

ESSF's Asia solidarity campaigns: Financial Report for 2017

Monday 12 February 2018, by [ESSE](#), [ROUSSET Pierre](#) (Date first published: 30 January 2018).

An overview of our financial solidarity campaigns in 2017

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Around the world, in different regions, in various countries, authoritarian governments have taken extremely antidemocratic measures to restrict freedom of association. This trend is particularly visible in Asia. In India, for example, the activities of progressive civil society organisations (CSOs) are often denounced as “threats to national security.” In some cases, solidarity funds that they receive from abroad have been blocked, or there is a risk of blockage or confiscation. In Cambodia, a range of CSOs have been closed or suspended. Their activities are subject to extremely intrusive, politically motivated investigations by the authorities. In China, an extensive system of “social control” has been established, in which, for example, most CSOs cannot receive funds from abroad.

This authoritarian global dynamic has led to numerous protests in defence of the freedom of association: ESSF has been part of these campaigns

In 2017 ESSF focused its efforts on the Philippines, where there was a series of humanitarian catastrophes (particularly in the southern island of Mindanao), as well as Pakistan, where the situation was also particularly difficult. We also maintained our support in Bangladesh and Indonesia. For the first time, ESSF sent solidarity funds to China, in collaboration with a new partner based in Hong Kong. ESSF also continued to contribute to the solidarity funds managed by the International Institute of Research and Education (IIRE) network in Amsterdam, Islamabad and Manila.

Permanent solidarity

Because of the catastrophic situation, ESSF operates open-ended solidarity campaigns on Mindanao (Philippines) and Pakistan. Different communities and groups of victims were “targeted” at different moments during 2017. In Mindanao (Philippines) we initially focused on civilians displaced during the battle of Marawi, and later expanded our work to respond to a tropical storm.

As in previous years, we also provided ongoing support to the activities of our Bangladesh partners BKF-BKS-BAS, the feminist association Perempuan Mahardhika in Indonesia and the IIRE solidarity funds.

For all of these initiatives, you can make a donation at any time and we will transfer it to our partners.

Donations that do not specify a beneficiary are put into our solidarity fund. This strategic fund is very important for our work. In 2017 we used these donations for the following activities:

- Immediate response following natural disasters (Philippines, Pakistan). We use the solidarity fund to respond immediately, before targeted donations have arrived.
- To top up targeted solidarity campaigns if targeted donations are insufficient to meet our objectives.
- To ensure long-term support to strategic partners. For example, because our Philippines targeted solidarity campaigns in 2017 all focused on Mindanao, we used the permanent solidarity fund to continue to support the activities of Mibands elsewhere in the Philippines (Ormoc, Leyte).
- To provide essential support in cases where a targeted solidarity campaign is not appropriate or not feasible (for example in 2017 we provided some funding to activities in China and Bangladesh).

Country summaries

We are still finalising our 2017 financial reports with each partner organisation and for each specific campaign. Minor modifications to the following details may be required.

BANGLADESH

Contribution to the costs of district-level meetings organised by the peasant organisations BKF and BKS as well as the indigenous peoples' association BAS.

€5,000 transferred January 4th.

Total for 2017: €5,000

Total Bangladesh (2011-2017): €22,279

CHINA (Including HONG KONG)

In response to the remarkable struggle of Wal-Mart workers in mainland China, we decided to launch a solidarity campaign in cooperation with our Hong Kong-based partner Globalization Monitor, as well as the French labour center Union syndicale Solidaires.

€5,000 transferred January 5th.

€2,000 transferred February 23rd.

Total for 2017: €7,000

Total China including Hong Kong (starting 2017): €7,000

INDONESIA

Library

Contribution to the Indonesian Community Library (ICAL) - a resource centre for social movements. This initiative is led by Maxwell ("Max") Ronald Lane (translator and author specialising in Indonesia).

€400 transferred January 4th.

Support to women workers in an industrial suburb of Jakarta

Since December 2016 ESSF has been providing annual support to Perempuan Mahardhika (Free Women), a solidarity movement focused on women workers in an industrial zone in the north of Jakarta. These workers are protesting sexual violence, and non-recognition of their rights, particularly regarding maternity benefits.

€1,000 transferred 14 December (for technical reasons the payment was re-issued on 11 January 2018, but is considered part of ESSF's activities for 2017).

Total Perempuan Mahardhika (2016-2017): €3,000.

Total Indonesia 2017: €1,400

Total Indonesia (2006-2017): €6,500.

PAKISTAN

Continuing the ESSF support to the activities of the Labour Education Foundation (LEF):

€3,000 transferred April 6th.

€2,000 transferred August 23rd.

€1,000 transferred October 10th.

€2,075 transferred October 19th

Total 2017: €8,025

Total LEF (2005-2017): €52,705

PHILIPPINES

Continuing ESSF support to the victims of humanitarian disasters via the Mihands coalition.

