

# ASIA PACIFIC NEWS



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**Public Services International is a global union federation representing 20 million members in 150 countries. Asia Pacific News is published and electronically distributed by Public Services International Asia Pacific Regional Organisation (PSI APRO). Please send comments and contributions to: [indah.budiarti@world-psi.org](mailto:indah.budiarti@world-psi.org) and [mike.ingpen@psa.org.nz](mailto:mike.ingpen@psa.org.nz)**

## Mobilizing for action – public service workers aim for social and economic justice in Asia Pacific



More than 100 leaders of unions affiliated to the global union federation Public Services International concluded meetings in Bangkok, Thailand from 16 to 18 October 2013 by committing to take joint action to build the power and influence of public service workers in the Asia Pacific region. The unions identified strategies to address a number of important issues, including fighting harmful free trade agreements, stopping privatisation and related corruption in public services, ending violence against women, and advancing positive solutions through tax justice, stronger trade union rights, and supporting young workers and migrant workers in public services.

PSI and affiliates were alerted to the need to take action to avert privatisation plans for public water and electrical services in Thailand. Privatisation in other countries has resulted in lower quality services at higher cost to users. Unions from the Philippines shared their experience with campaigns to block the privatisation of electrical utilities. PSI affiliates commit to opposing free trade agreements, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which threaten labour standards, social protection and public services, including through joining actions around the World Trade Organisation meetings in Bali in December. In a region where 60% of the population is denied basic public services because of misdirected funding, PSI and affiliates commit to working with civil society allies to build the regional network of the Global Alliance for Tax Justice. Further, the unions will expand the financial transactions tax campaign initiated by Japanese union JICHIRO. For details of the report and the presentations, please visit PSI's website [here](#).



## Greening the unions

Mr. Manoranjan Pegu, PSI Project Coordinator (India Office) and Ms. Gabriella George, PSA New Zealand, represented PSI at the **ILO Trade Union Training on Sustainable Development, Green Jobs and Decent Work** which took place in Bangkok, Thailand from 14 to 18 October 2013. Throughout the week, the participants looked at the issues that climate change raises for their unions and asked the question 'why do unions need to be involved in environmental issues? After all, don't unions already have enough to deal with?'

With 25 people from across the Asia-Pacific region attended, the participants had a vast range of skills and experience to share and learn from. There were many presentations and discussions, and they contributed to a handbook being written for unions about campaigning on environmental issues. They also learned about the importance of decent work, the creation of green jobs and the amazing possibilities that our countries have in undertaking a just transition from current unsustainable industries such as mining. The importance of helping drive a change towards sustainable development, instead of the current 'economic growth at any cost' model was a major focus during the week, and they learned how to get their unions engaged in this drive. The participants practiced campaigning skills and made action plans to follow up on with their own unions when they returned home. Lots of team work took place, great friendships were formed and there was a steady stream of laughter along with hard work all week long. By the end of the training, the participants had learned so much about the current environmental issues facing the unions, and how they can help prepare the unions to be involved in the transition of economies and industries that will occur in the near future. This truly answered the initial questions - unions need to be involved in environmental issues so that they can engage in social dialogue, collective bargaining and advocacy at national, regional and company level to contribute to policy making and union actions for sustainable development and green jobs with decent work at its core. For more information, please contact Ms. Gabriella George: [Gabie.George@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Gabie.George@parliament.govt.nz)

## ILO Governing Body adopts report of the Committee on Freedom of Association

The Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) drew the special attention of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Governing Body to the serious and urgent cases of Cambodia, Fiji and the Philippines: (1) The case of **Cambodia** concerns the murders of three trade union leaders over the last decade and the continuing absence of concrete steps to institute independent investigations into these murders; (2) The case of **Fiji**, the Committee dealt with allegations of acts of assault, harassment, intimidation, arrest and detention of trade union leaders and members, ongoing interference in internal trade union affairs, undue restrictions on trade union meetings and the issuance of several decrees curtailing trade union rights; (3) the case of the **Philippines** concerns a number of serious allegations made in 2009 relating to restrictions on freedom of association and anti-union policies in the Philippines economic zones, including assaults, threats, intimidation, harassment, blacklisting, criminalization and militarization at a number of enterprises in the zones going back many years. For more information, please visit ILO's website [here](#).



