

Solidarity Center

PROMOTING WORKER RIGHTS WORLDWIDE



2011 ANNUAL REPORT

The Solidarity Center is a non-profit organization that works with unions, NGOs and community groups worldwide to advance worker rights and achieve equitable and sustainable economic development. In nearly 60 countries, the Solidarity Center supports programs and projects that help workers build independent trade unions, exercise their rights and improve their working and living conditions. It was established in 1997.

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.

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 2011. We also honor the thousands of courageous workers from around the world who risk their lives every day in the struggle for worker rights and social justice.

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ON THE COVER: Domestic workers worldwide celebrated the June 16, 2011, adoption of International Labor Organization Convention 189, Decent Work for Domestic Workers (see story, Page 9). Clockwise from top left: A young domestic worker in Mali. © M. Crozet/ILO. Delegates to the International Labor Conference rejoice after the vote to adopt. © ILC. A woman prepares a meal in the Dominican Republic. © Richard Lord. Members of the Hong Kong Domestic Workers General Union ride a campaign bus. © Rupert Procter.

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Where We WORK

THE SOLIDARITY CENTER supports workers around the world from Washington, D.C., and 26 field offices, and with program activities in 57 countries.



Letter from the Executive Director

For the global working class, and especially for the poorest and most vulnerable workers, 2011 was a year of both fear and hope.

More than a decade of global economic turmoil has ballooned the gap between the rich and the rest of us. Wages and full-time jobs are on the decline, pushing working people to the margins and eroding their power to effect change in their workplaces and societies. With the financial crisis as a pretext, fundamental worker rights are being

denied or depressed. And the very vulnerable in our societies are carrying a heavy burden.

Yet through organizing and mobilization, working people everywhere find their voice. Trade unions continue to be a powerful vehicle for economic and political empowerment. Despite the odds against them, workers are standing up for social justice, democracy, equality. This report contains stories of perseverance in the face of adversity—and of achievement.



In 2011, the Solidarity Center partnered with workers and their unions organizing for better working conditions and for the fundamental rights denied to them. Workers gained recognition and social protections. They raised awareness about inequity of wealth and access to democracy. They helped craft labor law. They took to the streets to protest authoritarianism. And they helped shape the future of their economies.

For example, last year's Arab uprisings saw workers—tired of high unemployment, lack of opportunity, declining living standards and political repression—demand change. In Colombia, the most dangerous place on earth to join a union, many did—and bravely took on the labor practices

disenfranchising them. Domestic workers everywhere received the recognition due them. And Georgian unions battled for their existence using international standards and solidarity.

The Solidarity Center believes that through organizing, isolated and exploited working people can come together and improve their conditions—ultimately leading to healthier economies and more democratic and just societies. We support partner unions around the world and applaud their successes in staving off forces that would deny people their rights and inhibit their ability to speak up. We are proud to present their stories in this 2011 report.

Shawna Bader-Blau, Executive Director

SPOTLIGHT

A POPULAR DRIVE
for economic and
social justice spread
across the Middle East
and North Africa.



An Egyptian boy in Tahrir Square holds a newspaper showing pictures of eight Arab heads of state.

Credit: Joel Carillet

Arab Uprisings

In December 2010, a desperate act of self-immolation by a young Tunisian street vendor ignited one of the most dramatic and sweeping protest movements seen in decades. The action of Mohamed Bouazizi, who sought only the dignity of work, sparked a worker-led popular drive for economic and social justice that spread across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in what has been dubbed the “Arab Spring.” Worker issues such as high unemployment, lack of opportunity, declining standards of living and corruption spurred the uprisings, with unions and worker rights activists on the front lines.

As Tunisians took to the streets in January 2011, the Tunisia General Labor Union (UGTT) emerged at the forefront of the movement, coordinating actions across the country to demand political change and a more equitable society. After 23 years of authoritarian control, President Zine el

Abidine Ben Ali fled the country, paving the way for democratic transition. The extraordinary events in Tunisia set in motion an unprecedented rise in protests, with working women and men from Algeria to Yemen raising their voices for change. Today the UGTT is helping to nurture Tunisia’s nascent democracy and the rights of workers though a difficult transition. It has stood up in the face of increasing violence in the country, calling for peace and democratic rights only to see its offices—and those of other institutions—vandalized and firebombed.

