

# SOLIDARITY CENTER

PROMOTING WORKER RIGHTS  
WORLDWIDE



## 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

**The Solidarity Center is the largest U.S.-based international worker rights organization helping workers attain safe and healthy workplaces, family-supporting wages, dignity on the job and greater equity at work and in their community. Allied with the AFL-CIO, the Solidarity Center assists workers across the globe as, together, they fight discrimination, exploitation and the systems that entrench poverty—to achieve shared prosperity in the global economy.**

**The Solidarity Center acts on the fundamental principle that working people can, by exercising their right to freedom of association and forming trade unions and democratic worker rights organizations, collectively improve their jobs and workplaces, call on their governments to uphold laws and protect human rights, and be a force for democracy, social justice and inclusive economic development.**

**Our Mission:**

**Empowering workers to raise their voices for dignity on the job, justice in their communities and greater equality in the global economy.**

The Solidarity Center is organized as a not-for-profit corporation, under the the Solidarity Center Education Fund. It is exempt from taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and qualifies for the maximum charitable contribution deduction by donors. A summary of activities and financial highlights for the year ending June 30, 2018, is described in this report.

Editors: Carolyn Butler, Tula Connell, Kate Conradt  
Design: Deepika Mehta

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**ON THE COVER:**

In Morocco's fertile fields outside Meknes, some 1,000 agricultural workers, about half of them women, on five large farms won a landmark contract with Domaines Brahim Zniber, which boosted wages and provided other fundamental protections. Since then, union leaders have negotiated an extension of the contract to 200 additional workers at another large farm. Hayat Khomssi, farmworker and shop steward, elevated women's concerns and demands to union leadership to be included in the agreement. Credit: Solidarity Center/ Kate Conradt



**THE MAJORITY OF THE WORLD'S WORKERS** do not have the luxury of being able to worry about whether they will lose their jobs to robots. They are in a fight for their survival.

Over the last decade, authoritarians have gained strength—to the detriment of human and worker rights, fair economic systems, civic freedoms and social justice. The rise in inequality and corporate impunity has concentrated wealth and power. Racism, sexism and xenophobia no longer live on the fringes of society. And as space for civil society closes for the majority of the world's population, so too do the opportunities to find a dignified job, demand a safe workplace or weigh in on public policy.

The trends that are destroying decent jobs, hollowing economies and denying basic freedoms are diminishing democracy and devaluing work everywhere. But together we can reverse those trends.

Workers in the 60 countries where the Solidarity Center operates are building more solid futures by facing these significant challenges the best way they know how: at the workplace. Because formal-economy employment—jobs with regular hours, decent wages, rights and benefits—is on the wane, they are collectively affecting change where the work is. In 2017–18, migrant workers, street vendors, agricultural laborers, port workers, fast-food workers and others found ways to improve workplaces and living standards for themselves and their neighbors. They stood up to unscrupulous bosses, forced governments to live up to their promises, and raised their voices to improve conditions within the global supply chain.

The workplace has been a cradle for democracy—with unions led by workers thwarting disenfranchisement and inequality. The Solidarity Center is proud to support these workers and their unions as they stand up for democratic values and human rights, like freedom of association. In doing so, they are creating equality in front of power, constructing more just societies and unleashing the innovation of people.

In Solidarity,

Shawna Bader-Blau

Workers at the Ford Motor Co. assembly factory in Rayong, Thailand, are members of the Thailand Automobile Workers Unions, a Solidarity Center partner. Photo: Solidarity Center/Julian Hadden



**GIVEN THE INCREASINGLY FRACTURED, PRECARIOUS NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT**, the Solidarity Center works to secure freedom of association, collective bargaining and enforceable worker rights for all workers, everywhere. This includes developing new approaches to organizing to reach workers traditionally excluded from union membership and the benefits guaranteed in collective bargaining agreements. With partners, the Solidarity Center supports workers organizing unions, seeking formalization of their employment and protection of their rights under law.

At one of the largest KFC franchises in **Thailand**, some 2,000 fast-food workers won the first-ever collective bargaining agreement in the industry there, a pact that includes an early retirement program, the right to union representation in any dispute, meals and motorcycle maintenance funds for delivery workers. The workers are among 2,400 members represented by

the Cuisine and Service Workers' Union, a Solidarity Center partner and an affiliate of the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations.