## Meeting with ADB Mission in Lahore Pakistan

A mission from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) visited the Pakistan Workers' Federation office on 28 October 2013 in Lahore, Pakistan. The ADB's mission also met with the representative of the Pakistan United Irrigation employees Union, a member of Public Sector Employees

Federation of Pakistan (PSEFP), a PSI affiliate. The ADB informed that they had started rehabilitation work for the barrages in Punjab, which will enhance the capacity and capability of the irrigation department of Punjab. The ADB has a clear vision to observe the core ILO labour standards when carrying out the project and to involve all stakeholders in the project for smooth implementation. However, the unions criticised that the project started too early, before the ADB meeting with the unions, and noted that the irrigation department was going to implement the project by outsourcing. All the rehabilitation work will be carried out through private contractors. This situation may encourage poor labour standards and gender discrimination. It was proposed that the unions should be involved in monitoring all the works of the ADB project. For more information, please contact Mr. Abdul Rehman Aasi, PSEFP General Secretary: [psefp.skp@gmail.com](mailto:psefp.skp@gmail.com)



## Indonesia: Millions of workers join general strike

PSI stands in solidarity with its affiliates in Indonesia. Trade unions launched a national strike 30 October through 1 November to back their demands for a 50% rise in the minimum salary, an end to outsourced precarious work, implementation of health insurance coverage for all Indonesians and the introduction of laws to protect domestic workers. Some unions will hold preliminary demonstrations 28-30 October in front of labour ministry and local government offices.

Mr. Djufnie Ashary is president of the Federation of Pharmaceutical and Health Workers Union (FSP FARKES/R), the main PSI affiliate participating in this general strike. This union represents 28,000 members who work in the hospital, pharmaceutical, traditional herbs and cosmetics sectors. Ashary reported that the low standard of living, the lack of healthcare coverage for all Indonesians, outsourcing and the increasing rise of temporary work in state enterprises, combined with regressive government labour policies drove his members to take strike action. He explained that trade union members are demanding a higher minimum wage (currently an average of 220 USD per month) because of the rising inflation rate, and the increase in the price of petrol that is driving up costs for transportation and staple foods. "Another factor is because the currency devaluation of Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) to USD has caused prices to increase for most imported goods. So the minimum wage hike is not a real increase but is just an adjustment." Visit PSI's website [here](#), or listen to [RadioLabour's interview with Djufnie Ashary](#).



## Public services recruitment freeze means job cuts and more delays

An Australian government plan to freeze external public sector recruitment will lead to backlogs, delays and the loss of regional jobs, the union representing Commonwealth public sector workers warns. In order to meet its election target of cutting 12,000 public servants over two years, the Abbott government has ordered that from now on almost no one can be hired from outside the Australian Public Service to fill vacancies. Under the new rules agencies can only move existing public servants into vacant jobs, leaving gaps elsewhere. Vacancies must be filled by internal applicants or by staff redeployed from other departments.

Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) National Secretary Nadine Flood condemned the decision. "The government can try and dress it up any way they like, but this is simply a massive staff cut," said Ms Flood. "This decision is particularly tough on regional communities who will lose jobs because there isn't another Commonwealth agency to provide staff to fill vacancies. We call on the government to change this new policy to allow agencies to fill vacant positions locally and guarantee regional jobs are not lost. "From today agencies will be forced to cope with dwindling staff numbers rather than providing vital services to the public and quality advice to the government," Ms Flood said. The union also said the move would shut the door on people seeking a career in the public service. Click [here](#) for the CPSU Press Release.



## Korean hospital workers' strike action

Seoul National University Hospital (SNUH) workers, members of the Korean Federation of Public Services and Transportation Workers' Union (KPTU) Health Workers Solidarity Division, walked off the job on 23 October 2013 after attempts to reach an agreement on wages, conditions and measures needed to improve the quality of care. 46 rounds of negotiations failed to bring about positive action from the part of hospital management. Roughly 500 workers are on strike. Some 1000 members have remained on the job in respect of requirements for the maintenance of essential services.

