

# Solidarity Center

*Promoting Worker Rights Worldwide*



2008  
Annual  
Report



## Solidarity Center Board of Trustees

### CHAIR

John J. Sweeney  
*President, AFL-CIO*

### VICE-CHAIR

William Lucy  
*Secretary-Treasurer, American Federation of  
State, County and Municipal Employees*

### SECRETARY-TREASURER

Richard L. Trumka  
*Secretary-Treasurer, AFL-CIO*

### MEMBERS

Margaret Blackshere  
*Past President, Illinois AFL-CIO*

R. Thomas Buffenbarger  
*President, International Association of  
Machinists and Aerospace Workers*

Linda Chavez-Thompson  
*Executive Vice President Emerita, AFL-CIO*

Larry Cohen  
*President, Communications Workers of America*

Leo W. Gerard  
*President, United Steel, Paper and Forestry,  
Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied  
Industrial & Service Workers International Union*

Harry G. Kamberis  
*Past Executive Director, Solidarity Center*

Susan J. Schurman  
*Dean, University College Community; Director of  
Lifelong Learning, Division of Continuing Education  
and Outreach; and Professor, School of Management  
and Labor Relations, Rutgers University*

Barbara Shailor  
*Director, AFL-CIO International Department*

Joslyn N. Williams  
*President, Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO*

**The Solidarity Center** is a non-profit organization established to help workers build democratic and independent trade unions around the world. It was created in 1997 as the American Center for International Labor Solidarity through the consolidation of four regional AFL-CIO institutes. Working with unions, non-governmental organizations, and other community partners, the Solidarity Center supports programs and projects to advance worker rights and promote broad-based, sustainable economic development.

The Solidarity Center thanks the leaders and activists from the U.S. and global labor movement whose expertise as trainers and researchers was key to building global labor solidarity in 2007–2008. We also thank the thousands of courageous workers from around the world who risk their lives every day in the struggle for worker rights and social justice.

Solidarity Center programs are supported by the following organizations:

*U.S. Agency for International Development  
National Endowment for Democracy  
U.S. Department of State  
U.S. Department of Labor  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief  
Canadian International Development Agency  
AFL-CIO  
Academy for Educational Development  
Engender Health  
Family Health International  
Humanity United*

© 2008 by the Solidarity Center  
All rights reserved

Editor, Joan Seidman Welsh  
Design, Free Range Studios  
Printing, VMW Printing, Inc.

**FRONT AND BACK COVER PHOTOS:** Former child miners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on their way to school.

All uncredited photos by Solidarity Center and partners.



# Contents

Mission Statement.....	2	Organizing and Bargaining .....	18
Letter from the Executive Director .....	3	Migration and Human Trafficking.....	20
Africa.....	4	HIV/AIDS.....	23
Middle East and North Africa .....	6	Rule of Law .....	25
Europe and Central Asia .....	9	Visitor Programs.....	28
Asia .....	11	Communications.....	30
Americas.....	13	Financials .....	32
Worker Rights .....	16	Where We Work .....	33



## Children of the Mines

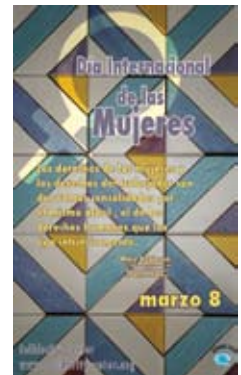
The cover of this year's Annual Report shows a group of happy girls and boys on their way to school in the Katanga Province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Until last year, these children earned their living as miners, like Félie, the boy in the photo on this page. Thanks to a unique partnership between the Solidarity Center and Save the Children, Félie and more than 700 other boys and girls have left the mines and are going to school full-time.

When Solidarity Center Board of Trustees member and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Rich Trumka, a former mineworker himself, heard about Félie and the thousands of children like him, he recognized the need to act:

"When you look at the eyes of these children, they have all the life plucked out of them—none of the sparkle and excitement that you normally see in children as they play and anticipate all the joys of life. They should be learning to read and think, stretching their minds and not their backs. If we can stop just one child from meeting this fate, it is worth the struggle."

Our heartfelt thanks go out to Trumka and others for giving these children the gift of joy and excitement—so evident in their eyes—through generous contributions to our Send a Child to School Campaign. To find out more about this unique program, visit [www.solidaritycenter.org](http://www.solidaritycenter.org). Together we can stop the cycle of poverty that for so long has deprived children like Félie.

**The Solidarity Center's** mission is to help build a global labor movement by strengthening the economic and political power of workers around the world through effective, independent, and democratic unions.





# Letter from the Executive Director



*"The real importance of the Human Rights Commission ... lies in the fact that throughout the world there are many people who do not enjoy the basic rights which have come to be accepted in many other parts of the world as inherent rights of all individuals, without which no one can live in dignity and freedom."*

So begins Eleanor Roosevelt in "The Promise of Human Rights," as it appeared 60 years ago in *Foreign Affairs* magazine. Mrs. Roosevelt was the founder and chair of the committee that crafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in the autumn of 1948.

As trade unionists we frequently and rightly avow that trade union rights are human rights. Today, 60 years on, the Solidarity Center continually reaffirms our belief in these principles through the support we give, as representatives of the U.S. labor movement, to promoting worker rights around the world. During the past 12 months I have had the privilege of visiting 14 countries where the Solidarity Center maintains offices and another seven in which we have partners or conduct programs. At the close of each of these journeys I attempt to reflect on what I have learned, the experiences I have had, and the struggles I have witnessed in the pursuit of these rights.

In Thailand, Cambodia, Jordan, and Pakistan I talked with workers whose hope for a better standard of life lies in having to migrate to another country for the purpose of work (Article 23). In Ukraine, Colombia, and Guatemala I met with labor leaders who are fighting every day for "the right to life, liberty and security of person" (Article 3). In Kenya, Mexico, and Bangladesh I visited with Solidarity Center partners determinedly fighting against child

labor and for the right to education (Article 26). And in all of these countries I met with union members who, at risk to themselves and their families, insist on upholding their right to freedom of association (Articles 20 and 23). Each of these workers and leaders exemplifies the words of Eleanor Roosevelt when she said, "My voice will not be silent."

It is through their perseverance and dedication to this code that the remarkable staff of the Solidarity Center in Washington and in our 27 field offices around the world obtain our greatest inspiration. The example of these brave individuals in their pursuit of trade union rights as human rights makes each of us desire to contribute in our own way toward making a different future—a future that allows workers the right to safely and freely choose their workplace and disallows discrimination in that same workplace; that recognizes unions in all sectors as positively contributing to the social and economic fabric; that accepts the value of the decent work agenda; and that acknowledges the importance of labor in sustainable development.

The Solidarity Center looks forward to working with the global labor movement and trade unions around the world toward this future and the understanding that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Ellie Larson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ellie" and last name "Larson" clearly distinguishable.

Ellie Larson  
Executive Director



# Africa

## DRC: Keeping Children Out of the Mines

Over the past year, a unique Solidarity Center partnership with Save the Children has enabled more than 700 boys and girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Katanga province to leave jobs in the mines and attend school full-time so that they can have a chance for a better life.

"We are working with schools, communities, and local and national governments," says Solidarity Center Program Officer Sonia Mistry. "In exchange for tuition forgiveness, we can help rebuild schools, add classrooms, and buy tables and chairs. For older children, we plan to offer accelerated learning courses and vocational training. We provide school supplies and uniforms to all the kids we work with to ensure that these costs do not prevent them from attending school."

Twelve-year-old Félie is one of these children. When Mistry met Félie in July 2007, he was a mineworker in the town of Kolwezi. All day long, he

hauled heavy bags of rock and dirt from a cobalt drop-off site to a water-filled pit—actually an abandoned industrial site—100 feet away, where others sifted the content through the contaminated water to find the precious ore. The bags were so heavy that it took two adult men to load them onto his back. The path was slippery with mud, and he had to be careful not to lose his footing and fall. On a good day, Félie made about \$4 for this hard, dangerous work. On a bad day, he made nothing at all.

"The other kids who do not work in the mines say that they are better off," Félie told Mistry. "When that happens, I feel shame."

Félie is one of the lucky ones, for he has escaped the life of the mines. Thousands of other children in Kolwezi still must work to support their families, put food on the table, and buy other necessities. Without an education, these children will probably spend their whole lives in the mines like their parents before them.

"With this program, we can make sure that children stay in school and have no need to go back to the mines," said Mistry. "Our goal is to send 4,000 children to school over the program's three-year span. For under \$20, we can buy a school kit that includes uniforms, books, and supplies. And \$30 will send a child to school full-time for an entire year."