In **EGYPT**, workers and independent unions led strikes and job actions, lending strength and power to mass protests in Cairo’s Tahrir Square that culminated in President Hosni Mubarak stepping down. On January 30, 2011, in the midst of the uprising, four independent Egyptian unions, along with industrial workers from other sectors, came

together to form the Egyptian Federation of Independent Unions. Another federation, the Egyptian Democratic Labor Congress, formed in October 2011. A year after Egypt's authoritarian regime fell, the two federations held founding congresses. Today they are both working to reform a prevailing labor law that does not guarantee freedom of association or other international labor standards.

In **BAHRAIN**, people converged on the "Pearl Roundabout" calling for equity and a more open society, only to be violently repressed. The government waged a divisive and relentless campaign against trade unionists and a broad swath of civil society, including human rights defenders, teachers and medical professionals. Thousands of workers were fired for participating in or being suspected of joining the democracy marches. The General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions (GFBTU) has been a constant and unwavering voice for peace and dialogue.

Across the MENA region, workers continue to fight for democracy and justice. Unions in **MOROCCO** stand with democracy and youth movements to promote longstanding demands for meaningful political reform. Independent unions in **ALGERIA** are leading the struggle for democracy, economic justice and worker rights. Despite government hostility, workers in **IRAQ** hold fast to demands for worker rights and a new labor law to replace the Saddam Hussein-era labor code still on the books. In the Gulf, protests and strikes such as those in **KUWAIT** are making gains for workers by pressing for real political change. In **YEMEN**, hundreds of thousands of citizens have bravely rejected their government's half-hearted reforms through rallies and protests they sustained for months.

The Arab uprisings, as exemplified by the workers' struggles in Tunisia and Bahrain, are a beacon for workers worldwide. In recognition of their pivotal roles, emblematic of the courage, resistance and dignity of men and women workers across the region, the UGTT and GFBTU will receive the AFL-CIO's 2012 George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award.

Focus on Workers in the Informal Economy

Around the world, the majority of working people eke out a living in the informal economy. Vulnerable to exploitation and caught in a hand-to-mouth existence, they are largely unprotected by national laws and excluded from the social benefits that formal workers have. Caught up in a daily struggle to make ends meet, workers in the informal economy—among them domestic workers, street and market vendors, agricultural and day laborers, and workers who have been pushed from permanent jobs into short-term temporary work—often cannot organize and fight for better working conditions, fair pay and a life with dignity.

To focus on the issues, needs and experiences of workers in informal employment, the Solidarity Center held a two-day conference in Cape Town, South Africa, with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development. The December 2011 event, "Organizing Workers in the Informal Economy," brought together workers, union leaders and researchers from around the world to explore ideas and strategies for helping workers with precarious, temporary, contract or "hidden" jobs improve their lives by forming and joining worker organizations.

"For the global working class, it is through organizing that working people can make their voices heard with employers and governments. And it is through organizing that once-isolated and exploited individuals can come together and challenge their conditions—and improve them," said Solidarity Center Executive Director Shawna Bader-Blau. "It is an organizational priority to support these workers' fight for social justice and to seek innovative solutions and linkages that will help them earn what they deserve."

The Solidarity Center's partners, Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), produced three research reports for the conference (see Page 16) and will continue working jointly to better understand the issues and commonalities of informal workers and the global economy they sustain. Over the next several years, additional research will help fill the scholarly gap on workers, their rights and the informal economy.



Workers, union leaders and researchers from around the world came to Cape Town, South Africa, to focus on the issues, needs and experiences of workers in informal employment.

Credit: Kate Conradt, Solidarity Center

WINNING for Workers

WINNING CONCRETE IMPROVEMENTS IN WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS for workers in the developing world by partnering with their unions in organizing and bargaining efforts is a Solidarity Center priority. Solidarity Center programs support workers' struggle to gain union recognition, provide strategic campaign assistance, and help precarious workers—those in temporary, contract and dangerous jobs exacerbated by economic globalization—gain workplace protections. Through these programs, Solidarity Center partners have the tools to help stem the forces pushing workers to the economic bottom.



On the fourth day of the fuel subsidy strike, protesters in Abuja, Nigeria, hold the national coat of arms upside-down to indicate that the country is in distress.

Credit: Nigeria Union of Journalists

Nigerian Unions Claim Victory in Fuel Subsidy Battle

In January 2011, thousands of workers in Nigeria took to the streets to protest the government's removal of a long-standing fuel subsidy, which caused oil and gas prices to triple overnight. Shops, airports, offices and schools across the country closed on January 9, the first day of a massive strike led by Nigeria's two major labor federations, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC).