In **Colombia**, after years of hardship for workers due to illegal corporate employment practices and a lack of recognition of their rights, the General Union of Third-Party Agribusiness Workers (UGTTA), a union of subcontracted palm workers, won direct employment contracts. The 730 affected workers now enjoy the full protection of the labor law and will be entitled to the minimum wage, social security benefits, health and safety standards, and organizing and collective bargaining rights. The Solidarity Center, along with a coalition of palm-oil unions, is helping monitor enforcement of the agreement.

In rural **El Salvador**, thousands of women work from their homes hand-embroidering intricate designs for garment factories. Although a living

wage is \$416 per month, in-home embroidery workers generally are paid between \$55 and \$80 a month. Now, with the Association of Women Transforming, some 300 women have formed an embroiderers' union, SITRABORDO, affiliated to FEASIES, a union federation and Solidarity Center partner.

Union leader Sultan Mutlag Ahmed won unpaid compensation for construction workers after participating in a Solidarity Center labor law training in which he learned about worker rights under **Iraq's** new labor law.

In **Tunisia**, the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT), in partnership with allied organizations, including the Solidarity Center, organized rural workers in Tunisia's long-neglected interior, where most of the 1.5 million agricultural workers are women who are not covered by social benefits like pensions and who toil in dangerous and harsh conditions, often into their 70s.

A palm worker at a plantation, Minas, Colombia. Solidarity Center ally Sintrainagro-Minas organized sub-contracted workers in 2016, significantly improving their wages, benefits and job conditions. Photo: Solidarity Center/Carlos Villalon (2016)



## BUILT INTO THE FABRIC OF SOCIETIES

are entrenched cultural norms and political, social and economic power structures that disadvantage one group of people to the benefit of another. This takes on many forms and often targets people by gender identity and norms, class, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability or other group identities. Working people often belong to more than one of these groups.

In partnership with a broad array of worker rights advocates around the world, the Solidarity Center is providing trainings and programs to help workers understand their vulnerabilities and rights, organize unions to mitigate structural oppression, learn to bargain for improved conditions and wages within their communities and along supply chains, and build solidarity across economic sectors and countries.

In **Pakistan**, members of the Trade Union Female Forum (TUFF), an empowerment and learning network for women designed and supported by the Solidarity

Center, participated in leadership training and conducted outreach to other groups to raise awareness among women workers of sexual-harassment-complaint reporting mechanisms.

Young workers and workers of color in **Brazil** were hit hard by a deep economic recession brought on by plummeting export commodities prices and increased inflation, resulting in high unemployment. In March 2017 and in response to proposed legislation that would weaken labor regulations and affect them disproportionately, young workers mobilized in the streets and through unions and other associations, including a 24-hour general strike led by the CUT (Central Workers' Union), a Solidarity Center partner, to protest the government's attempts to impose drastic cuts on pensions, salaries and social security, and dismantle labor rights.

Working with the Moroccan Labor Union (UMT), General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT) and the Arab Forum for the Rights

of Persons with Disabilities, the Solidarity Center helped survey 1,600 workers with disabilities to determine how they, working with unions, can address discrimination and lack of accessibility for workers in **North Africa**.

In May, the Solidarity Center released the video, "Not Part of the Job!" in support of the International Trade Union Confederation's global campaign to stop gender-based violence at work. And in New York in March, at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meeting, the Solidarity Center organized a side panel to bring the voices of women farm workers from **Jordan, Morocco and Peru** to the forum, for discussions on empowerment and equality for women in the commercial agriculture sector—which is one of the most dangerous in the world. Women, who are in the majority of agricultural workers, are especially vulnerable to sexual harassment, physical abuse and other forms of gender-based violence at work.

Domestic workers rally in Nairobi in February 2018 for ratification of International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 189, Decent Work for Domestic Workers—part of a larger campaign to improve domestic workers' wages and working conditions by the Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotel, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers (KUDHEIHA). Photo: KUDHEIHA



# THE SOLIDARITY CENTER CELEBRATES 20

For the last 20 years, and in partnership with hundreds of union and other partners around the globe, the Solidarity Center has supported working people striving to assert their fundamental rights on the job and have a voice in policies that impact their lives. The Solidarity Center has stood with workers as they celebrated victories—from a first collective bargaining agreement on a fruit plantation or in a garment factory to a new national minimum wage law that lifted all low-wage workers. And it has remained steadfast with them as they, in their quest for safer and more fair workplaces, have faced violence, unjust legal environments, government repression, economic hardship and other setbacks.