## Unions Work to Mitigate Effects of Post-Election Violence in Kenya

In January 2008, violence due to post-election clashes between supporters of President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga killed more than 1,000 Kenyans, drove hundreds of thousands from their homes, and uprooted communities. Many felt they had to make a terrible choice—leave their homes and jobs or stay and risk being killed by marauding gangs.

“Life is more important than work,” said a worker in Kenya’s cut-flower industry who had taken refuge at a local prison and hoped to return to his village. “If I stay here because I want to go to work at a flower farm, maybe the next day I will be hacked to death.”

As the economy shattered, more than 500,000 formal sector workers lost jobs and benefits. The Solidarity Center and its union partners were on the ground in the most devastated areas to provide aid and relief. We also launched a relief fund to help pay workers’ wages, buy needed food and medical supplies, and shelter the homeless.



**OPPOSITE:** The school has no furniture or electricity. Students sit on rocks, relying for light from chinks in the wall. School kits supplied by the Solidarity Center. **TOP:** Residents of Nairobi flee the city during the post-election violence. © Julius Mwelu/IRIN. **MIDDLE:** FAWUL President Austin Natee (left) and Secretary General Edwin Cisco (right) raise their hands in solidarity with AFL-CIO President and Solidarity Center Board of Trustees Chairman John Sweeney and USW President and Solidarity Center Trustee Leo Gerard at the George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award event. **BOTTOM:** Nearly 15,000 workers have joined the Nigerian hotel and service workers union since a radical change in the union’s organizing approach.

## Liberian Rubber Workers Receive AFL-CIO’s Human Rights Award

In recognition of the extraordinary courage, strength, and solidarity of Liberian rubber workers, the Firestone Agricultural Workers Union of Liberia received the AFL-CIO’s 2007 George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award, given annually to an individual or group fighting on the front lines for the rights of working women and men. The Solidarity Center and the United Steelworkers of America have supported FAWUL since 2005, when the election of Liberia’s first democratic government in 14 years created the political space for workers to raise their voices about abuses on the vast rubber plantation: unpaid wages, impossibly high production quotas that forced children to work alongside parents, and dangerous health and safety conditions. USW and the Solidarity Center offered union skills training and solidarity during strikes that eventually led to the first free and fair union election in company history on July 7, 2007.

“If we join hands, once we are together, we can move mountains,” said FAWUL President Austin Natee in accepting the award.



## Thousands of Nigerian Service Workers Join Union

Nearly 15,000 workers have joined the National Union of Hotel and Personal Service Workers in Nigeria since a 2006 training session by the AFL-CIO’s Organizing Institute radically changed the union’s organizing approach. Instead of requesting managers’ permission to talk to workers, as they did for years under the traditional model, union organizing committee members now visit workers one-on-one in their homes and communities, where they can freely discuss issues and concerns.

“We started meeting with workers at post offices, bus stops, markets, and their homes,” said Josiah Anolaba, lead organizer with NUHPSW. “When we visit workers on their own turf, we find that they are more willing to talk to us and more likely to express details.”

In the past year, NUHPSW has organized more than 3,000 workers in 30-40 hotels nationwide—10 in Abuja alone—as well as 6,000 private security workers. Total union membership has risen 55 percent.



## Middle East and North Africa

### Study Circles: Empowering Union Women in Jordan

Making the leap from education to coordinated, strategic, and change-inducing action is one of the great challenges of social movements. The Solidarity Center's Women's Regional Empowerment Network program in Jordan is specifically structured to meet that challenge. A key program component is the network of study circles, each facilitated by an activist in the program. Study circles not only serve as a training ground for educators, but also create a safe and democratic space where workers can analyze, debate, and strategize about the problems they face and their vision for the future.

In 2007, WREN supported study circles for the Land Transport Union. Participants discussed core worker issues and analyzed problems they foresaw in Jordan's proposed new Traffic Law.

With assistance from the Solidarity Center, the trainer who had facilitated the study circle designed and conducted a survey for members of her union. By documenting members' concerns, she developed a useful resource for union leaders to use in advocacy with the government. The study circle activities mobilized LTU leaders to send a letter to the Prime Minister requesting that he review the new law. The union also sent copies of the letter to newspapers. When the head of Traffic Management understood the union's position, he promised to help get the law reviewed. The union's concerns were subsequently forwarded to the new Jordanian Parliament for action. The activist so impressed her own union that she was hired as a trainer for the union's traffic education institute.

"With the support of their union leaders, WREN activists are becoming an energetic force for positive change," said Mary Ann Forbes, Solidarity Center Country Program Director in Jordan. "They are breaking new ground for workers in public policy debates, and with their unions they bring worker voices to the halls of government in new and effective ways."



## Moroccan Workers: On the Frontline of the Global Economy

In the coastal city of Agadir, Morocco, which draws royalty from around the world to its magnificent hotels and beautiful harbor, workers in export industries live in slums clustered around sardine factories and in barracks built on industrial farms. In 2008, the Solidarity Center launched an economic education for action program in partnership with the Democratic Labor Confederation (CDT), which represents workers from the fish processing and agro-export industries. These mostly female and young workers are on the frontline of the global economy, producing food for European and international markets and amassing profits for Moroccan and international owners.

Solidarity Center staff met with workers and learned about their struggles with poverty-level wages, a widespread culture of corporate and government anti-unionism, and abysmal working conditions. Workers described many problems: moving regularly from 100-degree-plus greenhouses to refrigerated storage areas; exposure to harsh and poisonous chemicals that burned their skin and filled their lungs; unpaid and illegal overtime hours; unjust and illegal firings; psychological and physical stress; poor sanitary conditions; and cuts and abrasions from fish parts, sharp metal cans, knives, and machines.

"This is the first time that 'experts' have come to the union and listened to what workers have to say," said a worker who participated in one such meeting. The Solidarity Center/CDT program



will continue in 2009 with a targeted group of 30 workers using popular education techniques, targeted thematic workshops, study circles, and other creative strategies in a unique effort to help workers analyze their role in the global economy and develop ways to strengthen worker rights.

## Building Solidarity with Algerian Petrochemical Workers

Algeria's state-owned petrochemical enterprise, Sonatrach, is among the most profitable companies in Africa. It employs close to 160,000 oil, chemical, and gas workers, 80 percent of them union members. Its operating equipment is state-of-the-art, but its labor practices lag far behind.

In January 2008, two health and safety experts from the United Steelworkers of America traveled to Algeria to conduct training and build relations with the new leaders of the National Federation of Petroleum, Gas, and Chemical Workers (FNTPGC). "Our participation in this program reflects the USW's belief that trade unions must act in solidarity with one another if they are to forge gains for worker rights in the global economy," said USW trainer Kim Nibarger, who was making his second such trip to Algeria. Nibarger and his training partner, Duronda Pope, first had workers describe some of their key concerns. High among them was stress due to putting in months-long stints "on base" thousands of miles from home for years on end. Physical issues included broken bones; gastric, skin, respiratory, and musculoskeletal problems; lacerations of the limbs; burns; and hearing difficulties. Workers knew little about the chemicals and solvents they worked with and had no idea how to protect themselves. The industry does not have a good track record on reducing hazards at work.

A workplace-mapping exercise enabled participants to identify and categorize hazards, link them to physical and psychological symptoms, and analyze their im-



**OPPOSITE:** Jordanian and migrant workers participating in a study circle identify and analyze their concerns. **TOP:** A woman and her children who live in the slums of Agadir near a cannery warily watch investigators. **BOTTOM:** Algerian oil and gas union members with the U.S. delegation. Back row center is Kim Nibarger; directly in front of him are Duronda Pope and Solidarity Center Country Program Director for the Arab Maghreb, Lorraine Clewer.

pact on social and community life. Participants developed concrete proposals for improving daily work conditions. Union leaders and members praised the USW methodology, noting that the program generated hope among petrochemical workers about their power to bring about positive change.

FNTPGC leaders and members welcomed the USW team with open arms as fellow workers. “My life will not be the same because of my wonderful experience, not only with the citizens of Algeria, but also with my union brothers and sisters,” said Pope.