Nigerians saw the subsidy as their only benefit from the country's vast oil wealth and feared that profits would disappear to corruption. Although oil is the source of 80 percent of national revenues, the wealth has not trickled down to the people. More than 90 percent of Nigeria's 160 million citizens live on less than \$2 a day, according to the International Labor Organization.

The strike ended—after at least 10 people were killed and more than 600 were treated for injuries—when President Goodluck Jonathan announced the partial restoration of the fuel subsidy. Unions claimed victory.

"We note the major successes Nigerians scored in these past days in which they rose courageously as a people to take their destiny in their hands," said the TUC and NLC in a joint statement. "With the experiences of the past eight days, we are sure that no government or institution will take Nigerians for granted again."

The Solidarity Center helped the NLC and TUC after the strikes in their efforts to maintain organizing strategies and to promote public dialogue around democracy and transparency.

Los Mineros: Winning through Adversity

Despite great adversity, the National Union of Mine and Metal Workers of Mexico, known as Los Mineros, is growing.

Over the last six years, the union has seen its leader, Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, forced into exile, its very existence under attack from corporations and the Mexican government, and 63 of its member mineworkers left buried at the Pasta de Conchos mine in Sonora. Still, in 2011, the union gained 6,000 new members, negotiated 70 collective bargaining agreements and won average salary increases of 14 percent at the bargaining table. These gains occurred largely at sites where industrial relations were established during previous Mexican administrations. At new organizing sites, however, the union and its allies face “protection” or “ghost” unions, state-sanctioned violence and anti-union campaigns.

But miners are tough. They have not been deterred from exercising their union rights, even under duress. With the support of the Solidarity Center, Los Mineros have strengthened organizing efforts at three sites and launched a new drive at a fourth. Workers at two more sites opted to leave a protection union and join Los Mineros. In August 2011, the United Steelworkers (USW)—which has a longtime strategic alliance with Los Mineros—signed a new “solidarity alliance” at the USW convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.

For their courageous commitment to defending Mexican workers’ aspirations to higher living standards, democratizing labor unions and promoting rule of law and a better future for their country, Napoleón Gómez Urrutia and Los Mineros received the AFL-CIO’s 2011 George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award, which recognizes outstanding examples of the international struggle for human rights through trade unions.

Bangladeshi Union Negotiates Third Contract

In an atmosphere of violence and uncertainty for unions in Bangladesh, the Sramik-Karmachari (Workers-Employees) Union stands out as an example of longevity and labor-management cooperation. Sramik-Karmachari, an affiliate of the Bangladesh Independent Garment Union Federation (BIGUF, a longtime Solidarity Center partner), represents 865 workers—mostly young women—at Global Garments, a ready-made garment (RMG) factory in Chittagong.

Bangladesh’s multimillion-dollar RMG industry employs about 3.5 million workers, more than three-fourths of them women. RMG profits account for 80 percent of Bangladesh’s export earnings, but RMG wages in Bangladesh—where collective bargaining in the sector is uncommon—are the lowest in the world for this type of work.

In 2011, Sramik-Karmachari negotiated with Global Garments to arrive at a collective bargaining agreement, the third in its 25-year history. The new two-year contract raises average monthly salaries, adds annual leave, improves workplace safety and health conditions and provides a streamlined dispute resolution process.

The Solidarity Center has been a leading voice in pushing stakeholder engagement in this and other sectors in Bangladesh.

40,000 Algerian Teachers to Join Formal Workforce

Tens of thousands of Algerian contract teachers have returned to the full-time workforce, winning back their rights through persistence and with the support of Algeria’s National Autonomous Union of Public Administration Workers (SNAPAP).

The more than 40,000 teachers—of 340,000 total—had been treated as contract workers with no guaranteed salary, benefits or job security. They were fired at the end of the school year and rehired the next term. For many, this precarious working situation lasted more than a decade.

For about three years, SNAPAP staged peaceful sit-ins and strikes, including hunger strikes, to draw national and international attention to the teachers’ plight. Dozens of teachers were arrested for exercising their right to protest.

In 2012, authorities ultimately agreed to their demands. The teachers have joined the National Council of Contract Teachers (CECA), a SNAPAP affiliate.

