



Global Solidarity has joined with many different groups in lobbying Irish Aid to support trade justice.

Irish Aid White Paper and Trade Unions

The Government published the Irish Aid White Paper in September 2006. It commits to reaching the 0.7% target and an absolute figure of 1.5bn per annum. Aid this year will be about €730m. While the poverty focus stays on Africa, Malawi has been added to the priority countries. Ireland has committed to invest in conflict resolution and has already started in establishing a humanitarian aid rapid response capability.

Of particular interest to trade unions:

Irish Aid believes
"An empowered local civil society can, over time, be the most effective driver of political reform and accountability in developing democracies".

Governments must be responsive to the needs of their citizens and

civil society organisations can help citizens voice those needs. Civil society organisations can make an important contribution to better government through appealing to, and bringing pressure to bear on, governments to perform better.

Civil society organisations (i.e. Trade Unions) can also play a vital role in delivering essential services to people, where state systems are incapable of doing so.

continued...

Civil Society Fund

This new fund draws together a number of previous funds. Eligibility for funding will not be limited to traditional NGOs; applications will also be considered from other organisations, such as institutes of higher education. Funds will be provided for poverty reduction activities in the poorer developing countries. Organisations will need to demonstrate capacity to implement planned actions, financial integrity, adherence to good development practice and financial sustainability.

Irish Aid will continue to encourage Irish NGOs to develop and strengthen partnerships with organisations in developing countries.

Support for civil society must be appropriate to the particular circumstances of a country. Care must be taken not to undermine or distort the role of democratic institutions.

Private Sector

The regulatory environment created by developing country

governments is critical if the private sector is to grow and jobs are to be created. If enterprise is to flourish, it requires predictability, stability and a legal and administrative framework that is fair and is enforced. To be effective in combating poverty,

pro-poor economic activity must be encouraged. This will only happen if the poor are involved in economic activity as producers, processors and employers.

While economic growth is crucial for development, the distribution of the benefits is central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Governments have a crucial role in deciding where economic



Lobbying the Irish Government for better working conditions is a major strand in Congress' work

efforts are focussed and how to distribute the benefits of national resources and wealth.

Social Partners.

As we know from Ireland's own development experience, strong, sustained and equitable economic growth requires stable and accountable government, substantial sustained investment in education and health, a dynamic and innovative private sector and a strong and vocal civil society. The social partnership model in Ireland has attracted considerable international interest among developing countries as a vehicle for more inclusive policy development and is something we could share. We will support the development of a diverse and independent civil society and encourage governments in our programme countries to facilitate greater civil

society participation and partnership in development planning. Where appropriate, we will **look at supporting efforts to share the experience of Ireland's economic success and our social partnership process.**

Trade Unions in Guinea Bear the Brunt of Violence from the Government

Over the last year more 113 people were killed by Government forces in the West African state of Guinea when they protested about the country's lack of democracy and the terrible levels of poverty.

Trade unions in Guinea led the struggle for major reforms in what is internationally acknowledged to be one of the more corrupt regimes in Africa, with leaders of the three main union groups leading a national strike last year and early this year. They have now proposed a national conference on reconciliation and mapping the way forward, for next month

(May). An acceptable Prime Minister has just been appointed by President Lansana Conte – who is himself the cause of all the dissatisfaction – but much remains to be won. Global Solidarity will follow the situation closely and report back to you on major changes.

Launch of New Global Trade Union Confederation

November 2006, saw the dissolution congresses of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) and the inaugural conference of the new International Trade Union Congress (ITUC) which will comprise the affiliated organisations of the former ICFTU and WCL together with eight other national trade union organisations that will for the first time affiliate to a global body. Congress was represented there by Vice President Patricia McKeown.

The international trade union movement is adapting in order to remain a key player in an economic climate that is creating more losers than winners. The imbalances of economic globalisation are having a devastating effect on millions of workers. Off-shoring, abuse of workers' rights and increasing poverty are all examples of the negative impact of globalisation.

The creation of the ITUC will solidify the trade union movement's capacity at the national and international levels', Guy Ryder General Secretary ".....stronger, we will exert more influence on companies, governments and the international financial and trade institutions. The founding of the ITUC is an integral part of the process of uniting the power of trade unionism".

He continued to explain why the reason for the creation of the ITUC ".....we (nations) have been told liberalise our markets and privatise the state, and you will have economic growth and create new jobs. But everyday we

see that this isn't working. With good reason we can ask, when did we vote on the Washington Consensus? When was this agenda democratically adopted? When did it get global approval?"