## New Alliance for Iraqi Oil and Transport Workers

In today’s Iraq, oil is a major revenue resource, but the Iraqi government is engaging in a systematic campaign to crush the emerging power of oil and port worker unions. In March 2008, Iraqi workers joined hands to form a strategic alliance between the workers who produce oil and those who transport it. Together, they plan to confront an increasingly hostile Iraqi government crackdown on trade union organizing in their sectors. Backed by the International Transport Federation and the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers’ Unions and their Iraqi union affiliates, and with support from the Solidarity Center, this new alliance will draw on workplace organizing and joint policy initiatives that will give Iraqi trade unionists unique access to industry-specific conflict resolution and global bargaining models. By building worker solidarity, it aims to counter anti-union laws and restore trade union rights. “We feel that this alliance is necessary,” said an oil worker at the first strategy session, “to show employers the real strength of workers and their ability to affect global production chains.”



**LEFT:** Iraqi oil workers have formed a Wellhead to Wheel strategic alliance. Photo by David Bacon. **OPPOSITE:** Women pick cotton in Tajikistan. © Clive Shirley/GlobalAware.





## Europe and Central Asia

### Documenting Migrant Worker Rights Abuses in Central Asia

“Mamad” boards a train in Dushanbe, the ragged capital of Tajikistan. He shares a cramped, fetid cabin with dozens of workers. They are bound for Russia, desperate to escape joblessness and poverty in their Central Asian countries. The train heads north through Uzbekistan. At the Kazakhstan border, the train crew marches through the car, demanding a bribe from every man and woman to keep local police from coming on board and harassing individual passengers. Mamad and the others pay up; if they refuse, they could be thrown off the train. Two days later, they reach the Russian frontier. There, border police sweep aside the railway crew and climb aboard. They, too, extort money, threatening to withhold passengers’ passports and send them back to Central Asia. As at the Kazakh border, Mamad and the others pay up.

This scenario is common in Central Asia. Each year, an estimated one million Tajiks, 600,000 Uzbeks, and 800,000 Kyrgyzs leave their countries in search of work. Most migrate to Russia. From the very start of their journey, they are vulnerable to exploitation. At home they are prey to customs officers, border guards, and police, as well as dishonest recruitment and travel agencies. In Russia and Kazakhstan, criminal commercial enterprises offer to help migrants obtain work permits. Unfamiliar with local laws and unable to speak Russian, the workers fall into a human trafficking trap. Once a migrant worker turns over his or her passport

to these “intermediaries,” the worker becomes a virtual slave. Sometimes workers are taken off the train they are riding and held hostage, forced to work months for no pay, and then sent back home empty-handed.

But Mamad is not a migrant worker. He is a human rights lawyer, sent by the Solidarity Center from Dushanbe to the Russian city of Yekaterinburg in order to observe and document the migration process firsthand. The study Mamad produced from his experience was used as a basis for pre-departure training modules for Central Asian migrant workers and helped establish links with Russian unions and community organizations aimed at educating and protecting migrant workers.

“Some of the most extreme forms of forced labor, xenophobia, and violence are directed against men and women who are just trying to feed their families,” says Mamad, whose real name has been withheld for his protection. “In a growing number of countries worldwide, including Russia, improving the treatment of migrant workers is key to addressing these human rights violations.”

## Georgian Teachers to the Rescue

When the Russian army invaded Georgia last August, teachers and their families began streaming by the hundreds every day into the capital city of Tbilisi. They told Solidarity Center Country Program Director Bob Fielding how they had been bombed and shelled out of their homes or forced to leave at gunpoint. Their meager belongings had been stolen, their homes burned to the ground. Most had fled into the forests, trying to make their way under cover of night into Georgian-controlled territory. Traveling in any kind of motor vehicle was too dangerous, so they walked dozens of miles in blistering heat. The only place they knew to go for help was the 125,000-member Educators and Sciences Free Trade Union of Georgia, a longtime ally and partner of the Solidarity Center and the American Federation of Teachers. ESFTUG members collected bedding, clothes, medicine, and food and delivered them to nearly 44,000 teachers and their families who had taken refuge in school buildings around the country. Many buildings had no running water, no functioning bathrooms, and no electricity.

“ESFTUG members got to work right away helping school principals fix the worst of the emergency accommodations,”



says Fielding. “[ESFTUG President] Manana Gurchumalidze had a list of all 205 school buildings being used as shelters to make sure that children, infants, and pregnant women got special attention. The union also ran children’s camps so that kids could not only play outdoors but also receive psychological counseling to heal their emotional scars.”



**TOP:** A high school gymnasium locker room provides limited shelter for three generations of Georgian refugees. © UNHCR/Y. Mechitov. **BOTTOM:** Ukrainian union youth leader Oksana Shevchuk knows how important it is to involve the next generation of union activists. **OPPOSITE:** Indonesian labor leaders Ari Munanto (left) and Ridwan Monoarfa (right) visit the Northern Virginia Central Labor Council office during their U.S. visit.

## Building the Next Generation of Ukrainian Union Activists

Oksana Shevchuk works at the Kyiv headquarters of the 270,000-member Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine. She is also a youth leader who is very aware of the challenges of engaging young people in the union movement.

“In Ukraine, after the Orange Revolution, young people were very active,” Shevchuk says. “People were ready to do anything because they felt they could win. Now, though, we are in a more silent time. If people have a small business, a job, they are afraid to lose it if they speak up about injustices.”

As a leader of the CFTUU Youth Committee, Shevchuk knows how important it is to build the next generation of Ukrainian trade union activists who will fight for worker rights. The Solidarity Center supports the CFTUU, which recently began publishing a monthly online newsletter.

“One of the problems among Ukrainian young people is the lack of knowledge about unions and about the new Confederation,” says Shevchuk. “The newsletter is a good way to keep all members informed about Ukrainian workers’ concerns.”





## Asia

### Indonesian Union Leaders Take Political Involvement Local

Nearly ten years of Solidarity Center union democracy programs in Indonesia are paying off, in ways that U.S. unions might recognize. In 1999, Indonesia held its first free and fair election in a generation, and the Solidarity Center helped with long-term election monitoring and voter education. In 2000 and 2001 the Solidarity Center trained trade unionists how to lobby their new parliament. Now Indonesian unions are taking the program local. In cooperation with the Solidarity Center, unions across the archipelago are using focus groups, strategic planning workshops, leadership training for local union leaders, advocacy seminars, media training, membership meetings, and town hall sessions with politicians as tools for addressing workers' real issues.

"We met with regional assembly members and school principals," says Ari Munanto, Vice Chairman of the National Workers Union in Semarang, central Java. "As a result, the government issued a decree that no other additional costs would be added to public education. Now

workers are free of any extra fees. The effects of this advocacy are good not just for workers, but for the entire community. Community leaders respect our union and consult with us regularly on matters of public interest."

The upcoming 2009 general elections in Indonesia present opportunities for unions to gain greater access and leverage with legislators. To offer insight into how U.S. unions contribute to the electoral process, the Solidarity Center brought a group of Indonesian labor leaders to the United States in the runup to the November 2008 elections. On the delegation were Munanto; Ridwan Monoarfa, Vice President of the Indonesian Metal Workers Federation; and Mustiyah, Secretary of the Chemical, Energy, Mine, Oil and Gas, and General Workers local union in Depok, a suburb of Jakarta. "The Solidarity Center gave us a new perspective on our labor movement in Indonesia," says Monoarfa. "Union members in the United States have a high level of political consciousness. We see this as bringing about a broader labor movement, more than just worker-employer relations."



## A Strong Voice for Cambodian Garment Workers

Meas Morokot has supported her family of nine siblings since she was 17. She worked first as a brick maker and then for seven years in a dangerous woodworking plant. Now 35 years old, with three children of her own, she works in a garment factory. When she started at the factory in 1999, workplace conditions were very poor. The owner regularly violated the labor law, forced employees to work extensive overtime, and fired workers for being sick. When workers formed a union, he refused to negotiate, fired union members, and used bribes and threats to keep workers from joining the union.

Stories like Morokot's are all too common. Deeply affected by years of destitution, civil war, and economic deprivation, Cambodia remains poor, and its workers struggle for social justice. Between 1999 and 2005, Cambodian garment unions worked under the umbrella of a unique trade agreement between the U.S. and Cambodian governments that linked increased access to the U.S. market to greater respect for worker rights. The Solidarity Center, along with the AFL-CIO and the U.S. garment union UNITE, played a key role in drafting the agreement. As a result, nearly half the estimated 300,000 workers in the garment and footwear industry belong to a union. Their challenge now is to negotiate collective bargaining agreements.