SNAPAP, which receives technical and financial support from the Solidarity Center, will continue to fight for rights in the education sector. “For the 40,000 contract teachers who are now permanent employees, we have achieved the most difficult step—freeing them from the contracting trap,” said Nassira Ghozlane, SNAPAP general secretary. “But the fight is not over, and we will continue our struggle to eliminate the ongoing inequities at all levels of the education system.”

Seeking SOCIAL JUSTICE

AROUND THE WORLD, workers face unjust conditions that transcend workplaces and even national borders. The Solidarity Center seeks improvement in people's living and working conditions through global thematic advocacy campaigns with its partners worldwide. When workers and their organizations decide to take on gender and racial discrimination, violence against women, human trafficking, child labor, HIV/AIDS and other complex and pervasive social problems, the Solidarity Center is there to provide solidarity and support.



AMRC members protest unsafe working conditions.

Credit: AMRC

Regional Network Aims to Protect Workers in Asia

Each year, more than 2.3 million workers around the world die from work-related accidents or occupational diseases, with 1.1 million of those deaths occurring in Asia, according to the Asia Network for the Rights of Occupational and Environment Victims (ANROEV), a regionwide network of trade unions, doctors, lawyers, occupational safety and health (OSH) experts, and advocacy groups from 14 countries. Over the past decade, the Solidarity Center has supported ANROEV, which was founded in 1997 and serves as a vital platform for exchange and cooperation around worker rights for civil society in the region.

Health and safety issues in Asia are drawing more attention from civil society actors, policymakers and the general public as the magnitude of the problem becomes more apparent and industrial tragedies and workers' struggles garner wide coverage in local and international media.

"Exposure to work hazards is one of the leading causes of preventable death, injury and sickness in Asia," said Sanjiv Pandita, executive director of the Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC), an ANROEV member organization. "Yet the dead, injured and sick people—and their families—remain hidden behind a thick veil of invisibility with most of the governments not even acknowledging the scale of the problem."

Through the network, the Solidarity Center supports grassroots and regional initiatives that raise awareness about and mitigate the incidence of occupational disease, including black lung disease and illnesses resulting from the use of hazardous chemicals in the electronics industry. ANROEV members are helping victims obtain workers' compensation, securing needed medical and rehabilitation services, training workers in hazards and their avoidance, pressing employers to provide healthy and safe working environments, and advocating for OSH law reforms.

Agricultural Workers in Peru Use Media to Advocate for Legal Reforms

The first Peruvian farm worker labor federation, the National Federation of Agricultural Workers (FENTAGRO), and its members are using personal testimonies and traditional outreach tools to convince Peru's Congress to amend the unfair Agricultural Sector Promotion Law 27360. The law, which governs the majority of agricultural workers, was launched as a "temporary measure" in 2000 to foster growth of new exports. Today it effectively codifies lower wages, less vacation and fewer protections from arbitrary dismissal for agro-export workers as compared to other private-sector workers.

This means the mainly female workforce can toil 12 hours a day planting and harvesting asparagus, peppers and other produce for export without earning overtime pay. They earn an average of just \$8 per day, can be fired for organizing a union or becoming pregnant, and can be hired on short-term, continuously renewable contracts, which leave them vulnerable to termination when they speak out. The workers live in a constant state of fear that they will lose their job if they complain.

The Peruvian Congress is debating an amendment to Law 27360 that would provide nearly 300,000 agricultural workers with the same wages and benefits as Peru's other private-sector workers.

To spark a broader conversation about Law 27360, the Solidarity Center in Peru, in cooperation with Peru's four main union confederations, held a series of regional and national workshops where workers interviewed one another and recorded their personal testimonies. They produced four radio spots featuring the voices of actual workers. These spots, as part of a broader campaign that has included rallies and letter writing, have been sent to more than 60 educational and community radio stations, distributed on union media networks and websites, and provided to union activists. Increased worker awareness and a clear message backed by real-life examples have helped farm workers to be more effective advocates.

The Beginning of Social Justice for Domestic Workers

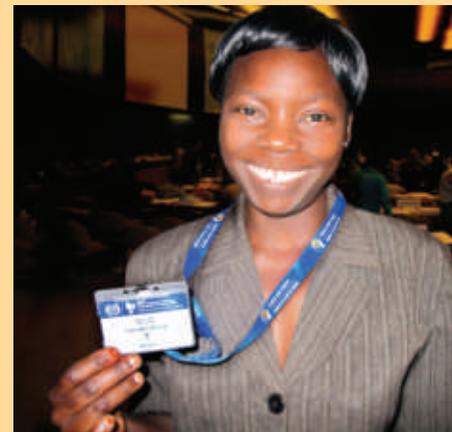
Around the world, domestic workers clean, cook, care for children and the elderly, repair and maintain their employers' homes and gardens and perform other tasks. Poor and often far from home, these workers—the overwhelming majority of them young women and girls—are vulnerable to exploitation, from low wages and long hours to physical abuse and human trafficking. Yet despite their difficult and often isolating situations, domestic workers are striving for—and winning—recognition.