Striking workers have set up a protest encampment in the lobby of SNUH's main building and are holding daily rallies at the hospital and related government offices. After striking for 13 days, Seoul National University Hospital Workers returned to work at 5:00am on 5 November. On the previous day, the union and hospital management reached a provisional agreement after four days of bargaining. The union delegates voted to accept the agreement that afternoon. For more information please contact Ms. Wol-san Liem, KPTU Director of International Affairs: [kptu.intl@gmail.com](mailto:kptu.intl@gmail.com)



## Philippines: 96% vote union

PSI together with the support of SASK & TEHY are negotiating for quality services and campaigning against precarious work in the health sector as part of the Philippines' Health Project. This project identifies ways for trade unions in the Philippines to address precarious work and contribute to decent work outcomes for health workers. The project included activities designed to solicit support from PSI affiliates and other stakeholders particularly on the campaign to amend the Philippine Nursing Law.

The project also contributed to PSI's organizing & growth program of action. It was a resounding organizing success. The PSI-affiliated Alliance of Filipino Workers (AFW), won recognition for the St. Luke's Medical Centre Employees Association in a certification election. A certification election is the first step in obtaining legal personality and recognition as a trade union in the Philippines for collective bargaining purposes. 96% of the total votes cast were in favour of creating a union (746 workers out of 779 voted in favour of forming a union). The new local union will represent 1,200 members, representing nurses, pharmaceutical, support services and office personnel. With this new affiliate, AFW's total membership has increased from 5,000 to 6,200. For more detail visit PSI's website [here](#) or contact Mr. Norman Grecia, PSI Project Coordinator: [norman.grecia@world-psi.org](mailto:norman.grecia@world-psi.org)



## Finland municipal workers visit Japan

Representatives from the Trade Union for the Public and Welfare Sectors of Finland (JHL) visited Japan as part of their exchange program with the All-Japan Prefectural and Municipal Workers Union (JICHIRO) from 7 to 12 October 2013. The delegation also visited the areas in North-eastern Japan affected by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami and was impressed by the resilience of the Japanese people and municipal workers facilitating recovery and post-disaster reconstruction efforts. For more details visit the JICHIRO website [here](#) (in Japanese).



## PSA: 100 years strong - for a better working life

PSI's affiliate in New Zealand, the Public Service Association (PSA), is 100 years old this year. Over the past century the PSA has proudly represented public servants and fought to improve their working lives. Many of the things it has fought for, such as superannuation, have benefited all workers in New Zealand. The PSA has won equal pay for women, flexible working hours, annual leave and has helped to create a politically neutral and corruption free public service that is the envy of many countries in the world.

The PSA has grown from being a union for government workers to one which represents 58,000 workers in local government, the health sector, crown agencies, state-owned enterprises, community and government funded agencies. This has made PSA New Zealand's largest union. The challenges remain. But remembering its people and its past, the union can look forward to the next century with confidence. Watch the video history of the union over the past 100 years, click [here](#).



The number of trade agreements that include labour provisions has increased significantly over the past two decades, according to a new report by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The report on the Social Dimensions of Free Trade Agreements says that there has been a substantial growth in the number of trade agreements featuring labour-related measures since the mid-1990s, including more 'South-South agreements' between developing countries. This report provides a comprehensive review of all existing trade agreements that include social provisions and discusses impacts for enterprises and workers. It also helps assess the challenges arising from the multiplication of trade agreements that include different social provisions. Click [here](#) for the report.

## Typhoon Haiyan: Solidarity support to all PSI affiliates in the Philippines

Members of the PSI Steering Committee have expressed their solidarity and deepest condolences to all people in the Philippines in the devastating wake of Typhoon Haiyan. Further, PSI will contribute solidarity and recovery funds. PSI has conveyed support and solidarity (please click [here](#)), and has called on other PSI affiliates to contribute to the PSI aid fund to help PSI members by rebuilding PSI unions and communities in the Philippines (please click [here](#)). Any contributions can be channelled through PSI, if affiliates so wish. Details on how this can be done are available on the PSI website [here](#).



## Stop maternity harassment at workplace!

The Annual Central Women's Forum of JTUC-RENGO was held on 25 October 2013. In spite of an approaching typhoon, which could have forced to cancel the meeting, more than 1000 members from various affiliates of RENGO participated in the meeting. PSI affiliate JICHIRO, was represented by 59 members (5 males and 54 females) from its 28 Prefectural organisations. The major focus of the forum was on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women especially as women are to play a major role in "saving Japan".