Morokot's story has a happy ending. With Solidarity Center assistance the workers at Morokot's factory remained strong throughout a lengthy struggle. Eventually, the employer recognized the union and began to negotiate. Today, workers receive three months of maternity leave with 50 percent pay and are no longer forced to work overtime. A labor-management committee meets regularly to address workplace issues. Morokot has risen from president of her local union to vice president of the Democratic Independent Solidarity Union Federation, secretary of the Cambodian Women's Movement Organization, and mayor of her community. She also is working as a union educator, training others to become union leaders and activists.

## Pakistani Unions: Ensuring Worker Rights in New Democracy

In March 2008, democratic elections in Pakistan ended military strongman Pervez Musharraf's nearly nine-year rule. The new government faces a country in turmoil. Hyperinflation, power shortages, and fuel and electricity costs are on the rise. Violence against women is increasing, child rights are continually violated, and the War on Terror is escalating. Discontent and despair are reflected in riots, suicides, and industrial disruption.

Amid this chaos, the Pakistan Workers Federation is a key voice for workers. The largest labor federation in the country, PWF represents 800,000 workers and 60 percent of organized labor. Before the elections, the Solidarity Center, with assistance from its partner, the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, brought together PWF leaders and representatives from all major political parties to discuss labor issues. This interaction produced a comparison of party positions on worker, women's, and child rights as well as a comprehensive Labor Manifesto developed by the PWF and distributed to unions, politicians, and government agencies. Now the PWF is holding candidates to their promises and pushing for badly needed labor law reform.



**TOP:** Garment worker and civic leader Meas Morokot. **BOTTOM:** A Pakistani worker measures and cuts fabric. **OPPOSITE:** Colombian human rights attorney Yessika Hoyos, daughter of a slain labor leader, tells her story to delegation member Tim Baker. Photo by Bill Camp.





## Americas

### **U.S. Trade Unionists Meet Worker Rights Champions in Colombia**

Since 1986, some 2,500 labor activists have been murdered in Colombia, but only 82 convictions have taken place. Yessika Hoyos should know. In 2001, her father, Dario Hoyos, was gunned down by two assassins.

In July 2008, as part of a six-member labor delegation, Florida State AFL-CIO Vice President Mike Williams made a ten-day visit to Colombia and met with Hoyos, now a 23-year-old human rights attorney. The purpose of the Solidarity Center sponsored exchange was to build a greater understanding of the struggles Colombian workers face in their daily lives.

“Yessika told me all about her father,” said Williams. “He was the leader of a mineworkers union in his hometown of Fusagasuga. After his murder, she founded a group called Daughters and Sons for Memory and Against Impunity. It started with a few young men and women who had lost parents in Colombia’s ongoing conflicts.

They recruited others, with the idea that all Colombia’s youth are sons and daughters of the martyred. Now there are about 600 members. Their goals are to change the culture of accepted violence by preserving the victims’ memory, not allowing the crimes to be forgotten, and seeking prosecution of the perpetrators. Our delegation was so moved by her story that we decided to form our own group in support. We call ourselves the Sisters and Brothers of the Daughters and Sons.”

Since his return to the United States, Williams and his fellow travelers, all union activists and leaders, have told audience after audience about Colombian workers’ constant struggle for social and economic justice—and why U.S workers need to hear their story.

“It is hard to explain the unsettling conditions in which these workers live and work, while at the same time living life with dignity and with an air of confidence,” Williams wrote in a daily journal that he kept during his trip. “Relentless intimidation, threats, and violence are used in attempts to eliminate the perseverance that is critical to those striving for worker rights. I am learning that in Colombia, every gain for worker rights is not achieved without the payment of the ultimate price. The solidarity and courage of the workers are incredible.”



## Mexican Mineworkers Change a Community

Over the last ten years, a Canadian-owned mine has purchased most of the land in Carrizalillo, located in the Mexican state of Guerrero, transforming it from a centuries-old network of communally owned farms into a vast mining operation that has leached millions of gallons of pollutants into the ground. In 2007, residents sought legal advice from the Economic, Cultural, and Social Rights Project (PRODESC), a Solidarity Center partner. As PRODESC activists worked with community members around land rights and environmental impact issues, they heard complaints from men and women who had been hired to work in the mine: low wages, dangerous conditions, failure to compensate for disabilities resulting from work accidents, mistreatment by managers, and additional, unpaid tasks such as food preparation assigned to women workers. The workers elected a negotiating committee of leaders where women played an important role in ensuring that the interests of the entire workforce were reflected. Through a combined union and community organizing strategy, Carrizalillo's residents gained significant concessions from the mining company, including community development projects, a profit-sharing plan, and compensation for environmental damage. The mineworkers won a collective bargaining agreement that provided substantial wage hikes and better working conditions.

PRODESC's intensive training and constant presence were essential to the success of the worker-community coalition. The workers' victory has affected the entire community. Democratic and participatory union practices have brought broader recognition of the value of collective efforts for change. Safer and fairly paid jobs have strengthened workers' ties to their homes and their local economy, alleviating the push to migrate in search of better opportunities. PRODESC is now working with mining communities in three other states that face similar challenges.



## Outreach to Farm Workers in Honduras

The cultivation of melons, sugar cane, okra, and other agricultural products for export is a key element of the national economy in Honduras. Violations of health and safety standards and child labor laws are increasing on the farms and processing facilities in the southern part of the country, where these products are grown. With the support of the Solidarity Center, COSIBAH, an organization of agricultural workers' unions, has launched an innovative outreach program for farm workers. Each month, trainers visit the farms to provide information on basic worker rights, labor law, and leadership skills. Over the past year, the COSIBAH program has reached hundreds of workers, and many are beginning to speak out for their rights. More than 300 workers at the Finca Santa Rosa melon farm, at an impasse in their efforts to encourage their employer to comply with the law, engaged in a ten-day strike to demand the legal daily minimum wage of 122 lempiras, about \$6.45. Prior to the strike they received less than half that. While the workers reached a temporary agreement with the employer, they insist that they want justice, not only a wage increase.

Through their workplace level education activities, COSIBAH and the farm worker activists from Finca Santa Rosa are paving the way for decent wages and better working conditions. Their actions have increased recognition of fundamental worker rights for Honduras's traditionally invisible rural workers.



**OPPOSITE:** After their successful organizing campaign, workers at the Carrizalillo mine debate a contract offer from their employer. **TOP:** Farm workers in Honduras are exerting their rights on the job thanks to an innovative union outreach program. © alimdi.net, photographersdirect.com. **BOTTOM:** Rubber tappers work on a remote plantation in the Amazonian rainforest. © J.R.Ripper / BrazilPhotos.com, photographersdirect.com.

## Brazil: Defending Worker Rights at the Beginning of the Supply Chain

In Brazil, multinational corporations operate in vast, isolated regions where development, democratic unions, and the rule of law are less advanced than they are in other parts of the country. As part of a two-year project, the Solidarity Center partnered with the Social Observatory Institute (SOI) along with national union centers CUT, Força Sindical, and UGT, their state-level federations, and their local unions in the Amazonian state of Pará to use International Labor Organization standards as a tool for defending worker rights. Pará is the first link in the supply chain for several strategic industries, exporting steel and aluminum to the United States, Europe, and China for use in automobiles and other types of heavy machinery. It is also the state with the highest level of forced labor in Brazil. On the basis of strategic relevance and gravity of worker rights violations in the area, the SOI designed a program to study and analyze the behavior of corporations in relation to workers' fundamental rights under ILO conventions, with the goal of establishing dialogue between unions, consumers, and companies. Workplace leaders were trained to identify violations in the areas of organizing and bargaining, workplace discrimination, child labor, and forced labor. The Solidarity Center and its partners plan to present their results at the January 2009 World Social Forum, to be held in Belem, Pará's capital.



## Worker Rights

---

### **Wellington Chibebe: A Voice for Worker Rights in Zimbabwe**

As the face of the labor movement in Zimbabwe, Wellington Chibebe has worked tirelessly to bring attention to Zimbabwe's worsening economic and human rights realities while pressuring the government for reform. Chibebe is Secretary-General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, which represents 300,000 members in 35 affiliates. As workers struggle to survive deep poverty, inflation rates of more than 200 million percent and rising, and violence directed against those who would speak out for their rights, the ZCTU represents all workers in their struggle for economic and social justice.

The Solidarity Center provides administrative support for the ZCTU's work in the informal sector and through its union newspaper, *The Worker*. In addition, we support the activities of the Labour and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe, LEDRIZ, established by the ZCTU as part of the Global Union Research

Network. Most important, we prepare and conduct strategic exchange programs that link union members in the United States with their brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe.