On June 16, 2011, delegates to the International Labor Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, adopted International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 189, Decent Work for Domestic Workers, which "lays down basic rights and principles, and requires states to take a series of measures with a view to making decent work a reality for domestic workers." Decent work, broadly defined, is productive work in conditions of freedom, security, equity and human dignity, including a fair income and the ability to organize. Through the efforts and resources of the Solidarity Center, some advocates went to Geneva to negotiate the convention as part of the Workers Delegation.

Convention 189 is the culmination of more than a decade of advocacy by and input from a broad coalition of labor organizations from around the world, including the Solidarity Center and many of its partners. Many representatives of these groups were present to witness the convention's adoption. One delegate was 26-year-old Evaline Mulo, a domestic worker from Nairobi, Kenya, and member of the Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers, a longtime Solidarity Center partner that represents thousands of domestic workers.

"It was a historic moment for me because the vote marked the beginning of social justice for domestic workers internationally," said Mulo. "The convention is the best thing to have happened to domestic workers in the world. It will change our lives."

The Solidarity Center has been supporting partners around the world—including in the Dominican Republic, Kenya, Indonesia and Hong Kong—to advocate, negotiate and call for the ratification of the new convention, pass national laws to support the rights of domestic workers as workers and organize domestic workers into unions.



Evaline Mulo, a domestic worker from Kenya, attended the historic conference.

Credit: International Domestic Workers Network

RIGHTING the Rules

THE SOLIDARITY CENTER fights repression of workers worldwide by helping them identify, challenge and reform laws, policies and practices that suppress worker and human rights, undermine freedom of association and collective bargaining, and result in discrimination against, and marginalization of, workers. Through its rule of law program, the Solidarity Center helps unions, worker centers and legal aid networks develop the legal tools they need to help improve the living and working conditions of workers in their countries.



David Welsh, Solidarity Center Cambodia program director, marches with Cambodian union members at a May Day rally.

Credit: Cambodian Labor Federation

Cambodia's Young, Independent New Unions Challenge "Labor Law"

Led by young, mostly female workers, Cambodia's growing independent labor movement is winning important legal battles in spite of a challenging political environment. In March 2011, in a direct challenge to employers and the government, Cambodia's independent federations protested the imminent imposition of a labor law unfavorable to workers.

Although Cambodian authorities held consultative meetings with employer and worker representatives on the draft Trade Union Law, input from the independent unions and unions associated with opposition political parties was largely ignored. The final draft showed the proposed legislation to be a trade union law in name only.

Undaunted, independent union leaders—with legal training and support from the Solidarity

Center—worked on an article-by-article critique of the law, including suggested revisions aimed at supporting union rights. On March 15, independent federations from the garment and tourism sectors released the critique to local press, representatives of multinational corporations, industry heads, U.S. embassy officials, the International Labor Organization and Cambodian government officials.

In a surprising response, the Cambodian government reopened consultations on the law. Since then, significant progress has been made, and the changes the independent unions seek are likely to be incorporated. The brave young workers leading the independent unions and federations, with the support and solidarity of more than a dozen local and international human rights and worker organizations, helped turn the tide.

Social Protections for Dominican Domestic Workers

Two groundbreaking pieces of legislation are poised to bring 300,000 domestic workers in the Dominican Republic into the national social security system. Dominican domestic workers—the vast majority of them women—do not earn a living wage; indeed, 50 percent of their meager earnings are often received as in-kind goods, food, and lodging at their place of work. They have no maternity leave, pension, health care coverage, or vacation time. Legislation, drafted by Sen. Adriano Sánchez Roa, would entitle domestic workers to receive a pension as well as disability, survivor, and family and occupational health insurance, in addition to other basic benefits. The Senate also has discussed ratifying International Labor Organization Convention 189. The government had pledged to ratify Convention 189 after its adoption more than a year ago.