In November 2017, some 300 allies, coalition partners and sponsors of the Solidarity Center packed the Long View Gallery in Washington, D.C., to celebrate the organization's 20th anniversary and look forward to its next 20 years.

"The work of the Solidarity Center is critical to unions around the world," said AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler, who hosted the evening's program.

"The Solidarity Center reaches half a million workers a year with programs that expand access to justice and boost organizing and advocacy skills for workers, unions and their allies. And we need to join together across borders, now more than ever, to make sure we are raising standards for all workers everywhere."

The program highlighted members of the Colombian and Honduran labor movements for their gains for workers despite difficult odds, and U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, for his longtime support of worker rights around the world. U.S. Reps. Karen Bass and Sander Levin joined the festivities.

Closing the evening program, Solidarity Center Executive Director Shawna Bader-Blau thanked the evening's honorees and applauded the work of the AFL-CIO International Department and Solidarity Center staff.

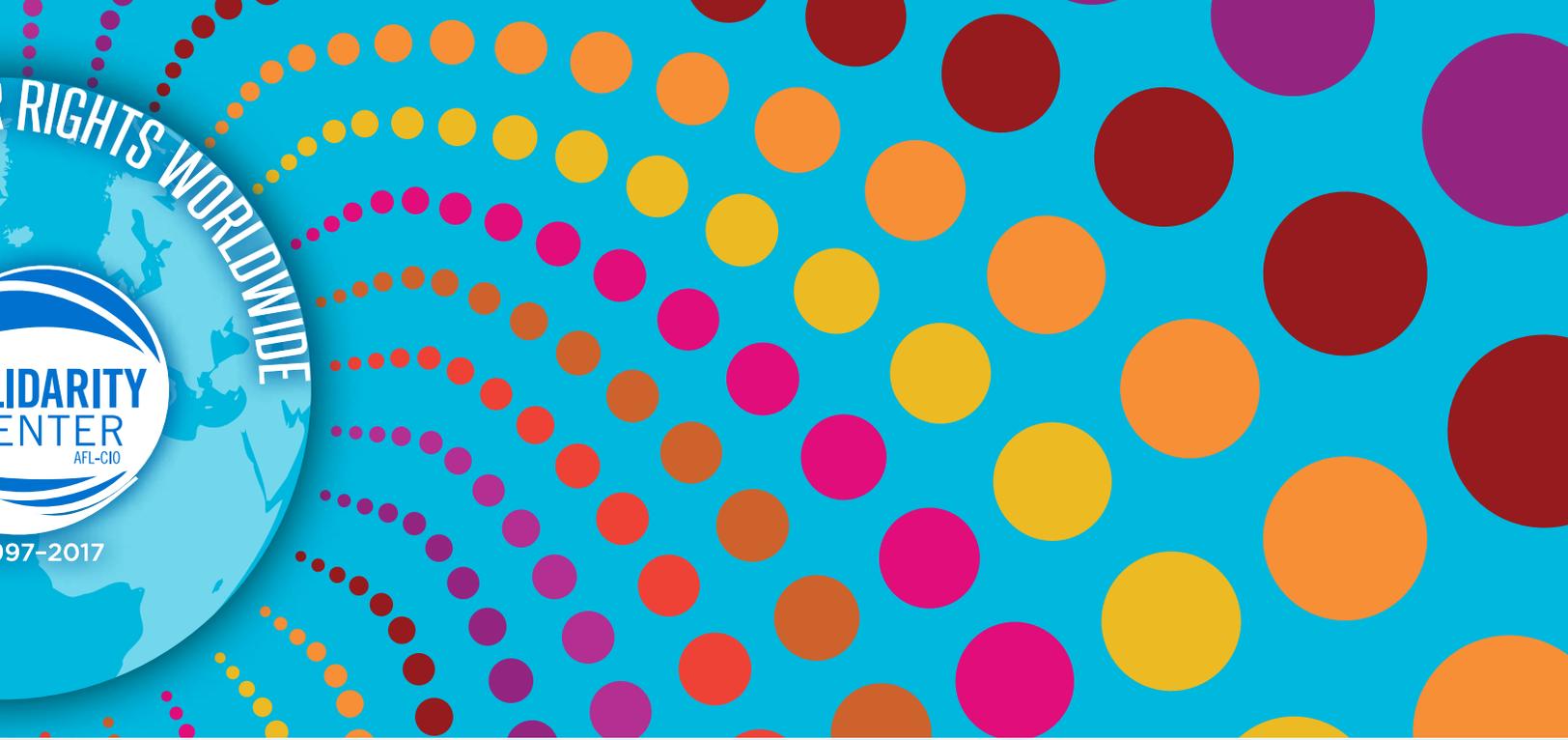
"We've seen successes, but we're not there yet," said Bader-Blau. "Until farmworkers and garment workers, retail and construction, domestic workers and heroes of our health and education sectors and all workers can be

