

OAJ and Development Cooperation

The Trade Union of Education in Finland OAJ supports the work of teacher unions in the developing countries since the early 1980s. The aim of OAJ is to strengthen the activity and the conditions of work of the teacher unions, in order that they could participate in the developing of education and the improving of teacher status in their countries.

OAJ and Development Cooperation in Africa

Some of the countries in which OAJ supports teacher unions are Namibia, Mali, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Activity is planned and implemented in cooperation with partners in each country. The cooperation includes, among other things, education, training and consultations, and support for the purchase of equipment. The projects are designed to run for several years.

With the help of OAJ, thousands of teachers have received training in union activity. OAJ has also helped the teacher unions to begin to exert their influence in society and in developing educational policy. This has also contributed to creating the necessary conditions for watching over the interests of the teaching professions.

In Namibia, OAJ supports the Martti Ahtisaari School. Naming the school after President Martti Ahtisaari and selecting it for support was OAJ's present for President Ahtisaari on his 60th anniversary.

OAJ's development cooperation and information support projects are mainly funded through project subsidies granted by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to NGOs. The aim of the information support projects is to increase the interest of teachers and schools in development issues.

OAJ is also active in the Finnish UN Association, the Service Centre for Development Co-operation, the section on education of the Finnish National Commission for UNESCO and several other forums for development cooperation.

Education International Encourages Development Cooperation

The global organisation Education International (EI) encourages its members to support teachers and teacher unions in developing countries. The United Nations recommend that countries should allocate 0.7% of their gross domestic product to development co-operation. EI supports this recommendation, exhorting its member organisations also to use 0.7% of their membership revenues to helping the developing countries.

Education International supports the participation of representatives from teacher unions of developing countries in meetings, seminars and training events. EI has regional offices in Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and Latin America. They support the teachers in these regions and work to find partners in industrialised countries for teacher unions in the developing countries. Education International has paid particular attention to the position of women and children in developing countries. OAJ is one of the founders of Education International.

The World Needs Teachers

Good education should be the right of every person all over the world. Education is an investment which has a decisive impact on the economic welfare of citizens and society. Education promotes equality and health, improves the quality of life and reduces poverty.

There are still millions of adults and children in the world with no opportunity of attending school. The UN's Millennium Summit adopted a declaration by which governments and heads of state committed themselves to the goal that all children shall be able to complete basic education by the year 2015. The goal is a challenging one. To reach it, we need both investments in education and skilled teachers.

Quality of Education – A Global Challenge

The provision of education for all by 2015 requires great efforts from the governments. Problems abound. In many countries, measures for reaching the goal have made class sizes even larger than before. Moreover, persons with no education have been engaged as teachers. These voluntary workers are paid a minimum wage or even less. The moving of educated teachers to better-paid jobs and out of their home countries are familiar phenomena even in the developing countries.

One of the starting-points of development co-operation is to help people in their own countries. No country can afford to neglect education. For the quality of education, an educated teacher is the most important factor.