



# Fighting child labour in the Philippines



*For a child to have to work rather than go to school is a disaster which condemns that child to a lifetime of poverty, job insecurity and low productivity.*

In the Philippines, child labourers can be found working as scavengers on Manila's two garbage dumps. Almost 2000 families, parents and children, work all day in the heat, stench and flies to collect aluminium cans, glass bottles, plastic, wood, and anything else that might have even a small resale value. A day's work on the garbage dumps might earn such a family the equivalent of just AU\$1.50

As the garbage trucks arrive and dump their load, young and old alike crawl over the rotting material, looking for anything of value. Other trucks arrive to take away the cans, glass bottles (sorted by size and colour), plastic bottles etc, back to factories for reuse. Even old wood is used to produce charcoal, which is then sold.

Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA assists a small project with our partner, the Institute for Occupational Health and Safety Development (IOHSAD). The project has two components. Firstly, IOHSAD tries to improve health and safety conditions for children and their parents working at the

dumps. Medical waste, including needles and broken glass, are the main problems, with any cuts quickly becoming infected. Hookworm is also a major problem, and the children are tested and treated when funds permit. The children are also encouraged to wear discarded shoes, even if they don't fit, as it is safer than bare feet. Other medical problems include diarrhoea and respiratory infections, especially TB.

*"The children are encouraged to wear discarded shoes, even if they don't fit, as it is safer than bare feet."*

Secondly, the children need to learn to read and write so that, should the opportunity arise, they can at least begin their formal education with some basic knowledge. The nearest school is about two kilometres away and enrolment fees mean that only 30% of the children attend primary school and just 3% begin secondary education. IOHSAD and the

local community organisation for urban poor, KADAMAY, have therefore built two childcare centres, where children can attend a pre-school in a safe, hygienic environment, while having an opportunity to learn to read and write, and develop basic numeracy skills. The second childcare centre was opened late last year and was built with donations from the APHEDA NSW South Coast support group.

In addition, basic services such as water are not available. Because the nearest water pipe is about one kilometre away, children carry water into the dump to sell. IOHSAD and KADAMAY are working with the people on the dumps to campaign for better education and water services.

Your contributions throughout the year have enabled training in hygiene for parents and more medical testing for children, as well as providing a small part-time wage for the teachers working in the two childcare centres.

Children who may otherwise be working on the dumps attend one of two childcare centres where they can begin to learn basic literacy.



Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA is the overseas humanitarian aid arm of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. We assist projects in South East Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East and southern Africa, working through partners to deliver training in vocational skills, health and workers' rights so women and men may have decent work which provides a living wage, reasonable conditions and a safe workplace. Our international program seeks to empower women and men in developing countries so they and their families might live with their human rights respected, both in their workplace and in their society.

Level 3, 377-383 Sussex Street Sydney NSW 2000 t: 02 9264 9343 or 1800 888 674 f: 02 9261 1118 e: office@apheda.org.au

[www.apheda.org.au](http://www.apheda.org.au)

ABN: 76 425 451 089