In response to the fast-moving situation in Mindanao, we made some contributions to the central Mihands bank account, some contributions directly to the coalition's member organisations Tripod and RRDRAC, and some contributions via the IIRE-Manila:

€3,000 transferred April 6th (Tripod)

€3,000 transferred May 30th (RRDRAC)

€3,212 transferred June 6th (via IIRE-Manila)

€6,000 transferred June 21st (Mihands)

€1,000 transferred July 20th (Mihands)

€1,000 transferred November 17th (Tripod)

€1,300 transferred December 14th (Mihands)

€2,000 transferred December 21st (Tripod)

These donations were primarily used in Mindanao, to support families (mostly of Moslem origin) who had fled the city of Marawi during five months of combat between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and a jihadist group, as well other civilian groups (particularly indigenous communities) affected by the expanding armed conflict in Mindanao, as well as victims of tropical storm Temblin/Vinta which struck Mindanao on December 23rd. The “Marawi campaign” was done with the Cedetim/Ipam network.

Outside Mindanao, €2,000 were allocated to Mihands activities in Ormoc (Leyte island), one of many localities in central Philippines, which is still recovering after typhoon Haiyan (known as Super Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines), which devastated parts of the central Philippines in 2015.

Total 2017 €20,512

Total Philippines (2007-2016): €75,089,27

IIRE Solidarity funds

IIRE-Amsterdam:

€900 transferred January 30th, 2018 as part of the ESSF 2017 activities.

IIRE-Islamabad:

€360 transferred (in cash) February 18th.

IIRE-Manila:

€3,000 transferred June 6th.

€2.788 transferred July 21st.

Total IIRE 2017: €7,048

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TOTAL TRANSFERRED TO PARTNERS IN 2017: €48,985

Cumulative total transferred to partners (2005-2017): €22,4673.04

Extract from the minutes of the Annual General Meeting of ESSF, February 18th, 2017

The following decisions are made:

1. The work of the association remains entirely based on voluntary work, the search for low-cost solutions and the minimisation of operating costs, to ensure that funds collected by ESSF are genuinely used for solidarity activities.
2. Progress with the ESSF website should be consolidated. The number of visitors continues to increase gradually (more than 2,000 per day at the moment). The English and French sections of the website are used regularly by a very varied readership. ESSF will make efforts to stabilise the team of administrators and strengthen their work. It is recognised that the further development of the site will require considerable efforts.
3. The General Assembly agrees that ESSF will participate in the Intercoll project, [1] cooperation

with the CADTM [2] and IIRE [3], as well as with other movements such as Solidaires [France] and the Fédération de Paris du Secours populaire.

4. Because of the humanitarian situation, as well as the quality of our existing relations with local associations and networks, ESSF will continue its ongoing solidarity work in Philippines, Pakistan, Indonesia and Bangladesh. At this point it is not clear if we will be able to maintain ongoing solidarity work inside China. Our other solidarity initiatives will be on a case-by-case basis.

Joining the Helloasso civil society fundraising network

During 2017, ESSF joined Helloasso, a French crowdfunding platform focused on associations [4]. Donations via this platform have lower transaction costs for ESSF. We present ourselves on the Helloasso site as follows: [5]

ESSF is an association dedicated to international solidarity. The website, in English and French, covers a wider range of issues. ESSF provides activist information on multiple struggles and campaigns, as well as background analysis, opinion and discussion pieces and key documents. The site wishes to be a useful tool for all those who are working for global solidarity.

Since 2005, ESSF has been organising fundraising campaigns for victims of humanitarian disasters in Asia. ESSF supports the engagement of local social movements and civil society groups from the countries concerned. Since 2005, most fundraising has focused on Pakistan, Philippines, Bangladesh and Indonesia, as well as for Japan (after the tsunami and nuclear accident in Fukushima).

The association works exclusively on a voluntary basis. We have no paid staff, which allows us to minimise our management costs, and to transfer virtually all the funds we receive to our local partners. We don't receive any grants. Our work is completely based on individual donations by private citizens.

Together with our Asian partners, we are developing an "aid policy" which links emergency response and long-term solidarity, which supports affected communities in regaining some level of control over their present and their future, and which supports their self-organisation. Our approach avoids the paternalistic relationships which can develop between donors and 'victims'. We base our work on support to local partners, we defend the rights of poor communities in emergency situations, during rehabilitation and reconstruction, following humanitarian disasters of various types.

Pierre Rousset for ESSF

Footnotes

[1] <https://intercoll.net/?lang=en>

[2] <http://www.cadtm.org/English>

[3] <http://www.iire.org/indexfr.html>

[4] <https://www.helloasso.com>

[5] <https://www.helloasso.com/associations/europe-solidaire-sans-frontieres/>