

PSI

# World News

January 2005

## Union-to-union solidarity fund



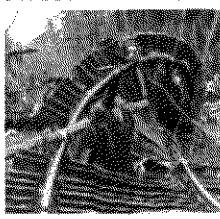
PSI has initiated a fund to deliver direct assistance to trade unions whose infrastructure and capacity has been damaged by the tsunamis of 26<sup>th</sup> December. The fund will help these unions rebuild and play their full role in restoring public services in the region. This is a union-to-union fund, and donations should be made by or through affiliated unions. An initial contribution of \$100,000 from JICHIRO in Japan has helped launch the fund, with more still being collected. For further information email [communications@world-psi.org](mailto:communications@world-psi.org)

## Public service unions respond



Aceh (pictured) was one of the areas hardest-hit by the tsunamis. We made an initial donation of \$10,000 to assist with construction of an emergency shelter in Aceh Banda, matching donations by local unions and management. \$20,000 more has been set aside locally. PSI representatives are currently at work in Thailand, India and Indonesia, and are visiting disaster sites to find out how we can help.

## After the cameras have gone



What happens further down the track? Long after the cameras have gone our affiliates and their members will be struggling to rebuild infrastructure and services in the region. After the Iranian earthquake in Bam last year government officials reported that \$1.1bn aid had been promised by foreign countries and organisations. Of this, only \$17.5m ever materialised. Much of the money was redirected from existing aid budgets, and there were strings attached relating to the privatisation of services. PSI will be monitoring the reconstruction efforts to ensure that unions are involved in planning as well as the delivery of restored services.

■ If you want to be kept informed about the solidarity fund or the PSI response to the crisis email [communications@world-psi.org](mailto:communications@world-psi.org)

## A small selection of union responses

### In Indonesia...



The Indonesian electric power company workers' union (SP PLN) had 4,000 members in Aceh, on the west coast of Sumatra. They have received confirmation of 700 fatalities among their members and immediate families, with 1,000 still missing. Power plants, distribution lines and offices were destroyed. This area was closest to the epicentre of the magnitude-9 earthquake that triggered the giant waves and killed more than 95,000 people in Indonesia. In spite of this, by January 5th, 85% of electric power had been restored in Aceh's cities. The President and other officers of SP PLN union went to assess the situation two days after the tsunami, and subsequently SP PLN organised teams of up to 115 volunteers to travel to Aceh on consecutive days with truckloads of food. Within one week, the SP PLN had raised \$26,200 to finance an emergency shelter. The union plans to send additional teams with food next week, as well as fresh water drilling teams.

### In Sri Lanka...



The south-eastern coast of Sri Lanka was directly in the path of the tsunami and was the first to be hit. On January 1st members of the Public Service United Nurses Union drove vans loaded with medical supplies, nurses, doctors and food into the area. Amid scenes of devastation they tended to the injured, checked supplies in local clinics, and passed out supplies and clothing. They are now planning their next steps, and PSI has offered to provide support.

### In Thailand...



Unions set up an emergency relief fund on the first day after the tsunamis and have collected about \$15,000. A joint network set up by unions to resist privatisation (Public Utilities Protection Network) has been taking trucks from Bangkok since December 28<sup>th</sup> carrying food, clothes, medicine, bottled water and coffins.

## How you can help

Your union can make a donation through the PSI's solidarity fund (see first page). Individuals can also help in a number of ways. The WHO has set up a web page including suggestions on how health professionals can help. It provides information about cash donations, donations in kind (including drug donations), and the recruitment of emergency specialists. See [http://www.who.int/hac/crises/international/asia\\_tsunami/en/](http://www.who.int/hac/crises/international/asia_tsunami/en/)

You can also help through:

» CARE

<http://www.care.org/> then choose country

» Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

[http://www.ifrc.org/helpnow/donate/donate\\_response.asp](http://www.ifrc.org/helpnow/donate/donate_response.asp)

» UNHCR

<http://www.unhcr.ch/donate/redirect.html>

» UN World Food Programme

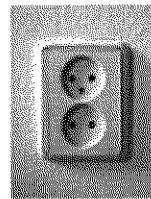
[http://www.wfp.org/how\\_to\\_help/support\\_wfp/online.html](http://www.wfp.org/how_to_help/support_wfp/online.html)