“The best way to begin to lift domestic workers out of exclusion and poverty is by affiliating them to the social security system,” said Eulogia Familia, vice president and coordinator of policies for gender equity of the National Confederation of Unions (CNUS), a Solidarity Center partner. “The approval of these laws will generate an advance for women and men who are domestic workers.”

The Solidarity Center’s partners in the Dominican Republic, who have been advocating for many years for the rights of all informal workers, continue lobbying to make these protections a reality. With Solidarity Center support, they have conducted public awareness campaigns, organized domestic workers, and educated Haitian migrants on their rights as domestic workers.

Georgia: Fighting for Union Democracy

The independent trade union movement in the Republic of Georgia is under attack, and Georgian unions have been documenting and reporting worker rights violations. In February, Georgia Trade Union Confederation (GTUC) President Irakli Petriashvili traveled to Washington, D.C., to report on the array of anti-union legal maneuvers that are choking off fledgling unions.

For example, two of the country’s largest unions have been denied the right to collect dues through payroll deductions (a method called a dues check-off system), flouting valid collective bargaining agreements and bringing the unions to near-bankruptcy. The result: GTUC affiliates have lost 110,000 members over a five-year period. The democratically elected leaders of three major unions (for teachers, health care workers and railway workers) affiliated with the GTUC have faced down a systematic campaign of threats, intimidation and pressure to resign, remaining in their posts to represent the interests of their members.

Despite this harsh environment, the GTUC, with assistance from the Solidarity Center, continued its program of education and outreach to trade union members, unorganized workers and the general public. The GTUC also continued to advocate for greater legal adherence to international labor standards and worked with the International Trade Union Confederation, the European Trade Union Confederation and the U.S. labor movement on advocacy strategies that use international human and worker rights instruments.

Petriashvili values ongoing cooperation with the Solidarity Center and other international labor organizations. “Workers all over the world must join in solidarity. Otherwise the notion of democracy will fade away in the eyes of Georgians,” he said.



GTUC President Irakli Petriashvili leads a union march in Tbilisi.

Credit: GTUC

Colombian Palm Oil Workers Demand Compliance with New Laws



Workers in Colombia's palm oil sector are frequent targets of threats and violence.

Credit: Molly McCoy, Solidarity Center

Palm oil workers in Colombia have courageously taken a stand in the hopes of not only improving their own working conditions but also setting legal precedents that would affect thousands of Colombia's working people.

Colombia's palm oil industry employs tens of thousands of workers and is projected to create hundreds of thousands more jobs in the next decade—crucial to the country's economy as demand for biofuels grows. But some 80 percent of this employment is through third-party contracting, subcontracting and “associated work cooperatives”—creating informal jobs that render workers ineligible to join unions or exercise their basic legal rights.

“The cooperatives aren't real. They are set up by the company,” said Reynaldo Guillen, leader of cooperative workers at the Las Brisas palm plantation. “We are forced to work there, and we have to pay for everything out of what would have

been our salary, so we take home only half of what we earn. And we can't join the union, so we can't ever get better pay.”

Under pressure from workers and unions, in 2011 the Colombian government issued Decree 2025, which bans associated work cooperatives from being hired to perform work that is central and fundamental to production of a company's “characteristic goods and services.”

Encouraged by this legal reform, with its potential to shift tens of thousands of workers out of precarious labor, Colombian agricultural workers began to demand directly hired, formal jobs with palm oil companies. However, what started as a regular collective bargaining process at one palm oil plantation turned into a massive community dispute when employers refused to negotiate. The large community strikes forced the country's vice president to travel to the area to mediate.

The Solidarity Center supported the Colombian National Union of Agroindustry Workers (SINTRAINAGRO) as it pressed for full compliance with Decree 2025. The Colombian government ultimately agreed to fully implement the new law and proposed a series of labor inspections aimed at eliminating the use of associated work cooperatives—the first such inspections in Colombia. In 2012, the first fines were levied against the palm oil company for non-compliance with this law.

Despite these advances, SINTRAINAGRO has faced a severe backlash for its advocacy for workers. Union leaders have received death threats, some from paramilitary groups. When they came under threat, the Solidarity Center pushed in Colombia and the United States for their protection. Authorities have been slow to respond to requests for protection, providing only one leader with some security assistance.