certain they will receive fair wages, a voice in their democracies, work in safe environments and never have to fear a sexual assault on the job, the Solidarity Center will be there.

"But here's what we know. It takes more than skills, more than a commitment to a struggle and a willingness to fight. It takes joy. It takes love. It takes conviction, and it takes power. And when I stand here in this room with all of you, all of US together—I feel the unstoppable, beautiful power of solidarity."

As the Solidarity Center begins its next 20 years, it commits its future to a global labor movement based on true equality and inclusion for all workers. Working directly with the American labor movement, it will redouble efforts to secure freedom of association and enforceable worker rights for all workers, everywhere.





# YEARS IN THE FIGHT FOR WORKER RIGHTS



## THANK YOU TO OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY SPONSORS!

### Worker Rights Champions

Amalgamated Bank  
 American Income Life  
 International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers and International Masonry Institute  
 Ullico  
 United Food and Commercial Workers International Union

### Solidarity Supporters

American Federation of Teachers  
 Jules Bernstein  
 Communications Workers of America  
 International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers  
 United Steelworkers

### Progressive Partners

Employee Benefits Group  
 Humanity United  
 Iron Workers International  
 Transportation Workers Union of America  
 United Domestic Workers of America  
 Equal Rights Advocates  
 AHT Insurance  
 Alvarez Porter Group  
 Calibre CPA Group  
 International Union of Painters and Allied Trades  
 JLL  
 Motley Rice LLC  
 National Education Association  
 National Nurses United

Office and Professional Employees International Union  
 Segal Group

### Social Movement Makers

Alberta Federation of Labor Association Resource Group  
 DocuVantage  
 Evolve IP  
 Simon Fong & Katherine King  
 Fontheim International LLC  
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National Domestic Workers Alliance  
 O'Donoghue & O'Donoghue LLP  
 Orange County Employees Association  
 Seafarers International Union of North America  
 Texas AFL-CIO  
 Washington Office on Latin America

### We'd also like to thank

1230 Restaurant and Champagne Lounge  
 California Labor Federation  
 Coalition of Black Trade Unionists  
 International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers  
 Jobs with Justice

Photos: Left: Darius Sivin, United Automobile Workers (UAW), and David Yang, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), help celebrate the Solidarity Center's 20th Anniversary. Above left: Evangelina Argüeta Chinchilla, Angel Miguel Conde Tapia, Solidarity Center Executive Director Shawna Bader-Blau, U.S. Rep. Karen Bass and Leonila Murillo. Above right: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler joins U.S. Rep. Sander Levin at the Solidarity Center's 20th Anniversary Celebration. Solidarity Center/Imagine Photography



**RESPECT FOR WORKER AND HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND EQUALITY**—by governments and corporations—does not come about magically but rather through engagement and pressure by people. Around the world, the Solidarity Center supports workers and activists trying to create dignity and safety in their workplace, and advance fairness in economic and social policy.

In **Zimbabwe**, hundreds of women waged a weeklong sit-in at Hwange Colliery Co. Ltd. (HCCL), demanding unpaid wages for their husbands who labor in the company's coal mines. The women launched their action with a peaceful rally and decrying their husbands working for five years while barely being paid. Solidarity Center partner National Mineworkers Union of Zimbabwe (NMWUZ) provided a tent to shelter them. HCCL had been paying miners 50 percent of their salaries since the beginning of 2016 and, in 2017, paid 7 percent of the employees' 2014 outstanding wages.