Chibebe's outspokenness on behalf of Zimbabwe's workers has led the government there to arrest him nine times in the last five years, most recently in May 2008, when he and ZCTU President Lovemore Motombo were detained by Harare police for questioning in connection with speeches they made on May 1, International Labor Day. Charged with "inciting the public to rise against the government and communicating falsehoods," Chibebe was shackled, held in solitary confinement, and subjected to long interrogations, starvation, and physical abuse. After numerous postponements, his case still awaits trial.

Chibebe has earned much recognition for his dedication to promoting worker rights. In 2003 he received the AFL-CIO's George Meany-Lane Kirkland Award for Human Rights, and in August 2008 he traveled to the United States to accept the A. Philip Randolph Institute's inaugural Norman Hill Human Rights Award. "Union membership has been decimated by the combination of a collapsing economy and widespread attacks by the government," he said. "Luckily for the trade union movement in Zimbabwe, we are part of a global family."



## World Day for Decent Work

Every man and woman is entitled to have a job that enables them to meet basic needs and provide for their families. This is the premise of the International Trade Union Confederation's Decent Work campaign. On October 7, 2008, the global labor movement observed the first World Day for Decent Work, initiated by the ITUC to focus attention on global solidarity and joint action among workers the world over. Solidarity Center partners worldwide participated in a range of activities centered on three themes: rights at work, solidarity, and ending poverty and inequality. In Kuala Lumpur, affiliates of the Malaysian Trades Union Congress rallied thousands of members to protest government policies that promote unfair and unethical exploitation of workers through outsourcing, contracting, and working conditions akin to forced labor. "These measures are deliberately implemented by the government in order to suppress wages and deny social safety nets, which are essential requirements to ensure decent work," says MTUC spokesperson Parimala Moses. "We join hands in solidarity with millions of workers across the globe."



## In Palestine, Job Creation with Respect for Worker Rights

Until now, job creation programs aimed at alleviating high unemployment and rising poverty in Palestine have been flawed. Employment under these programs has been temporary with low wages and benefits. These factors have prevented workers from organizing and promoting their interests. In 2008, the Solidarity Center worked with the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions to develop policies for future job creation programs that promote worker rights and sustainable jobs. The Solidarity Center helped train a five-member PGFTU team to work with the PGFTU executive board on drafting policies and presenting them to PGFTU sectors and locals. These groups discussed the policies and gave recommendations, which were adopted and ratified by the sector unions and the PGFTU.

Working with the Solidarity Center, the five-member team presented the policies to workers, civil society organizations, and government agencies, including the Palestinian National Authority. The PNA Labor Minister and many NGOs responded positively about working with the PGFTU to implement these policies in future programs. The long-term goal of this ongoing program is not only to create sustainable jobs, but also to ensure that workers' fundamental rights are respected.



**OPPOSITE:** Zimbabwean labor leader Wellington Chibebe (left) with Norman Hill, President Emeritus of the A. Philip Randolph Institute.  
**TOP:** Malaysian cement workers pave sidewalks in Kuala Lumpur, where construction jobs are often contracted out at low wages. © Tengku Mohd Yusof Su Photography, photographersdirect.com.  
**BOTTOM:** Palestinian union members march in the first World Day for Decent Work rally, October 7, 2008.



# Organizing and Bargaining

## East African Journalists Organize Against Brutal Media Repression

East Africa is a dangerous place to be a journalist. The tragic story of Nasteh Dahir Farah, a reporter for the BBC Somali Service and Reuters, and vice president of the National Union of Somali Journalists, illustrates this stark reality. While working to get death benefits paid to the family of a murdered member of his union, Farah himself was shot to death in front of his home and his pregnant wife. In a cruel twist of fate, his own widow and two children were left destitute after his employer denied full death benefits. The family was forced to flee the country for their own safety.

Executive Director Ellie Larson called Nasteh's murder "an indication of just how threatening advocates for the free trade union movement

are to authoritarian institutions." She went on, "When that advocate is a journalist, he or she is the voice for thousands who are repressed. That journalist has the power of words—words that tell the story for workers all over the world."

Similar stories can be found throughout the Horn of Africa. In a dynamic show of solidarity, journalists from nine East African countries joined to form the Eastern Africa Journalists Association. From a position of collaborative strength, EAJA can implement important organizing initiatives throughout the region. In 2008, the Solidarity Center's partnership with EAJA helped EAJA leaders develop a strategic vision, create a network connecting women journalists, and conduct workshops on freedom of association, collective bargaining, and strategic organizing. In 2009, the Solidarity Center will support EAJA's first-ever regional organizing drive.



## Going Global: Organizing, Recognition, and Union Rights

As employers and governments continue to undermine workers' efforts to form and join unions, union membership is dropping worldwide. On December 10 and 11, 2007, the Solidarity Center participated in a historic global organizing summit that brought together labor leaders from the United States and around the world. The two-day summit, held in conjunction with International Human Rights Day, was sponsored by the Council of Global Unions and hosted by the AFL-CIO at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, Maryland. A special panel discussion on Capitol Hill, led by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, gave members of Congress an opportunity to offer input.

"In an age of rampant global corporate outlaws, the world's workers must forge new alliances to defend their democratic freedom to come together in unions to improve their lives," said AFL-CIO President and Solidarity Center Board of Trustees Chairman John Sweeney. "When workers are free to exercise their right to bargain collectively, everyone benefits. Wages increase, inequality decreases, and democracy is strengthened. And when workers' freedom to form unions is thwarted, standards of living plummet."



**OPPOSITE:** EAJA Vice-President Tervil Okoko displays a campaign plan at a strategic organizing workshop. **TOP:** AFL-CIO President and Solidarity Center Board of Trustees Chair John Sweeney addresses global organizing summit participants. Looking on are Communications Workers of America President and Solidarity Center Trustee Larry Cohen (left) and Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.). Photo by Bill Burke, Page One Photography. **BOTTOM:** South African telecom workers march for decent jobs during an organizing campaign.

## African Telecom Unions Build Bargaining Strength

Across the African continent, the telecommunications industry is changing at breakneck speed. Massive privatization, policy changes, and job restructuring have created an uncertain and often tumultuous economic and political environment in countries where governments historically could not or would not intervene on behalf of workers. As a result, unions must constantly find new ways to represent their members and enforce collective bargaining agreements.

In 2008, the Solidarity Center continued its work to develop the organizing capacity of telecommunications unions in Kenya and South Africa. In partnership with the global union federation Union Network International and the Communications Workers of America, the Solidarity Center provides the Communications Workers Union-South Africa and the Communication Workers Union-Kenya with technical expertise on strategic research and union campaign planning. As a result of this program, hundreds of telecommunications workers can now exercise their right to form and join unions. Telecommunications unions in Kenya and South Africa have built a cooperative relationship with a major regional employer that operates internationally.



# Migration and Human Trafficking

## Assessing the True Cost of Shrimp

In the \$13 billion global shrimp processing industry, workers pay the price for consumer affordability. The drive to make a product for the world market quickly and cheaply has left a trail of abuse, misery, and damaged lives. Solidarity Center partners in Thailand—especially those that defend the rights of Burmese migrants—conduct difficult and dangerous investigations of labor abuses against migrant workers in the Thai seafood processing industry. Their findings tell a harrowing tale that governments, international advocacy organizations, and the media are just beginning to hear.

Most jobs on the processing line are poorly paid and hazardous. Workers toil long hours for low pay, often standing ankle-deep in slippery muck without protective equipment. But their migrant status makes the situation even worse. Many shrimp processing workers are caught in an extensive and sophisticated system of migrant smuggling and labor brokering. The end result for too many is a labor trafficking trap leading to extortion, debt bondage, and forced labor.

“Three female migrant workers were picked up by a job broker and taken to the Thai-Burma border, where they joined other Burmese migrants,” investigators reported to the Solidarity Center. “[When they reached] the factory they learned from the boss that the broker had taken a fee of 13,000 baht (\$366) per person. They were also told that this was to be deducted from their pay. At midnight the next day they started work on their first shift, which lasted 18 hours until 6:00 p.m. the following evening. They were beaten if they did not get up or if they were not on time for work. Between the three of them, they peeled around 110 pounds of shrimp a day and received a payment of 600 baht (\$17) every 15 days.”

Workers who want nothing more than a decent job are indeed paying a terrible price. Telling these workers’ stories is the first step toward improving worker rights in the seafood processing industry. In 2008, the Solidarity Center released *The True Cost of Shrimp*, a study of worker rights abuses in the Thai and Bangladesh shrimp processing industries.

