

# 25 years

# of International Solidarity

Union Aid Abroad APHEDA  
The overseas humanitarian aid agency of the ACTU



**Australian People for Health Education and Development Abroad (APHEDA)** was established 25 years ago as the international aid agency of the ACTU. APHEDA now also uses a shorter name - Union Aid Abroad.

**The APHEDA story** began in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon in 1982. A young nurse-



trainer, Helen McCue (pictured, left), was working for the World Health Organisation in the Middle East. After the massacres in the camps she went as a volunteer to

assist the surviving health workers. She worked beside nurses from *Norwegian People's Aid*, the overseas aid arm of the Norwegian trade union movement, and was highly impressed with their work focussed on skills training. As a strong union member herself, she felt that the Australian union movement should have a similar organisation. Lying on a concrete floor one night, she heard on the BBC that Bob Hawke and the ALP had won the election in Australia. Returning to Australia later in 1983, she met with ACTU President, Cliff Dolan. Cliff was sold on the idea of an international solidarity arm, and the rest is history.

Over the intervening 25 years, Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA, on behalf of Australian unions, has played a crucial role in fighting for global **social justice** - for human rights, genuine sustainable development, self-determination, workers' rights, equality, freedom and democracy. Most projects are in partnership with local unions or community organisations, and provide education and training to working people.

In South Africa, Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA was the lead Australian agency in supporting the democratic movement **fighting apartheid**. From 1985 to 1990, APHEDA assisted the ANC



(African National Congress) with capacity building for various departments, and from 1990 to 1994, assisted those in exile to return during the transition to democracy. In 1990, APHEDA brought the recently-freed Nelson Mandela (pictured) to Australia. More recently, we've assisted the fight against HIV, especially through trade unions running workplace education and support campaigns.

In **Cambodia** since 1985, we have trained over 80,000 people, mainly women, focusing on technical and vocational education, agriculture, forestry and fishery, women's health, HIV and nutrition, and union strengthening for women in the informal economy and garment sector.



In **East Timor**, since 1998, over 5,700 people have been trained in literacy, sewing and tailoring and handicraft production for women, and carpentry, mechanical and agriculture training for men, with media and librarian training also provided. Most importantly, we have helped establish and strengthen the trade union movement in East Timor, ensuring that men and women will have a fair wage and a safe workplace.

In **Vietnam** and **Laos**, health & HIV, vocational training and the strengthening of workers' rights at the enterprise level have been a feature of our work, as well as assisting trafficked women and livelihood skills training for young disabled victims of Agent Orange.

## On behalf of Australian unions

APHEDA has worked in many other countries over 25 years such as PNG, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, the Philippines and Indonesia. Our work has also supported refugees from Burma

and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

But it is not just projects to train workers or strengthen unions that have enabled APHEDA to make such a difference.

With a **human rights** based approach to development, APHEDA has also campaigned for democracy, rights and justice in many countries, and continues to do so today with our Burmese, Zimbabwean and Palestinian partners.

In recent years the organisation has defined its specific contribution to the union movement through the **Decent Work** agenda, seeing the centrality of labour and production as a key means to eradicate poverty. When working women and men have education and skills, and can organise collectively to ensure safe workplaces, fair wages and conditions, they then have the **dignity** that comes with being able to feed, clothe and educate their family themselves, and to give their families a decent standard of living.



Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA has been fortunate to have **generous donors** in the union movement, and **dedicated partners** overseas to deliver training.

*On behalf of Australian unions, APHEDA has delivered practical international solidarity and human rights for working people and their organisations for 25 years.*

## Since 1984

To support and learn more about the work of Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA's current 50 projects in 15 countries, visit [www.apheda.org.au](http://www.apheda.org.au) or call tollfree 1800 888 674.

For 25 years - thank you.