

I.C.T.U. Global Solidarity Summer School 2012
WEXFORD

Global Solidarity is a crucial component of IMPACT's overall international agenda. In today's environment of increasing hostility to trade union and worker rights, plus an unprecedented global financial crisis, the needs of the developing world can easily be relegated down the priority list of so-called Western governments. It is up to all of us as trade unionists and activists to not allow that to happen. The I.C.T.U. Global Solidarity Committee gives Irish trade unions the mechanism to build stronger links with international trade unions, working together to utilise and share practical experiences and learning, to achieve common goals such as those outlined in the Decent Work Agenda and Millennium Development Goals. We fundamentally believe that all workers of the world should have access to productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

The Global Solidarity Committee is a representative group advocating and working towards these goals for the developing world, it is not just another talking-shop. IMPACT currently has 4 representatives on the committee and all of these reps have a strong commitment to global solidarity and social justice. Inter-union co-operation provides an opportunity to expand and build on existing services in the developing world. Working with Public Services International, the international trade union federation for public service unions, IMPACT has supported workers' rights campaigns, equality initiatives, and union capacity-building projects in the Middle East, India, Congo, Tanzania, Uganda, Cameroon, Burma, Iraq, Brazil and many other countries over the last number of years.

IMPACT itself has an International Affairs Sub-Committee, chaired by an Officer of the Union, which is currently Kevin O'Malley, the President. This is resourced by a nominated representative from each of the divisions within IMPACT, along with the reps on the Global Solidarity Committee and others who are interested in development issues. This IMPACT committee is highly regarded within the union and is keeping development issues high on IMPACT's agenda. The main work of this group includes;

- 1) providing financial aid to projects in the Developing World
- 2) participating in the ICTU Global Solidarity work – attending meetings, workshops, Summer School and encouraging members to attend the Global Solidarity Champions training
- 3) highlighting to our members (and supporting) the needs of worker communities abroad that have called for international solidarity, such as Palestine, Sri Lanka
- 4) adding strength to international trade union campaigns – such as Justice for Colombia, the Clean Clothes Campaign
- 5) Supporting our colleagues in other trade unions internationally
- 6) Lobbying the Dept of Foreign Affairs
- 7) Actively supporting and participating in projects in the Developing World, such as the new Special Needs Assistants project in Tanzania

Yesterday, 2 IMPACT reps travelled out to Tanzania with John Coughlan of Disability Aid Abroad, to visit an orphanage and training centres, with a view to developing a Special Needs Assistants teaching programme for centres that cater for the needs of children with disabilities. This is an early intervention strategy, ensuring that persons with a disability/special needs have received an education which will enable them to productively participate in the labour market, as well as ensuring they can access decent working conditions. So many people with a disability in the developing world are living in abject poverty because of the lack of social and employment opportunities. This simply must change. The SNA project is a very significant development in the disability sector in Tanzania, and the possibilities for replicating this across the developing world, are plentiful. These IMPACT representatives were able to undertake this initiative as a direct result of their membership and work on the ICTU Global Solidarity Cttee, giving IMPACT a platform to lead such campaigns.

Some of the current projects that the IMPACT International Affairs Sub-Cttee is supporting include:

- a) Up to £24,000stg for the ICTU-supported project to give legal support to the Colombian Trade Union Federation
- b) €78,246 to Christian Aid over 3 years for the project providing international protective accompaniment of human rights defenders and communities of internally displaced people in Colombia
- c) €10,000 over 2 years for a joint ICTU/Disability Aid Abroad project on employment support and trade union empowerment for workers with disabilities in Uganda
- d) €50,000 to the 'Twinning the Kingdoms' project in Lesotho
- e) €1,000 to the Naba Disha educational support programme in India and Kenya
- f) €25,000 to Nurture Africa
- g) Further discussion is taking place around funding a 2nd Christian Aid proposal on empowering informal waste collectors in Brazil

IMPACT is different in the way that we fund these development projects. In fact, every IMPACT member is part of this show of solidarity because 3% of their subs go directly into the Developing World fund. Since the establishment of the Developing World Fund in 1981, it has donated over €6 million to projects in the developing world, with over €500,000 allocated in each of the last 2 years alone.

Finally, we at IMPACT would like to take this opportunity to thank the other delegates of the Global Solidarity Committee and the fulltime officers, for their tireless work and commitment to social justice and sustainable development for the planet's poorest and most vulnerable communities. After another successful Summer School, we should all, as activists, rededicate our efforts to work together and inclusively with our international colleagues to be part of a real solution. After all, in unity there is strength, and by uniting and truly co-operating on a national and global level, we can constructively play our part in the movement for progressive change in the Less Developed World.