“Many of the workers we interviewed described serious human rights violations and deplorable working and living conditions,” said Executive Director Ellie Larson. “To clean up global supply chains, we need informed consumers, engaged corporations, responsible government leaders, effective worker protection laws, and strong worker rights organizations.”



## Hotel and Tourism Workers Help Fight Human Trafficking in Kenya

Kenya is a source, transit, and destination country for women, men, and children trafficked for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Fueled by unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, inadequate legislation, and poor law enforcement, trafficking thrives in Kenya.

In the coastal city of Mombasa, where tourism is the main industry, the Solidarity Center trained shop stewards from the Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers about the danger signs of human trafficking. Shop stewards have reached out to more than 2,500 union members in the tourism sector, and the number of trafficking and potential trafficking case referrals to law enforcement and victim protection organizations has increased sharply. Recently police,

acting on information from a KUDHEIHA shop steward, rescued a child who had been brought by a tourist into a local hotel.

KUDHEIHA also represents domestic workers, who are particularly vulnerable to trafficking. Domestic workers may be forced to work long hours, confined to their quarters, and physically and psychologically abused. Their employers may refuse to pay them or pay reduced wages. They may deny them food or not give them enough to eat. Some employers and agents confiscate passports and other documents to ensure that their workers do not try to run away.

With Solidarity Center support, KUDHEIHA held a series of awareness-raising meetings for domestic workers. The workers learned the danger signs and received anti-trafficking brochures. At the last session, they developed an action plan for advocacy and community outreach: holding a public hearing with prominent personalities to discuss their role in ending domestic worker exploitation, distributing brochures and posters to other domestic workers and their employers, and forming small committees in key areas to advocate for domestic worker rights and to act as watchdogs against trafficking and exploitation of fellow domestic workers.



**OPPOSITE:** Shrimp processing workers are literally on the plant floor with no boots or gloves.  
**ABOVE:** Many domestic workers in Kenya are forced to work long hours, confined to their quarters, and physically and psychologically abused.



**TOP:** Indian migrant worker activist Rafeek Ravuther (in car) discusses worker rights issues with Indian construction laborers on strike in Dubai. **BOTTOM:** Haitian migrants who cross the border into the Dominican Republic to work in the construction industry are often abused and exploited. **OPPOSITE:** “AIDS is one of the most arrogant diseases I have ever come across,” says South African HIV/AIDS union activist Kuki Ndlovu, shown here at a 2005 global health conference.

## Migrant and Worker Activists Build Bridges in Gulf States

In November 2007, four worker rights activists from trade unions and NGOs in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka traveled to Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates on a Solidarity Center study tour. The purpose of the trip was to meet with workers and representatives from trade unions, human rights groups, community associations, and governments in order to learn about conditions migrant workers encounter in the two Gulf States. The study tour helped these longtime activists base their migrant worker protection programs in their home countries on the real needs of their citizens in the countries of destination. In addition, it built a strong foundation for ongoing partnerships between worker rights advocates in both origin and destination countries. One joint effort will be to urge governments in the countries of origin to prosecute criminal gangs of exploitative labor recruiters and demand that host country governments provide legal protection for their citizens in line with international standards.

## Dominican Construction Union Uses Organizing to Combat Trafficking of Haitian Migrant Workers

Haitian migrants who cross the border into the Dominican Republic to work in the construction industry are among the country’s most exploited workers. They often pay agents huge sums to bring them across the border, only to become trapped in a system of indebted servitude when construction operators refuse to pay them on time, forcing them to take out high-interest loans against future wages. Some are trafficked; others report having their wages stolen by local police and then being deported with nothing to show for months of hard labor.

These were the findings of a Solidarity Center supported investigation conducted by the Dominican construction workers’ federation FENTICOMMC. During 2008, Haitian migrant and Dominican construction workers from FENTICOMMC developed a survey in Creole and Spanish. Teams of union members designed the survey and interviewed 500 Haitian construction workers onsite about their working conditions, signs of forced labor and human trafficking, knowledge of basic rights, and attitudes about what workers can do to address abuses. This methodology was new to the interviewers, many of whom had only basic education levels or minimal literacy in their native languages. A follow-up report, prepared by FENTICOMMC with Solidarity Center support and due to be published in 2009, shows that 74 percent of Haitian migrants would like to join a union.



This overwhelming proof that Haitian workers aspire to freedom of association has sparked FENTICOMMC’s commitment to build a grassroots organizing effort and to advocate on behalf of Haitian migrant construction workers in the Dominican Republic. For CNUS, the national center that supported FENTICOMMC in this groundbreaking effort, this innovative outreach to Haitian workers in the Dominican labor market using the native Haitian language, Creole, has been transformational. The results have carried over to CNUS affiliates that represent workers in other industries and have generated a new approach to combat human trafficking.





# HIV/AIDS

## African HIV/AIDS Union Activists Bring Passion to U.S. Visit

Union activists have much to teach us about HIV/AIDS. In November 2007, a three-member delegation—all African unionists and HIV/AIDS specialists—traveled to the United States on a Solidarity Center exchange program for a 12-day visit. The purpose of the trip was to share ideas and strategies about HIV/AIDS workplace programs with union leaders and constituency groups, meet with HIV/AIDS service providers and people living with HIV in the United States, and make a presentation at the American Public Health Association conference in Washington, DC. The group also traveled to Philadelphia to discuss their experiences with students at Temple University. On the delegation were Esther Ogunfowora, a registered nurse from Nigeria, active in union affairs since nursing school and now working with the Nigeria Labor Congress; Kuki

Ndlovu, a nurse and union mobilizer involved with HIV/AIDS workplace programs serving South Africa's factory workers; and Romano Ochieng, General Secretary of Uganda's Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union and project coordinator of his union's HIV/AIDS activities.

"HIV/AIDS is a family issue, and therefore a union issue, because the union is our family," says Ogunfowora, whose passion is breaking down the barrier of HIV/AIDS stigma in the healthcare field. "If anything affects one person, it affects all of us."

"AIDS is one of the most arrogant diseases I have ever come across," says Ndlovu, a gender trainer who coordinated the Solidarity Center's HIV/AIDS education program for garment workers in Swaziland and Lesotho, where HIV prevalence among women of working age is among the highest in the world. "As workers we can't continue to ignore it or put it off as negotiable."

"In Uganda, many people thought that HIV was spread by witchcraft," says Ochieng, whose union implements the ROADS project targeting long haul truckers and communities in Uganda and other East African countries. "Workers trust their unions to tell them the truth about HIV/AIDS."



## Ecuadorian Municipal Worker Unions Spread the Word About HIV/AIDS

Reaching out on non-traditional issues that touch union members, families, and communities enabled Ecuadorian public sector unions to reinforce support for nuts-and-bolts member representation. In 2008, the Solidarity Center and the Ecuadorian labor center CEOSL developed and implemented HIV/AIDS awareness training for four municipal worker unions in the Esmeraldas department, which borders Colombia. Recognizing that municipal government employees' daily interaction with the community uniquely qualifies them to distribute new information to the public, the program trained 26 union activists to provide HIV/AIDS education for their colleagues and families—200 people in all. The training program gave the union activists an opportunity to work with UNAIDS and the Public Health Ministry of Ecuador. It also raised their profile as community leaders on public health issues. Involving union leaders directly with their base and the community strengthened inter-union coordination in Esmeraldas. Unions and employers were able to cooperate in a common effort, improving communications and enhancing their relationship at the bargaining table.

## South African Union Ties HIV/AIDS to Bargaining

In South Africa, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS affects workers everywhere. By 2015, South Africa will have lost more than 21 million workers to the disease. The Solidarity Center continues to work with South African unions to ensure that HIV/AIDS issues remain at the forefront of every workplace contract negotiation, policy, and practice. In 2008, the Solidarity Center held workshops on collective bargaining and HIV/AIDS for members of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa. With 260,000 members, NUMSA is the third largest labor union in the country, representing approximately 50 percent of all South African auto workers. As a visible and politically active union with a legacy of being on the frontline to improve South Africa's social conditions, NUMSA has taken a pro-active stance to address HIV/AIDS in the workplace. Workshop trainers explained how to prevent HIV transmission. They discussed care and treatment, gender issues and HIV risk, stigma reduction, legal and ethical concerns, and the necessary



steps required to create a well-informed HIV/AIDS workplace policy. With their newly developed skills, NUMSA members now have the tools to negotiate for stronger HIV/AIDS provisions, such as anti-discrimination language, appropriate health benefits, and workplace HIV/AIDS trainings, in collective bargaining agreements.