Pakistan Unions Campaign to Restore Worker Rights

When the 18th Amendment to Pakistan's Constitution came into effect on April 9, 2010, it was widely hailed as a milestone for democracy. The amendment was aimed at furthering provincial autonomy and preventing arbitrary states of emergency, common during President Pervez Musharraf's long rule. However, the amendment also ended the Industrial Relations Act (IRA) of 2008, dissolving the Labor Ministry and relegating all worker rights issues to the local jurisdiction—effectively preventing national unions from functioning and casting into question the federal government's role in worker rights.

"When the IRA expired, there was total confusion, and in some cases labor courts could not function," said Zahoor Awan, general secretary of the Pakistan Workers Federation (PWF), the umbrella organization for unions in Pakistan and a Solidarity Center partner. "There were contradictory verdicts and views as to which law applied in the provinces. No one knew how unions in national organizations could exist and operate without a national law. And there was a real fear that Pakistan could be in non-compliance with international labor standards and conventions."

With the support of the Solidarity Center, the Pakistan Workers Federation and its affiliates coordinated a yearlong campaign to establish a new national Industrial Relations Act. They conducted briefings for parliamentarians, held press conferences and produced and distributed briefing papers. As a result, an interim law was promulgated, extended and finally made permanent on March 16, 2012.



Labor Law Training Lays Foundation for Democratic Burma

Political space in Burma has begun to open, but 50 years of military rule has degraded the legal environment. Today Burma—once one of the most educated and progressive societies in Southeast Asia—lacks a legal framework for foreign investment, industrial relations and democratic participation in civil society and government. Indeed, few lawyers and even fewer specialists in labor law remain.

Today the Burmese must struggle with inadequate relics from Burma's colonial past to try to address the needs of current workers: enforcing minimum standards in the workplace, ensuring adequate occupational health and safety protections, and giving them a voice at work.

Burma will have to create new legal frameworks for human and worker rights as its economy expands with increased investment and development. To meet this need, the Burma Lawyers' Council, an organization of lawyers with ties to the democracy and labor movements, has been running the Peace Law School located across the Burma border in Mae Sot, Thailand. There young Burmese activists and law students—from within and without Burma—study comparative and international law as they support migrant workers or work with human rights groups.

The Solidarity Center, in conjunction with the Burma Lawyers' Council and the Thai Human Rights and Development Fund, has conducted several courses on worker and human rights law. Some of the students at the Peace Law School have taken the knowledge and advocacy skills developed through their coursework back into Burma, where they advocate for Burmese workers and push the government to enact adequate human and worker rights laws. They are filling a huge gap in Burma's civil society, as they train other lawyers and activists and begin campaigns to provide Burmese workers with a voice at work, advocate for the enforcement of existing laws governing human and worker rights, and push for legal reforms that will begin to address such abuses as failure to pay minimum wages, excessive overtime, discrimination against minority and women workers, unhealthy and unsafe workplaces, and repressive rules hindering the formation of unions and other civil society associations.

This rule of law initiative complements the Solidarity Center's longtime partnership with the Federation of Trade Unions–Burma (FTUB), which has worked to restore democracy, trade unions and social justice to the country.

Members of the Pakistan Workers Federation rally for a new Industrial Relations Act.

Credit: Pakistan Workers Federation

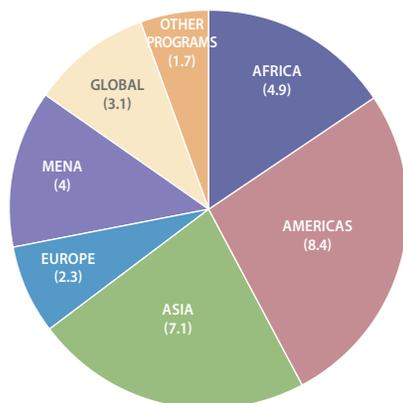
FINANCIAL Snapshot

Solidarity Center

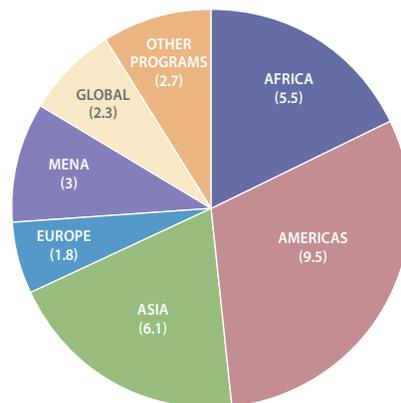
YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2010, AND DECEMBER 31, 2011