At the inaugural ITUC Congress were panel discussions on Global Unions- Global Business. This brought together leaders of the Global Union Federations (GUFs) who have key responsibilities in dealing with multinational enterprises, of international employers, and of national trade union organisations. Some of the key issues will be:

- Is there need for new trade union initiatives to internationalise our organising and bargaining strategies?
- If so how can the GUFs and the ITUC work together to meet that need?
- How do we link national and international strategies?
- Is international business ready to engage with trade unions internationally?
- What is the scope for positive relations between Global Unions and Global Business, and what are the limits?

The ITUC has also launched the Decent Work, Decent Life Campaign. It was launched at the World Social Forum in Nairobi. This Decent Work, Decent Life Campaign is a concept covering equal access to employment, living wages, social protection, freedom from exploitation and union rights at the core of development, economic, trade, financial and



Young people give an enthusiastic welcome to the launch of the ITUC

social policies at the national, European and International level through public campaigning and lobbying. The main points of the campaign are:

- Build awareness of Decent Work amongst citizens, decision makers and key institutions.
- Show that Decent Work is the only sustainable way out of poverty and is fundamental to build democracy and social cohesion.
- Place Decent Work at the core of development, economic, trade, financial and social policies at the national, European and International level.

Growth is not enough!

International trade and economic growth alone cannot eradicate poverty. In many countries wealth is continuously concentrated within a few hands. Societies, both developing and industrialised are growing more and more unequal. Decent Work is a key mechanism by which wealth is redistributed and poverty eliminated.

The campaign will take its message from Nairobi to the World Economic Forum in Davos, and then on to the G8 meeting in Germany. The campaign will strive to make it not only a reality, but through it to reconnect people with the political process and give them hope that they can in fact change what from afar seems the unchangeable.



No Sweat in Palestine

The Clothing NGO No Sweat has started using Palestine made garments for its clothing line. The Bethlehem factory gives consumers in the US and Europe to do something positive about the situation by supporting union jobs. Since the Intifada Palestine has lost about 2/3's of the jobs in the clothing manufacturing industry. The owner of the factory Elias Alajar reports that the area around the factory has been relatively free from violence but the building of the wall has hurt the economic life of his home town and welcomes the opportunity of expanding his business be is not so dependant on trade with Israel. The No Sweat company using the Bethlehem factory has been supported by both the Authorities Palestinian and Israel. No Sweat has found an unusual market in the US for their new clothing lines.

Strangely enough the Yoga going Christian, who not only want to buy ethically who the significance of the "Bethlehem" label is not lost on. It also gives the opportunity to politically minded Americans and Europeans to do something positive for the Palatine economy and workers.

Adam Neiman founder of the No Sweat NGO said "the biggest problem over there (Palestine) is that young Palestine men have guns but no jobs." The factory employs 120 union workers and Neiman has already met Shafer Saed the General Secretary of the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions with regard to the factory. The "Bethlehem" label will be launched in London in March and will be used by Congress at Bi- Annual- Delegate Conference 2007. Buy from No Sweat is a positive method of supporting workers and protecting the environment as the cotton used in production is organically grown in Turkey.

No Sweat produce 100% made Trade Union made runners, tee shirts and other clothes from factories in the US, Latin America and Indonesia. For further information check out <http://nosweatapparel.com/>



One of the T-shirts being produced in the Bethlehem factory. No Sweat and Congress are working together to increase the effectiveness of fairly traded clothing