**TOP:** CEOSL members celebrate with a newly graduated group of HIV/AIDS trainers. **BOTTOM:** South African union members listen intently at a workshop that ties HIV/AIDS to workplace policies and collective bargaining. **OPPOSITE:** A volunteer art teacher at a migrant worker center prepares a calligraphy painting. The Chinese use cultural enrichment as a tool for organizing workers. Photo by Richard Resnick.





## Rule of Law

### Labor Attorneys Explore Worker Rights in Today's China

Over the past two decades, China's workforce has changed dramatically. This once isolated society has evolved into the fastest growing global manufacturing center in the world. China's capitalist reforms of state-owned enterprises have thrown millions of older workers out of work, often without adequate pensions. The burgeoning private economy has drawn millions of peasants from their villages to huge new export industrial centers. Chinese labor law is being rewritten to introduce such policies as enforceable minimum labor standards for all workers, establishing sectoral worker representation, and promoting widespread industrial dispute resolution and collective bargaining. "In this global economy, where Chinese and U.S. labor standards are linked, U.S. unionists should be armed with an understanding of the changes in the labor force and the labor laws," said Solidarity Center legal expert Earl Brown.

In November 2007, five high-level U.S. union

attorneys and one Solidarity Center staff member traveled to China for a 12-day visit. The delegation met with a broad range of worker and migrant rights advocates, key actors in China's evolving industrial relations system. Through visits with prominent labor law academics, the U.S. attorneys learned about the intense debates that preceded China's enactment of a new employee contract law. They visited worker and community centers attempting to serve China's vast migrant worker populations and met face-to-face with migrant workers to hear their stories.

"China's huge economic growth comes from a private sector only 25 years old, which has rapidly overtaken the state sector, and Chinese workers, like workers across the globe, have too often ended up with the short end of the stick," said Brown, who was on the delegation. "As China begins to address stark imbalances between workers and employers in this globalized economy, it is vital that grassroots workers be heard and that fundamental worker rights be respected and enforced."

## Global Call to End Violence and Impunity in Latin America

Attacks against union leaders and activists in Latin America have surged despite increasing international attention. In Colombia, 41 trade unionists were murdered during the first eight months of 2008, compared to 39 in all of the previous year. In Guatemala, the government recorded 38 attacks against unionists as of July 2008, a sharp increase from the 13 of the previous year. The use of violence against those who defend worker rights is all the more troubling because most of the perpetrators have not yet been found, let alone brought to justice.

The international labor community has joined with Latin American trade unionists to call for an end to violence and impunity in Latin America. In January 2008, more than 140 participants from labor, government, business, and civil society traveled to Guatemala for a conference, "The Role of Trade Unions in the Fight Against Impunity." The conference, organized by the International Trade Union Confederation, successfully placed union and worker rights high on the agenda of newly elected President Alvaro Colom, who was a keynote speaker. A follow-up delegation brought prominent international union leaders to Honduras and back to Guatemala. Honduras was included because of the April



24, 2008, assassination of Altagracia Fuentes, General Secretary of the Confederation of Honduran Workers. Fuentes's death remains unsolved. Honduran officials insist that she was the unfortunate victim of a carjacking and have refused to conduct a thorough and independent investigation. The Solidarity Center will continue to work with the global labor movement to demand an end to violence, intimidation, and impunity across the Americas.



**TOP:** The challenge of picking bananas is as great for Guatemalan workers as the challenge of exercising their rights on the job. **ABOVE:** Solidarity Center legal fellow William Bolainez. **OPPOSITE:** Occupational safety and health advocates in China aim to protect construction workers like these, who have little or no safety equipment. Photo by Richard Resnick.

## New Organizing Tool Will Protect Workers' Legal Rights

International and regional human rights systems have increasingly emerged as potential venues for labor advocacy. Until now, however, little has been done to analyze this mechanism and to evaluate how it relates to worker rights. In October 2008 the Solidarity Center began work on a new rule of law project that focuses on building tools and capacity for legal work in support of labor organizing around the world. In the first phase, the Solidarity Center is compiling a legal brief bank of labor-related cases before international human rights bodies such as UN committees and the Inter-American Human Rights Court and Commission. In the next phase, the Solidarity Center will use the brief bank to build practical training for attorneys, paralegals, and worker advocates in an expanding rule of law program.

Salvadoran human rights attorney William Bolainez has been working as a legal fellow with the Solidarity Center to help launch the project. "This is an essential step for building the momentum to organize workers globally," said Bolainez. "As the reach of international human rights law expands, we can be at the forefront of using these systems to advocate for workers."



## Ensuring Rights for Workers in Asia

Worker rights are central to rule of law and democracy. Workers want to be certain that they will be paid fair wages, in full and on time. They want to have job security and healthy and safe workplaces. They want a voice at work. The Solidarity Center's rule of law program aims to protect workers by building the technical capacity of trade unions and worker rights advocates to use legal norms and channels in order to implement core worker and human rights. Throughout Asia, the program promotes compliance with occupational safety and health laws and sustains local OSH advocacy projects. It supports innovative worker rights projects in China, in Thailand, and among Burmese exiles and migrants. Through our offices in Asia, it furnishes legal advice to unions, human and worker rights advocates, and other community activists in the region. With legal aid and law reform projects focused on protecting worker rights, the rule of law program has moved legal systems to enforce worker and human rights on behalf of migrants and other workers in Asia.





## Visitor Programs

---

### **Visit to India Changes U.S. Union Women's View of Organizing**

A global economy that relies on low-wage production to keep profits high is pushing millions of workers out of good jobs into the informal economy. Around the world, work is increasingly outsourced, sub-contracted, temporary, seasonal, and part-time. In cooperation with union partners and other allied groups around the world, the Solidarity Center helps empower informal workers to stand up for their rights on the job and raise their living standards.

Through Solidarity Center visitor programs, U.S. union activists and leaders learn firsthand the challenges that workers face and build lasting relationships all over the world. In 2008, the Solidarity Center facilitated a study tour that sent an all-female union and community organizer delegation from the United States to Gujarat,

India, headquarters of the Self-Employed Women's Association. In India, self-employed women make up 93 percent of working women. Founded in 1972 and now counting 900,000 members, SEWA is the largest union for informal workers in India and the largest union led by and for women in the world. Through SEWA, members have access to health care, insurance, and legal services, and thousands have opened accounts in the SEWA cooperative bank. The U.S. delegation, all organizers working with domestic and home-based health care workers, visited SEWA members on the job and in their homes—often the same place. They shared experiences with the women and their families and discussed new ideas for organizing informal workers worldwide.

“Being able to meet with and listen to the women of SEWA helped clarify for me the many ways that we can build the leadership capacity of our own home-based workers,” said delegation member Anne Luck of Communications Workers of America Local 1037 in New Jersey. “I see organizing differently now—it’s not just about changing working conditions. It’s about developing leaders, connecting struggles, and ultimately changing lives.”





## Australian Labor MP Joins Distinguished List of IVLP Visitors

Since 1940, hundreds of distinguished world leaders have traveled to the United States under the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. More than 250 current and former heads of state, 1,700 cabinet ministers, and many others influential in government and the private sector have participated in the IVLP, including French President Nicolas Sarkozy, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and scores of union leaders who helped bring democracy to their countries.

In August 2008, Australian Labor Party Member Mark Butler was an IVLP visitor. The Solidarity Center designed Butler's 18-day tour to offer him a comprehensive view of U.S. labor laws and practices in comparison with those of Australia and other Western countries. To this end, he met with U.S. labor representatives, including Solidarity Center senior staff, along with members of U.S. governmental and non-governmental offices engaged in promoting and protecting worker and organizing rights.

"I greatly enjoyed our discussion about your organization's work in spreading labor and other rights around the world," wrote Butler. "I wish you all the best for your ongoing work."

## Kuwaiti and U.S. Union Leaders Strategize on Common Challenges

The Gulf State of Kuwait is a leading member of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the first Gulf country to recognize trade union rights. Kuwait's economy, once based on fishing, pearl diving, and trading, now counts on oil for 95 percent of its export revenue. The 34,000-member Kuwaiti Trade Union Confederation, formed in 1964 to represent workers in the civil service and oil industry, is fighting for a voice for workers in the privatization process, which KTUF leaders fear will lead to lower wages and fewer protections for workers. In May 2008, a four-member U.S. labor delegation traveled to Kuwait on a Solidarity Center exchange visit to learn more about the challenges of being a union leader in an environment where migrant workers outnumber Kuwaiti nationals two to one, union officers are volunteers with full-time outside jobs, and unions are not sufficiently involved in economic policy decisions.