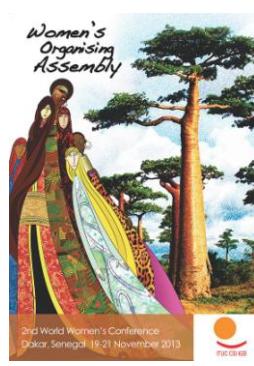
**Maternity harassment** has long been a major issue for women workers in Japan; this involves treating female employees unfavourably because of being pregnant or having children, sometimes to the point of making them quit their jobs. The forum recognized the situation and made an appeal to face the challenges and implement further action for greater gender equality in the workplace. For more information about the forum, please visit JICHIRO's website [here](#) (in Japanese).



## Angkasa Pura 1 Workers Union: 4<sup>th</sup> National Congress

The leaders and workers' representatives from 15 branches of the Angkasa Pura 1 Workers Union met from 15 to 18 November in Yogyakarta for their 4<sup>th</sup> National Congress.

The values, policies and actions, that have been decided for the next five-year mandate, 2013-2018, show the union's vision and commitment to working towards unified goals and objectives that embrace new industrial relations to promote strong and mutual industrial relations, respect workers' rights and collective bargaining. The 4<sup>th</sup> Congress was successful and involved leadership transitions. Ms. Sulistiani, General Secretary, took over the General Chairperson position with majority votes. The union thanked Ms. Itje Julinar for her leadership these past 12 years that helped strengthen the union. This was celebrated at its 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 17<sup>th</sup> Nov 2013.



## World Women's Assembly to focus on organising women

300 women trade union delegates from 100 countries gathered in Dakar, Senegal from 19 to 20 November to analyse the impacts of the global jobs crisis on women, find ways to organise more women and map out international trade union action to improve women's job security, pay and conditions as the global economy remains highly unstable. A major focus of the programme was on reaching out to the most vulnerable and exploited women such as domestic or home-based workers and map out different ways of organising them all around the world. The Conference also focused on promoting women in leadership, the Count Us In! Campaign, and mentorship programmes to support younger women. For the detail, visit the website [here](#).



## Violence against women is an age-old problem – it is time to end it now

Violence against women exists in all countries and in all societies. It happens in private and public places, and in physical as well as virtual online spaces. Violence is often driven by a deep-seated belief that a woman is not equal to a man. PSI and our affiliates can work together and with civil society organisations to break the silence and mobilise against discrimination and violence in our workplaces and societies. 25 November is International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. PSI affiliates say NO TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS!

Please visit the PSI website for the statement and download the poster [here](#).



On 23 November PSI affiliates in Singapore held an event and invited the Speaker of the Parliament as the guest speaker, Mdm. Halimah Yacob (front row seated in the middle). At the forum, PSI affiliates in Singapore have been promoting the message that Violence against Women must end and have been encouraging people to speak up and be heard on this important issue in both the workplace and in society. Another guest was Ms. Diana Chia (2<sup>nd</sup> from left), President of NTUC Singapore.



On 15-16 November, PSI Japan Council (PSI JC) held a seminar on Gender Equality and an End to Violence against Women. The major focus of the seminar was on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Violence against women stems from gender-based discrimination and gender inequality. Putting an end to violence against women is not the responsibility of one person, or one organisation but requires a collective response, in which everyone has a role to play. Read more [here](#) (in Japanese).



On 23 November, Tonga Public Service Association took part in an event to mark an end to violence against women. This event was organized by the National Centre for Women & Children in Nuku'alofa. Lord Vaea, Minister for Internal Affairs, was the guest of honour. The message he gave was that violence against women is wrong and that we all have the power to end it.



On White Ribbon Day - the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women - PSI affiliate the [Australian Services Union \(ASU\)](#) participated in awareness raising activities to promote the message because violence against women is not something that should be kept a secret. By opening this tragedy up to the light, we have a greater chance of eliminating it. For many years, the ASU has been promoting the message of White Ribbon Day and encouraging people to speak up and be heard on this important issue. Read more [here](#).

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