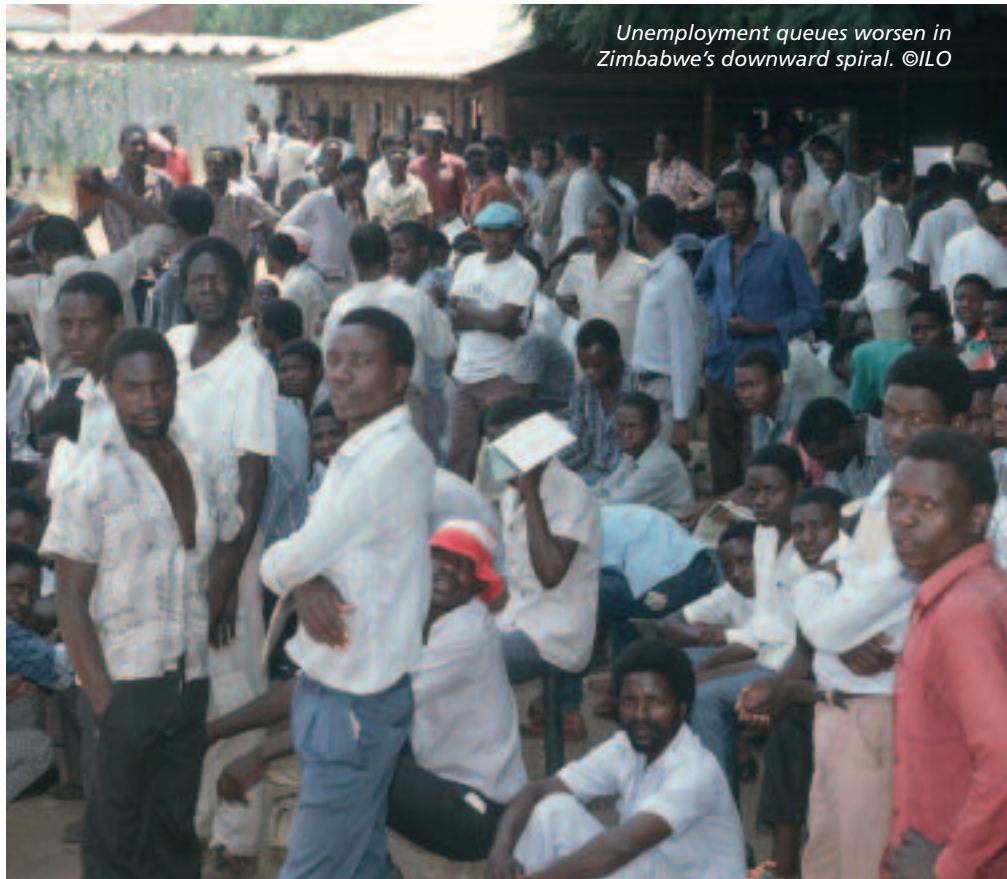
Irish delegation to Venezuela: learning the lessons

Mark Langhammer, ATL Director in Northern Ireland, went to Venezuela for a 10 day study tour, as part of a delegation of trade unionists from Ireland. He visited some of the poorer parts of the capital and interviewed a number of officials, trade unionists and teachers - people who have seen at first hand the effects of privatisation and liberalisation on the education sector in a poor country.

The President of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, was overthrown in a coup d'état organised by business and financed in part by US Government money. By popular demand, he was reinstated within a year and has since then run the government in a way that the press in the rich countries does not like: he has diverted lots of money into schemes to feed the poor, into creating jobs for the unemployed, and in expanding free access to basic education for tens of thousands of people.

He has been known in the UK and Ireland for his 'deal' with London Mayor Ken Livingstone, to barter oil for expertise in transport and municipal governance issues. Cuba and Bolivia - similarly left-wing governments to his own - have also benefited from Venezuelan oil products at less than current market prices, because Chavez believes Venezuela's oil wealth should be used for the benefit of the poor throughout the world. According to Mark Langhammer, Venezuela's social revolution is Global Solidarity in action.

For a full copy of his fascinating report, e-mail Mark at mark.langhammer@atl.org.uk



Unemployment queues worsen in Zimbabwe's downward spiral. ©ILO

Irish Government Backs Congress Stand on Zimbabwe

The Global Solidarity project team has been lobbying hard for support from the Irish Government for renewed sanctions against the brutal Zimbabwe Government of President Robert Mugabe.

On 20 December, Congress General Secretary David Begg wrote a letter to the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern setting out the movement's concerns for ordinary working people in Zimbabwe, faced with the repression and horrendous mismanagement of the economy that is causing hardship and distress to millions of people. In particular, we urged the Irish Government to insist that the EU maintain 'smart' (i.e. targeted and specific) sanctions against certain members of the Zimbabwe Government. This would stop Mugabe and his friends coming to Europe on buying trips for personal reasons.

In February, we received a reply from the Taoiseach which strongly supported our position. The Irish Government and Congress obviously see eye to eye on a number of important issues and we are obviously keen to dialogue further with Irish Aid and other sections of the Government to see where trade union influence can most effectively be brought to bear.

Women's Conference: Solidarity issues engage with even more people

The Women's Conference took place on 23-24 March in the Clarion Hotel at Dublin Airport and was generally considered a great success. This year, the Women's Committee discussed with Global Solidarity the possibilities of working together and we all agreed on the theme of "Globalisation, Workers' Rights and Equality in the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All".

There were over 150 delegates from 39 different trade unions and trades councils, from North and South of the border. Delegates were presented with fascinating accounts of women's struggles in the workplace in many parts of the world. Our very good friend June Hartley fired people's imaginations - and their sense of outrage - at some of the incidents she related, and Samantha Maher from the Clean Clothes Campaign also gave us valuable insights into the

strategies bosses have come up with for cutting back on workers' pay and for reducing resources for workers' conditions and working environment.