On the delegation were Michigan State AFL-CIO President Mark Gaffney, Georgia State AFL-CIO Vice President and CWA Local 3204 President Walter D. Andrews, Office and Professional Employees International Union Organization and Field Services Director Kevin A. Kistler, and Solidarity Center Program Officer Tom Egan. The KTUF published an article about the visit in its union magazine.

"I learned that Kuwait unions, like unions in the United States, are facing significant challenges of globalization," said Gaffney. "It is important that we work together in the struggle for decent jobs and employment security and a better understanding of each others' areas of concern."



**OPPOSITE:** A home-based SEWA member rolls incense in Ahmedabad, India. A group of SEWA members created a space near their homes where they roll incense together—a place to work, to socialize, and to rest. **TOP:** Australian Labor Party Member Mark Butler. Photo courtesy of AUSPIC. **BOTTOM:** (left to right) Abdul Rahman Al-Ghanim, KTUF Vice-President and Head of Migrant Workers Office; Mitri Mokbel, KTUF Administrative Director; Walter D. Andrews; Laurie Clements, Solidarity Center Country Program Director in Kuwait; and Mark Gaffney. Photo by Kevin Kistler.



# Communications

---

## **New Media Training Gives Workers a Powerful Voice**

Across the globe, Internet multimedia, text messages, cell phone cameras, satellite phones, and a multitude of communication innovations are transforming how we share information. Unions are using these “new media” tools to tell the day-to-day stories of working families, raise awareness about their struggles, and advocate for social change. Developing these technologies into democratic communication for workers presents both an extraordinary challenge and an opportunity. Young workers, in particular, are answering this challenge and taking a leading role in the innovative use of new media to advocate for their rights. With the rapid expansion of access to the Internet, workers now have the potential to tell their own stories to audiences around the world.

The use of new media enables union activists to amplify marginalized voices, particularly in countries where freedom of association and freedom of the press are limited or non-existent. New media can be created on inexpensive equipment and distributed at low or no cost. One cell phone video uploaded to the Internet can almost

instantly show the world that monks are marching in the streets of Burma, or that people in Haiti desperately need food and shelter in the aftermath of massive floods.

New media tools give unions access to a direct line of communication within their own region and abroad. To empower union activists around the world, the Solidarity Center is developing new ways to promote union-generated media. In 2008, the Solidarity Center conducted a video advocacy project in Kyiv with affiliates of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine. Solidarity Center staff interviewed union leaders and rank-and-file workers for a documentary project highlighting Ukrainian workers’ struggles to form free and independent unions.

In Djibouti, Solidarity Center staff trained leaders of the Eastern Africa Journalists Association in multimedia advocacy. At the workshop, union journalists created powerful videos, using only inexpensive cameras and Internet-based distribution channels. The training showed union leaders how to use new media tools to increase their chance of winning worker rights campaigns. In 2009, the Solidarity Center will expand and continue its new media project with outreach in the Dominican Republic and Algeria.

“With new media, workers can tell their own stories in their own voices,” said Solidarity Center Program Officer Tristan Masat, who is managing the project. “That is the most powerful way to build solidarity and simple human empathy across borders. Unions can carry the struggle for decent work and freedom of association to every corner of the world.”

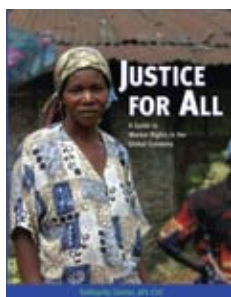


# New Publications



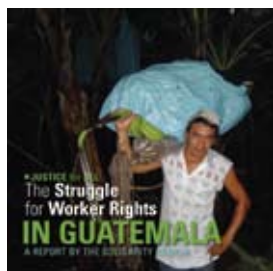
## The True Cost of Shrimp

This report, the second in our **Degradation of Work** series, uncovers pervasive worker and human rights violations in the Bangladesh and Thai seafood processing industries—such as low-wage sweatshop conditions, use of child and forced labor, and global supply chains that drive wages down and hide the exploitation of workers. Coming soon: *Degradation of Work* in the Nigerian oil sector.



## Justice for All: A Guide to Worker Rights in the Global Economy

The latest edition of this comprehensive worker rights manual provides promoters and defenders of worker rights with accurate, timely information they can use in their fight for global worker justice. It cites ILO standards, specific trade pacts, and strategies for promoting corporate accountability. New chapters on informal and migrant workers offer insight into these growing economic trends.



## Justice for All Country Reports

Our two newest reports in the **Justice for All** series demonstrate that workers around the world face immense challenges to exercising their rights. *Justice for All: The Struggle for Worker Rights in Thailand* goes behind the scenes of this beautiful, tranquil country to describe the situation for workers who put in long hours at low pay, sacrificing their rights to create the atmosphere tourists enjoy and to make products used all over the world. *Justice for All: The Struggle for Worker Rights in Guatemala* documents ongoing attacks and murders of union activists who attempt to protect worker rights.



## Workers' Freedom of Association Under Attack in Mexico

Solidarity Center Country Program Director Ben Davis reports in this August 2008 **Global Policy Brief** that 14 years after the inception of the North American Free Trade Agreement and eight years after the end of one-party rule, Mexican authorities continue to violate the country's obligations under national and international law to uphold core labor standards, including workers' freedom of association. Available for electronic download only.

**OPPOSITE:** Ukrainian union activist and former teacher Nadia Leleka, whose struggle for decent work led to her involvement with the CFTUU, tells her story to Solidarity Center local program coordinator Tetyana Solodovnyk. The interview was videotaped for Internet broadcast.

To order copies of Solidarity Center publications, contact [information@solidaritycenter.org](mailto:information@solidaritycenter.org).

# Financials

## American Center for International Labor Solidarity

### Consolidated Statements of Activities

Years Ended December 31, 2007 and 2006

	2007	2006
<b>Support and revenue</b>		
Federal awards	\$27,373,150	\$29,584,532
In-kind contributions for federal awards	374,680	1,006,865
Contribution from the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)	656,862	702,167
Other contributions	43,957	292,506
Interest income	174,062	155,914
Net depreciation in fair value of investments	(44)	22,752
Other revenue	101,160	294,027
<i>Total support and revenue</i>	<b>28,723,827</b>	<b>32,058,763</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Program expenses	23,570,212	27,212,674
Indirect expenses	5,341,787	5,080,932
<i>Total expenses</i>	<b>28,911,999</b>	<b>32,293,606</b>
<b>Change in net assets</b>	<b>(188,172)</b>	<b>(234,843)</b>



# Where We Work

---

## Africa

Democratic Republic  
of the Congo\*  
Djibouti  
Ethiopia  
Kenya\*  
Lesotho  
Liberia  
Namibia  
Nigeria\*  
Rwanda  
South Africa\*  
Swaziland  
Tanzania  
Uganda  
Zimbabwe\*

## Americas

Argentina  
Bolivia  
Brazil\*  
Chile  
Colombia\*  
Costa Rica  
Dominican Republic\*  
Ecuador\*  
El Salvador  
Guatemala\*  
Haiti  
Honduras  
Mexico\*  
Nicaragua  
Paraguay  
Peru\*  
Uruguay  
Venezuela

## Asia

Afghanistan  
Bangladesh\*  
Burma  
Cambodia\*  
China  
Hong Kong  
India  
Indonesia\*  
Malaysia  
Nepal  
Pakistan\*  
Philippines\*  
Sri Lanka\*  
Thailand\*  
Vietnam

## Europe and Central Asia

Belarus  
Georgia\*  
Kazakhstan  
Kyrgyzstan\*  
Russia  
Tajikistan  
Ukraine\*

## Middle East and North Africa

Algeria\*  
Bahrain  
Egypt  
Iran  
Iraq  
Jordan\*  
Kuwait\*  
Morocco\*  
Oman  
Palestine\*  
Tunisia  
United Arab Emirates  
Qatar  
Yemen

*\*Field Office*





**SOLIDARITY CENTER**

888 16th Street NW, Suite 400

Washington, DC 20006

Phone: 202 974 8383 | Fax: 202 974 8384

[information@solidaritycenter.org](mailto:information@solidaritycenter.org)

Please visit our website to learn more about the Solidarity Center and to support our work. [www.solidaritycenter.org](http://www.solidaritycenter.org)