

World News - N° 9 , 2003

YOU are stopping the poor getting essential services!

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We have been asking affiliates to send us material (or comment online at www.publicworld.org) on the draft version of the World Bank's World Development Report, 'Making services work for the poor'. A recent series of incidents makes this now urgent. PSI and EI staff have met with Bank WDR staff in the last few days and have been told that, in the view of the Bank, PSI, EI and the ICFTU 'Oppose poor people having a say in services and have no focus on poor people'. That is, of course, nonsense, but now you have to show it. We need as many single paragraph examples as is possible from developing countries especially, to be sent to Steve Commins (scommins@worldbank.org) and copied to Mike.Waghorne@world-psi.org. These should show either union proposals for public sector reforms which would have improved services for the poor or would have improved access for the poor; or programmes where unions have cooperated with governments; and, very specifically, of programmes (government or union) where a central government agency - a ministry of health, for example - has reorganised its structure or service so that the poor get better service, without privatisation, decentralisation, contracting out, etc.

Withdraw the Draft Bill – Chile

On 2 May PSI General Secretary Hans Engelberts wrote to the Finance Committee members of the Chilean Chamber of Deputies, demanding that a Draft Bill, including provisions that would adversely affect public employees, be withdrawn. The letter was sent upon request from PSI affiliate Agrupación Nacional Empleados Fiscales (ANEF) in Chile. Industrial relations in the country are already strained due to the hostile attitude of the government to the public sector workers represented by ANEF.

Colombia – once again

On 8 May a bomb blast killed three workers at the Cali Drinking Water Treatment Plant. Nelson Lopez, Wilmen Vergara and Jorge Vasquez were long-standing members of PSI affiliate SINTRAEMCALI, which has been engaged in a determined campaign to prevent privatisation of the municipal

services company. All three men died on the spot. PSI is urging the Colombian government to fully and seriously investigate the origins of the explosion and supports SINTRAEMCALI's demand that the material and intellectual authors are charged, tried and punished. PSI affiliates are requested to join the urgent action. See www.world-psi.org for supporting facts and model letter.

Health Services Task Force

On 5-6 May the PSI Health Services Task Force met in Geneva. On the agenda was follow-up of work done by the Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU) on globalisation trends in health services. Most of the time was spent on the Programme of Action, selecting areas of special emphasis for the rest of 2003, through to 2007 and beyond. The task force also adopted a resolution on the crisis related to the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). The resolution offers support for the victims of occupational illnesses in general, and for victims of SARS in particular. It questions whether the spread of SARS would have been less pronounced had the health and political systems in key countries been different; and it urges governments to consider the implications of such outbreaks of new and unknown diseases. The resolution also calls on governments to be alert and ready for outbreaks of other new, unexpected and easily transmitted diseases; and offers support and congratulations to thousands of healthcare workers and other emergency service workers who have put themselves at risk in serving their patients and communities during this crisis. Contact mike.waghorne@world-psi.org for details.

Organising the health sector in Iraq

Hundreds of Iraqi medical workers marched through the centre of Baghdad on 7 May, demanding their back pay, calling for a union, and pressing for the removal of Saddam Hussein regime officials from the interim Iraqi Health Ministry. Doctors, nurses and health workers in Iraq called for a change of the current self-financed medical system which has been an obstacle to the access to health services for many poor Iraqi citizens. The demonstrators also insisted that they would not accept the US-appointed head of the Health Ministry because of his ties to the overthrown regime of Saddam Hussein.

Health and safety at work

The ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) recently published a new occupational health and safety guide, entitled 'Your Health and Safety at Work'. It contains all the ILO instruments and codes related to occupational health and safety as well as chemical safety cards and search tools, pertinent addresses, a catalogue of ILO publications on health and safety and a picture gallery. Consult www.itcilo.it/english/actrav/telearn/osh/default.htm.

InvestmentWatch

In PSI World News 07-03 it was reported that PSI, along with other global unions, has taken the position not to support any of the 'new issues' (i.e. investment, competition policy, government procurement and trade facilitation) in the World Trade Organisation (WTO). PSI also urged affiliates to sign on to a statement 'No investment negotiations in the WTO' (to sign on, send the name of your organisation and country to stopthenewissues@hotmail.com). The Corporate European Observatory, with whom PSI cooperates through the 'Our World is Not for Sale' network, has now taken the investment issue one step further and created a special website www.investmentwatch.org. The website is designed to be a central resource for NGOs, unions and civil society groups etc. working against the launch of investment negotiations in the WTO. The website will bring news,

critical voices, resources and more. Input is encouraged (see the 'Contact' section on the site) as the site will gain in importance the more input is received. The WTO 'new issues' will be featured in some detail in the forthcoming FOCUS.

Water in Cancún

Union representatives going to the WTO Ministerial in Cancún in September may wish to check on the water, not because it is dirty, but because it is private. On 10 July 2002, Ondeo (Suez) bought out Azurix's (Enron) assets. An Ondeo press release from the time of the takeover boasts that Cancún will provide Suez with total revenue of US\$1.5 billion and immediate earning-accretive (see www.suez.com/upload/up887.pdf). Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU) at Greenwich University has put together a small, one-page 'capsule' on 'Aguas de Cancún' from the database for information. Go to www.psiru.org/briefings/cancunwater.doc.

Strategic planning workshop

Fifteen representatives from eight PSI affiliates in Turkey (YoHs, Belediye-Is, SES, Tum Bel Sen, BES, Genel-Is, Yapi Yol Sen, Harb -Is) participated in a workshop on strategic planning, lead by PSI Education Co-ordinator, Jenny Luck, on 14-16 April. The aim of the workshop was to assist PSI affiliates in Turkey in making practical use of strategic planning techniques. The participants practised the techniques by developing a strategy for the next phase of the LOTCO financed project. Participants agreed that the next phase should focus on government assaults on the public sector, including direct attacks on trade union rights, and the under-representation of women within unions. Contact: jenny.luck@world-psi.org for details and background material.

New Sub-Regional Secretary

Returning from the Russian and Central Asian Constituency meeting in Kazakhstan, 12-13 May, Alan Leather, PSI Deputy General Secretary, reports that the meeting unanimously agreed that Olga Lavrova, Russian Health Workers Union, would take over the responsibility as Sub-Regional Secretary for Russia and Central Asia. Olga will be working fifty per cent of her time for the Constituency and the rest of her time she will be the International Secretary of the Health Workers Union.

Comments

Please email comments on PSI World News to psi@world-psi.org.

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