SUPPORT AND REVENUE	2011	2010
Federal awards	\$ 28,602,918	\$ 28,552,508
In-kind contributions for federal awards	1,147,663	1,305,955
Other contributions (AFL CIO, foundations and affiliates)	492,315	714,155
Other revenues	307,081	253,458
Total support and revenue	30,549,977	30,826,085

REGIONAL SPENDING (\$ million)



2011



2010

Our 2011 Supporters

American Federation of Government Employees
 American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
 American Federation of Teachers
 Berger-Marks Foundation
 Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO
 Coalition of Black Trade Unionists
 Communications Workers of America
 Humanity United
 International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers
 International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers

International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers
 Maryland State and D.C. AFL-CIO
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 International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America
 United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union

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Special thanks to Tom Egan, John Hosinski, Jennifer Kuhlman, Lisa McGowan, Hanad Mohamud and Rudy Porter for assuming management or additional management roles during the period covered by this report.

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The Solidarity Center has 233 staff members in Washington, D.C., and around the world.

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PUBLICATIONS

The Plight of Shrimp-Processing Workers of Southwestern Bangladesh (2012)

Despite a labor code that addresses pay, working hours, and on-the-job conditions, Bangladeshi shrimp-processing workers say they still face inadequate health and safety protections at work, receive less than the minimum wage and are denied the benefits to which they are entitled. This report is based on in-depth interviews with more than 700 permanent and contract workers at 36 seafood-processing plants in southwestern Bangladesh.

A Post-Earthquake Living Wage Estimate for Apparel Workers in the SONAPI Export Processing Zone (2011)

In a unique survey format, export-apparel workers in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, interviewed their colleagues to identify overall cost-of-living and earnings levels since the January 12, 2010, earthquake. The resulting snapshot study found that while the cost of living has increased, the minimum wage has remained the same, and Haitian workers find it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to provide for themselves and their families.

Degradation of Work: Oil and Casualization of Labor in the Niger Delta (2011)

A job in Nigeria's oil and gas industry once provided hope for raising working and living standards in a country where the majority of workers cannot count on steady jobs and 70 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Now Nigeria's oil workers, who fought hard for their rights and good jobs within the industry, are losing out to "casualization," a global trend in which formal jobs with good pay and benefits are replaced with temporary, short-term, outsourced or otherwise informal employment.

SOLIDARITY CENTER RESEARCH ON VULNERABLE WORKERS

In 2011, the Solidarity Center launched a multiyear research project to study the informal economy, migration and gender—all of which comprise vulnerable workers who have few rights and remain at the bottom of the wage scale. Focusing first on the informal economy, Solidarity Center research partners Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) produced the first four reports in this five-year series. The reports were funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy: A Review of the Literature on Organizing in Africa, Asia, Latin America, North America and Western, Central and Eastern Europe (2012)

Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations examines commonalities and differences in the efforts of workers worldwide, laboring in the informal economy, to form and join trade unions. This literature review considers country employment relations policy frameworks, "informal" workers' ability to organize and unions' efforts to organize and represent them.

WIEGO Research Project: Informal Workers' Organizing (2012)

WIEGO researchers reviewed its literature on workers in the informal economy, concluding that no single organizing model fits all situations of informal workers, and any approach to organizing must be inclusive rather than exclusive.

Informal Economy: Law and Policy Demands—Lessons from the WIEGO India Pilot Study (2012)

WIEGO's Law and Informal Economy project, initiated by a pilot study in India in 2008, is aimed at contributing to the development of an enabling legal environment for informal workers that promotes work and economic opportunity, worker rights, benefits and protection. This report highlights common themes and issues as well as political and economic implications of legal demands by and for informal workers.

Gender Equality and Labor Movements: Toward a Global Perspective (2012)

This Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations study looks at the gender gap in union organizing, union leadership and union priorities; details "best practice" approaches for lessening gender inequalities and ensuring greater opportunity, freedom and security for all; and reflects on new avenues for future research.

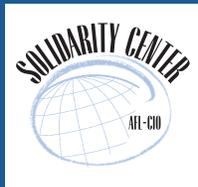
In Memoriam

The Solidarity Center lost one of its own in 2011. Jason Campbell, country program director for West Africa, died following an accident in Abuja, Nigeria. He was 35. Jason ran the Solidarity Center's programs in Nigeria and Liberia for two years, helping local unions organize new members and improve health and safety programs. He had a deep commitment to social justice and was a longtime trade unionist. His support for the working people in Africa and the United States, especially those least empowered, is his significant legacy.

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