In 2018, the Solidarity Center partnered with the National Day Laborers' Organizing Network (NDLON) to establish the first transnational worker center in **El Salvador** to foster the social and economic reintegration of deportees and returned migrants, and to strengthen rights activism among low-income and informal workers. The partnership brings together experts from the U.S. worker center model; leaders organizing the Salvadoran diaspora; migrants facing and surviving deportation; the Salvadoran trade union movement; and on-the-ground activist organizations supporting policy, organizing and rights education for the Salvadoran working class.

Thousands of garment workers in **Haiti** took to the streets in July 2017 to demand an increase in the sectorwide minimum wage that leaves most workers unable to cover bare necessities. The strike was one of a series of demonstrations that began May 19 in the wake of a 30 percent spike in fuel costs, which resulted in dramatic

increases to food and transportation expenses. Striking workers also called for health benefits and food and transportation subsidies. Later that month, the government raised the daily minimum wage for garment workers to \$5.73. In 2014 and subsequent years, the Solidarity Center, working with union partners, found that a living wage for a Haitian worker was at least \$23 a day.

Some 40 domestic workers from 17 countries across North and South America and the Caribbean shared organizing tactics, hammered out resolutions and participated in Solidarity Center training on gender-based violence at work at a recent conference in São Paulo, **Brazil**. The conference is one of a series of regional planning meetings domestic workers around the world are holding in advance of the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) congress of November 2018 in **South Africa** to which domestic workers from all regions will bring recommendations.



## GLOBALLY, WORKER RIGHTS ARE THE MOST FREQUENTLY VIOLATED.

More than half of the world's nations deny some working people the right to establish or join unions. In 2017, workers who rallied for their rights—to receive their wages, fight sexual harassment or demand safe workplaces—in almost 60 countries were arrested, detained—or even murdered. The Solidarity Center supports efforts to strengthen and create worker-supportive laws that address the unequal relationship between workers and employers, correct broad disenfranchisement and provide remedies to hold corporations and governments accountable.

Although associations of pro-union and pro-worker legal professionals exist in some countries, no network connects such lawyers worldwide. Given the global nature of supply chains, the common trends that affect workers regardless of nationality and the need to represent workers in issues that transcend borders, the Solidarity Center established the International Lawyers Assisting Workers

(ILAW) network. The membership organization focuses on five areas: accountability in global supply chains, migrant worker rights, the employment relationship, discrimination and bargaining with multinational companies.

Rural villagers from **Cambodia** who were trafficked for forced labor in the shrimp processing industry in Thailand challenged a ruling by a California federal district court that dismissed their case against the Thai and U.S. companies that benefited from their work. A coalition of human rights groups, led by the Solidarity Center, filed an amicus brief in June in support of seven workers as their case goes to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The workers had brought their suit based in part under the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, which in 2008 was amended to extend civil liability to those who “knowingly benefit” from the trafficking of persons in their supply chains.

Union activist Fakhridin Tillayev, in an Uzbek prison serving a 10-year sentence and tortured for attempting

to organize an independent union for day laborers, was released in 2018. Tillayev's release was among the results sought by a Cotton Campaign delegation to Tashkent, **Uzbekistan's** capital, in 2018 for unprecedented meetings with government officials and rights advocates to discuss the eradication of forced labor. Cotton Campaign coalition representatives sought legal and policy reforms to end the mobilization of education and healthcare workers to harvest cotton. The Solidarity Center, a Cotton Campaign member, was represented on the delegation.

In **Kenya**, unions spearheaded a requirement for migrating domestic workers to have contracts, salaries and details of their work assignments before they leave. The draft policy, crafted by the Labor Ministry and the Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotel, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers (KUDEIHA), a Solidarity Center partner, is part of KUDEIHA's campaign to advance the rights of domestic workers in Kenya and abroad.

Cambodia's garment sector features notoriously dangerous and largely unregulated transportation for its workers, who crowd onto open-air trucks to save money. Photo: Solidarity Center/Claudio Montesano Casillas



**INCLUSIVE, CIVIL-SOCIETY PARTICIPATION** in all aspects of public life is the antidote to rising authoritarianism, corporate impunity and the denial of human rights that erode democracy globally. For workers to be able to guard their rights and have a say in their how their government enacts economic and social policy, the Solidarity Center works to support unions at the national level and bridge large social movements to address common struggles, from the grassroots to the international stage.