As well as the work sided to the conference, we all enjoyed the food and entertainment of the Friday evening dinner: it was a wonderful social occasion in the middle of a weekend of inspiring messages and discussions.

The conference ended with an update on the Lesotho linking event, scheduled for later this year, and delegates were able to return to their own unions and workplaces, armed with more information about strategies for overcoming some of the inequalities that still plague our world.



Poor women worldwide were the focus of the Women's Conference this year

Students as well as teachers' unions lobby the Irish Government with the trade union position on a decent education for all



Global Action Week for Education 23-29 April

Teachers' unions take part in Global Action Week via the Irish Global Campaign for Education coalition which is composed of NGOs and trade unions. Although the themes and activities behind Global Action Week change on an annual basis, the core message remains the same: give us free, quality, basic Education for All by 2015.

For 125 million children and 880 million adults, the basic human right of education is being violated everyday. The Global Campaign for Education is a worldwide alliance of trade unions and non-governmental organisations active in over 150 countries. The Global Campaign for Education promotes education as a basic human right and mobilises public pressure on governments to fulfil their promises in providing free and public education for all people.

There are three different stages in the action week 2007. They are:

- 1. Stage one - Evidence Gathering:** Coalitions and campaigners will create dossiers or gather evidence of violations of the right to education and how far the Education for All (EFA) has succeeded.
- 2. Stage two - Campaigners to receive messages to take to leaders:** Campaigners will go to local meeting points as first links in the chain reaction. They will look at the evidence in terms of EFA goals realisation and hear the reality of those who do not get education.
- 3. Stage three - Common Global Campaign Action:** Human chains created around the world where people join hands or make paper chains of 'friend' style cut-out figures that join together. Chains act as the means of delivery of the dossiers and evidence to Governments.

For more information on how to get involved with the Global Campaign for Education or if you are a teacher and want you class to get involved check out <http://www.campaignforeducation.ie> .

Public Favours Decent Work Standards Everywhere

Strong majorities in developing nations around the world support requiring countries that sign trade agreements to meet minimum labour and environmental standards, a multinational poll finds. Nine out of 10 Americans also support such protections. The leaders of less developed nations have generally opposed including language mandating minimum standards for working conditions and environmental protections in trade deals, arguing that such rules are protectionist and would undermine their ability to compete in major markets such as Europe and the United States.

Nonetheless, majorities in four developing countries in Asia (China, India, Thailand and the Philippines) and two middle income countries in Latin America (Argentina and Mexico) agree that trade agreements

should require governments to maintain 'minimum standards' for working conditions or for the protection of the environment. These findings are part of multinational study by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs and WorldPublicOpinion.org, in cooperation with polling organisations around the world. The larger survey includes 17 countries (China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Russia, Thailand, Ukraine, Poland, Iran, Mexico, South Korea, the Philippines, Australia, Argentina, Peru, Israel, Armenia) and the Palestinian territories.

Uganda Mines, Metal and Allied Workers' Union



Ugandan Trade Unionists met with Peter Bunting (Assistant General Secretary of the ICTU) and Global Solidarity in February. This followed a meeting of support with Irish trade unions. Irish Unions in particular IMPACT have support the Ugandan Mines , Metal and Allied Workers' Union (UMMAWU) in order to assist in creating awareness and sensitising members, workers and their families of the effects of HIV/ AIDS in Uganda. The Union has embarked on awareness education programmes to sensitise the workers and the community over the past year. Additionally IMPACT has agreed to support the development of the training and organising capabilities of the union. Members of the IMPACT executive visited Uganda in 2006 to examine at first hand the work of UMMAWU and see first hand the effect of the unions work in the community.

Impact's visit last year to Uganda has led to growing links and a strengthening relationship

World Bank sees Privatisation Winning Some, Losing Some

According to a summary report posted by the World Bank's private-sector development department, the total value of privatisation transactions in developing countries increased by 72 per cent between 2004 and 2005, the fourth consecutive year of increase.

However the data, which is presented in current (non-deflated) US dollars, shows that the 2005 level is still below peak levels of privatisation reached in the late 1990s. According to the Bank's report, China, Turkey, Romania and Ukraine were the top privatisers in 2005 and five-sixth of the total volume was in Eastern Europe and Asia.

However some regions are going in a contrary direction, with privatisation transactions down in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East.

