional provisions to promote women's positions in decision making; and
- promote EFA and education of girls.

Since 1997, more than 30,000 male and female members and leaders have participated in this project.

The ITF also funds an Education for All (EFA) project in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

The objectives of the project are to:

- increase numbers of teachers;

- increase enrolment of students with a focus on girls;
- retain higher number of students; and
- train untrained teachers.

The following outcomes have been achieved:

- due to the UPPSS campaign for the employment of trained teachers, the newly elected government of the State has decided not to employ para-teachers any further to fill up the vacant positions (about 130,000);
- under the program 1,222 out of school children (675 girls) were enrolled in the 44 schools;
- girls' enrolment in the schools increased from 87% to 99%;
- 150 teachers were trained to use the training

manual developed under the program. Manuals were distributed to the teachers in the schools which they continue to use;

- More than 200 teachers participated in awareness meetings and helped organise rallies of hundreds of students and community leaders;
- Thousands of handbills were distributed and posters pasted in and around the schools throughout the session. ❖

*For more information on the work of the ITF, contact AEU Deputy Federal Secretary, Darcel Russell at the AEU Federal Office.*





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