

Speech Emily Mayo Campaigns Coordinator

Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA

AMWU National Conference

(SLIDE 1)

Acknowledge Traditional Owners - the Gadigal of the Eora Nation – Pay my respect to the elders – past, present and future.

Introduce APHEDA – the global solidarity organisation of the union movement – working across 60 projects and 15 countries. Our work is about Movement building. Union values at the heart of all we do. And more than 80 percent of the money we receive from our members, those who making monthly contributions, goes directly to our local partners, on the ground.

(SLIDE 2)

We are the union movement's humanitarian organisation – We don't outsource our fundraising to corporate organisations who, sometimes, in turn, rip off front-line workers and profit from peoples' good will.

We are very lucky because union members are generous people and we rely on that generosity. We rely on thousands of individual union members who are also APHEDA members, people who make regular monthly contributions to our work – chipping in - making global solidarity a thing you do.

And we rely on the unions, the collectives of members, just like you – the AMWU who support APHEDA projects financially and through actively participating in our work. Here, there and everywhere.

Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA's work really matters.

We matter in Burma where – with recent elections there is once again hope for workers to be able to build democratic unions and social movements which, we all know, form the basic social fabric to stand up for decent working and living standards.

We matter in East Timor where we are supporting farmer cooperatives to build power and capacity so that they can sustain themselves, their families, their communities and protect their land.

We matter in Cambodia where we support sex workers and entertainment workers through their union to have safer work and minimum standards.

We matter in the Pacific where we supporting union building and women's participation and resourcing vocational and skills education programs.

We matter because it's just not right that very few people have so much and so many have so little.

And we matter here, in Australia. Because while ever capital exercises its power globally taking every opportunity to generate more profit – it is workers everywhere who feel the hit.

And in this room we know this all too well. We are in a mighty and unrelenting struggle to stop the off shoring of manufacturing – of YOUR jobs.

The fact is things have still got to be made and as employers slash your jobs here they turn to poorer nations where they can exploit more workers and make more money. It's as simple as that.

We must support workers and communities globally to organise, to lift their wages and conditions, to act collectively. Because it is the right thing to do and because it is in our collective interest.

Speaking of in our collective interest: I am here to talk about one part of APHEDA's work. It's a part of our work you'll all be familiar with. You'll be familiar through this union's proud part in tackling it. You'll be familiar because many of you will know people killed by it.

(SLIDE 3)

And you'll be familiar with it because not a week goes by without another news story about it. Last week, despite asbestos being banned here, illegally imported asbestos building products were found, not by the bosses, but by CFMEU delegates on a construction site in Perth – a children's hospital.

... Our import bans are clearly not being adequately enforced.

... And there'd not be asbestos in the building products if the building products were made here...

As hard as it is to believe people are still profiting from asbestos.

(SLIDE 4)

This is an asbestos waste dump in Indonesia. It's behind an asbestos factory (one of 26 in indo producing roof tiles, building materials and others good with asbestos – largely for the local market). It's right next to a village.

(SLIDE 5)

In Vietnam asbestos rooves line the skies and asbestos waste off cuts are used to separate garden beds.

In Cambodia as development takes off construction workers, many of them women, sweep asbestos dust from work-sites.

In Laos asbestos factories are in operation and the pro-asbestos Industry Lobby has a strong hold – telling people that the asbestos is 'safe'.

And every time another country wins bans the industry up and moves its killer business somewhere else.

(SLIDE 6)

300,000 metric tonnes of raw asbestos is imported to Indonesia each year. Indonesia is the 3rd largest consumer of raw asbestos in the world. Thousands and thousands of people are exposed every day. And while asbestos related disease has been recognised not one single Indonesian doctor has diagnosed an ARD yet. Many people don't know asbestos is harmful and we are a long way from holding people to account.

(SLIDE 7)

50 percent of the raw asbestos mined comes from Russia. And money is made at many points along the supply chains. Some people profit from asbestos and other people die.

(SLIDE 8)

While ever asbestos is used anywhere it's a risk everywhere. It's not just Indonesian factory workers who are at risk – Asbestos is banned here but, despite asbestos import bans – illegally imported asbestos – like that found last week at the children's hospital, is still detected... In worksites, building products, in machine parts, and even children's crayons.

So, this is not JUST a problem in Indonesia, The Mekong – China and India and Brazil and Russia. It's a problem here. It's a problem there.

It's a global problem.

(SLIDE 9)

Video

(SLIDE 10)

We all know what it takes to win.

Strong and actives unions and movements of people fought and won asbestos bans here...

Strong unions will fight to make those bans enforced and to work toward complete eradication.

And strong and active unions and movements of people can fight and win asbestos bans everywhere.

We are supporting worker and community organising and projects in Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos and we are looking to support other groups in other countries working toward bans.

We are linking movements across SE Asia and in November we will support partners to come together for the SE Asia Ban Asbestos organising meeting. Because we know we are stronger together. And together we will say – Asbestos. Not here. Not anywhere.

We invite you to join APHEDA (www.apheda.org.au) – your financial contributions support our partners to further bans country-by-country – but, it's not just money we need – we need to be willing and able to take action – and take on a powerful industry once again - in support of country-by-country and global bans.

We will fight. And we will win. People's lives depend on it.

I invite each of you to join this struggle. If you are already an APHEDA member please see Simon about how you can get active in this work and help us to build global momentum. If you are not an APHEDA member – chip in.

(SLIDE 11)

The Australian union movement stood in solidarity with workers in Vanuatu after the devastation of cyclone Pam. We supported workers to rebuild their housing by providing them with roof sheets.

In the process, the union has now managed to sign up 50 workers in blue scope, which has never been organised before.

And this morning they send this message - to our comrades at CUB.

(SLIDE 12)

Global Solidarity, Global Justice is union business.

Thanks for your time.

For more information contact Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA office@apheda.org.au