The report notes that the drop was particularly sharp in Latin America, which the Bank attributes to "a shrinking portfolio of state enterprises and ... political and public backlash to privatisation". It observes that countries such as Bolivia, Russia and Venezuela are now engaging in re-nationalisation but has not collected data on that trend. The top sectors for volume of privatisation transactions were telecom, banks, energy and transport infrastructure.



Privatisation continues at a pace in China



President Hugo Chavez has called for the renationalisation of privatised companies in Venezuela including Oil.

Tsunami Aid update

Congress has worked with other partners to make sure that the sums of money generously donated by affiliated union sand members have gone to the victims of the December 2004 tsunami. Assistant Secretary General Peter Bunting has been heavily involved in the discussions on what is the best way to help the thousands of families struggling to rebuild their lives and their livelihoods after the devastation of two years ago.

Peter went on a fact-finding trip to the region shortly after the tsunami and then was able to return in 2006 with a significant cheque that exemplified the help, concern and compassion of Irish trade unionists.

Altogether, four projects have benefited from your donations:

- The ILO in Sri Lanka - "Trade Union Assistance to Tsunami-affected Communities; Making Voices of the People Heard". Economic Empowerment of coastal communities, rebuilding livelihood and job opportunities, organising the unorganised. The partners with the ILO are: National Association of Trade Union Research and Education

(NATURE) and its affiliates, Trade unions, Cooperatives and Community associations. Grant of €300,000

- Forum Bangun Aceh (FBA) - Salt farm micro economic recovery project which aims to rebuild eight salt-farms and factories in Baet village, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. Grant of €10,000.
- Volunteer International, Sri Lanka, a project which aims to provide the tools and materials that enable people to return to work and to give people the opportunity to establish a sustainable livelihood that generates an income independent of government or other aid, and contributes to families becoming self-supporting. Grant of €10,000
- Congress donated a further \$450,000 (€338,000) to the ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation - formerly the ICFTU, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) towards the rehabilitation of people in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam Districts in Tamil Nadu Province in India by offering skills development and vocational rehabilitation.

Global Solidarity is not just the title of a project: it is the practical expression of the compassion and generosity of tens of thousands of Irish trade unionists who have made possible this very concrete work of support and solidarity.

Peter Bunting handing over a Congress cheque to the head of the Sri Lankan trade union confederation, CLR Joseph, National Project manager and Tine Staermose, ILO Director, Colombia Area Office



The World Bank thinks it's alright for these labourers in Niamey, Niger, to work without the basic protection offered by respect of the Core Labour Standards. ©ILO



World Bank breathes hot and cold on Core Labour Standards

After years of lobbying by trade unionists, the World Bank group appears to have given way a little. In December last year, its President Paul Wolfowitz announced that all building and infrastructure project financed by the World Bank would have to comply with the Core Labour Standards of the ILO (International Labour Organisation). He announced that that would cover some \$8 billion a year of projects and the decision followed on from the World Bank's private sector sister, the International Finance Corporation, which had taken a similar decision in May 2006.

At the same time, the World Bank was still publicising and endorsing its internal publication, *Doing Business*, in which it consistently argues that

core labour standards and other labour legislation are 'obstacles' to the real business of doping business. And in its recent public advice to China, the World Bank has urged China not to take labour rights' issues too seriously, as they are not the main element in any country's path to economic development.

So the World Bank and its allies have not become firm partners of the trade union movement: far from it. We still need to mobilise our energies and make our collective voice heard in the defence of basic and essential rights for working people, all over the world.

Trade Unions Call for Fair Deal for Cotton producers

Global trade unions demanded that the high-level session on cotton at the World Trade Organisation in Geneva must embark on a root and branch reform of trade in cotton instead of tinkering at the edges. The aim must be to secure concrete progress to address the needs of cotton producing developing countries and their workers and thus help lift those countries, particularly in Africa, out of poverty. Cotton production is hugely important for a number of developing country producers, especially Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad and Niger, in West Africa. However despite the listing of cotton as a priority issue by the WTO in 2004 and 2005 by the WTO, little real progress has been made on addressing the enormous subsidies which some industrialised countries provide to domestic growers in the sector.

Solidarity Committees

The Solidarity Committees (NI and ROI) continue to be the vital link between Congress and affiliates on solidarity issues. These Committees work closely with the Global Solidarity Project to ensure that it reaches affiliated unions of Congress and meet regularly during the year. They continue to act as a link between the project, their individual unions, and the membership.

These Committees encourage affiliates to engage with the project and looks to embed solidarity linking within trade union structure.

Some affiliates (NIPSA, IMPACT, PSEU and ESBOA) have formed their own structures to engage with international solidarity issues.

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