The **Colombia** Port Workers' Union, in coalition with 66 civil-society organizations, won a landmark pact that committed the Colombian government to investing more than \$500 million over the next decade in the long-neglected city of Buenaventura, home to the country's largest and highly lucrative port. Many of the city's 400,000 predominately Afro-Colombian inhabitants live in poverty, without access to decent jobs, healthcare,

education, infrastructure and basic services like water, sanitation and electricity. The union, a Solidarity Center partner, also is working to end indefinite employment contracts and create permanent jobs that include family-supporting wages, health care, severance, pension benefits and coverage by the union's collective bargaining agreement.

**Liberia's** labor federation, the Liberia Labor Congress, a Solidarity Center partner, mobilized several dozen people to help monitor 10 precincts and more than 40 polling places during October elections. Election monitors, including workers from locals affiliated with the United Steelworkers and United Steelworkers Canada, were led by Solidarity Center staff. Prior to the poll, Liberian unions ran a successful get-out-the vote campaign focused on ensuring workers were heard in the democratic process.

Building on its work with the United Nations to promote the right to freedom

of assembly and association for working people, the Solidarity Center co-sponsored a side event moderated by the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, "Expanding Space within the United Nations." The panel discussion, held during the UN General Assembly meeting in New York, brought together national representatives, UN bodies and civil-society representatives to discuss strategies to more effectively promote and protect civic space in the UN system.

Protecting the rights of migrant workers must be an essential component of the United Nations Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration, according to union leaders who met in **Mexico** to craft a worker rights agenda for inclusion in the global compact. The Solidarity Center helped ensure the participation of 17 union leaders from across the **Americas**, so they could provide input on a shared policy agenda and advocate within national and regional government bodies.

UWUL leader Dave Seneh shows his election card. This year, asserting their right to participate in the democratic process, 50 people with Liberia's labor federation, the Liberia Labor Congress (LLC), helped monitor 10 precincts. Photo: Mike Zielinski

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Doug Moore, Executive Director, United Domestic Workers (UDW/AFSCME Local 3930)

Art Pulaski, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO

Joslyn N. Williams, Former President, Metro Washington Council, AFL-CIO

**SENIOR LEADERSHIP**

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Kate Conradt, Communications Director

Imani Countess, Africa Regional Program Director

Al Davidoff, Director of Organizational Development

Tom Egan, Senior Adviser for Trade Union Strengthening

Randi Goldstein, Development Director

Lisa Humphries, Human Resources Officer

Michael Lawrence, Controller

Molly McCoy, Policy Director

Lisa McGowan, Gender Quality and Inclusion Director

Sarah McKenzie, Director of Program Coordination and Trade Union Strengthening

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Tim Ryan, Asia Regional Program Director

Lystia Santosa, Director of Finance

Nader Tadros, Middle East and North Africa Regional Program Director

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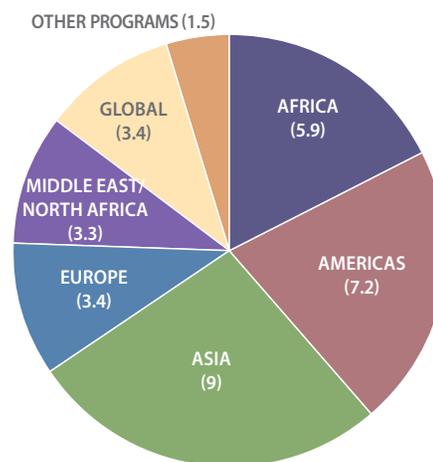
Darcy Wertz, Director of Operations

**Solidarity Center**

**YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2017, AND 2016**

SUPPORT AND REVENUE	2017	2016
Federal awards	\$ 31,215,180	\$ 29,976,848
In-kind contributions for federal awards	958,390	1,130,451
Other contributions (unions, foundations, institutional donors, individuals)	1,186,213	935,358
Other revenues	484,017	161,757
<b>Total support and revenue</b>	<b>\$ 33,843,800</b>	<b>\$ 32,204,414</b>

**FY 2017 REGIONAL SPENDING**  
(\$ in millions)





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