» UNICEF

<http://www.supportunicef.org/site/pp.asp?c=iuI1LdP0G&b=276341>

## Other news this month

### Privatisation cancelled in Indonesia



Earlier in December we witnessed a significant victory for Indonesian energy workers when the court cancelled a law for privatisation of the electricity system. This had been imposed in 2003 as part of a lending agreement with the World Bank. Indonesian trade unions were among the plaintiffs who called on the court to strike down the privatization law. The court determined that electricity services are vital to the nation's interests and should be controlled by the government.

### Unions in Iraq



Iraqi workers had hoped the fall of Saddam Hussein would enable them to recover lost rights, such as the right to an independent union. In 1987 those who labored in state enterprises were prohibited from forming unions. The US Labor movement has repeatedly asked that this decree be repealed. A British representative of the Coalition Provisional Authority was recently asked about this and replied: "I'm going to tell (the Iraqi minister) that these visits are taking too much of his time, and recommend that he concentrate instead on doing his job."

## Divide and Conquer



A new study prepared for PSI shows how the FTAA and GATS treaties dramatically reduce the sovereignty of governments and their ability to regulate in the public interest. "Divide and Conquer" dissects the mechanisms through which

these two treaties can appropriate the authority of local, state and national governments, overriding a government's ability to favour domestic enterprises for investment, safeguard environmentally sensitive areas, or condition procurement contracts on buying locally. The trade rules could also affect the licensing of toxic waste sites, establishment of water quality standards, and accreditation of schools, hospitals and universities. See <http://www.worldpsi.org/interamericas> for more. The study can also be requested (in English or Spanish) by emailing [communications@world-psi.org](mailto:communications@world-psi.org)

## 2005: the year that changed the world?



"We want 2005 to be remembered as the year that changed the world." With these words Steve Tibbett of ActionAid helped deliver the "Make Poverty History" report to Tony Blair. Make Poverty History is part of the Global Coalition Against Poverty which includes trade unions, PSI, charities, campaign groups and celebrities, and which aims to be the most powerful coalition ever built against world poverty. The report is available by email from [communications@world-psi.org](mailto:communications@world-psi.org), and marks the beginning of an unparalleled international anti-poverty campaign. For details of what is happening in your country and how you can be involved see <http://www.whiteband.org/>

## 2005: Some dates to watch out for

17 January: Millennium Project report to the UN  
<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/html/about.shtml>

21-26 January: World Social Forum Porto Allegre  
[http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/index.php?cd\\_language=2&id\\_menu=1](http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/index.php?cd_language=2&id_menu=1)

April: Commission for Africa report

11-22 April: UN Committee on Sustainable Development  
<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd13/csd13.htm>

6-8 July: G8 summit  
[http://www.g8.gc.ca/menu\\_en.asp](http://www.g8.gc.ca/menu_en.asp)

September: UN special General Assembly Summit on MDG's  
<http://www.un-mdg.org/MDG/unaction.htm#1>

13-18 December: WTO meeting in Hong Kong  
[http://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/minist\\_e/min05\\_e/min05\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min05_e/min05_e.htm)

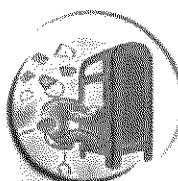
## Visas denied!



An innovative protest is being planned by NGO's and PSI for the critical WTO meeting in Geneva from February 7th to 25th. This meeting is part of the negotiations to advance the General Agreement on the Trade in Services. It is a pivotal gathering where trade

ministers will be under intense pressure to expose more services to the market powers of transnational corporations. NGO's will be meeting in advance to discuss the terms of a people's permit, which will only be granted to participants subject to written commitments on protecting services. Those who manage to board planes without a permit will hopefully be snared in Geneva before they can scamper into the WTO bastion. Affiliates who wish to be involved in these actions locally are encouraged to contact Mike Waghorne (mike.waghorne@world-psi.org).

## New to the News?



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