

SOLIDARITY CENTER

PROMOTING WORKER RIGHTS
WORLDWIDE



2016 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 voice for dignity on the job, justice in their communities and greater equality in the global economy.

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ON THE COVER:

Waraluk Panngam, 27, has worked three years at the Ford Motor Company assembly plant in Rayong, Thailand, where she is a member of the Thailand Automobile Workers Unions, a Solidarity Center partner. Like most of the factory workers in the Rayong industrial area, Panngam, who was raised in Surin Province in northeast Thailand, migrated there for a job. Photo: Solidarity Center/Julian Hadden



20 YEARS OF STANDING WITH WORKERS AND ADVOCATING FOR LABOR RIGHTS FOR ALL

OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS...

The Solidarity Center marks its 20th anniversary in 2017 as the largest U.S.-based international worker rights organization.

With the consistent, long-term partnership of hundreds of allies from the labor, migration, gender, human rights and democracy communities, the Solidarity Center has advanced its core values of equality and inclusion; solidarity; partnership; rights-based worker empowerment; and the dignity of work. For the last 20 years, the Solidarity Center has supported women and men around the world as they sought safe and dignified livelihoods, recognition of their fundamental labor rights and a voice in shaping the work conditions and public policies that impact their lives.

Over the next 20 years, the Solidarity Center will challenge growing global injustice and economic inequality; strive to dismantle the overlapping systems of discrimination that trap and exploit workers; support, defend and expand workers' right to organize for their benefit and protection; and build a transnational rule of law response to the exploitation of workers in all its forms—to afford workers a remedy and to hold corporations and governments accountable and build grassroots democracy.

We are ready to begin building our next 20 years, joining together with unions and other allies to empower workers around the world to achieve decent work and more just societies.



ORGANIZING AND BARGAINING

Solidarity Center support, training and comprehensive worker rights education programs have helped hundreds of thousands of workers in countries from Guatemala to Thailand win a voice at work with union representation. Through their unions, workers have negotiated higher wages and safer workplaces, and have improved the lives of their families and communities. Since the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh in 2013, for example, the Solidarity Center has provided organizing stipends, training in conflict resolution and collective bargaining, and mentorship to organizers, who have supported workers as they organized most of the of 450 new garment-worker unions—covering more than 216,000 workers.

Swazi migrant mine worker Mduzuzi Thabethe says he has fewer workplace rights than his South African co-workers. His union, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union, is working to improve conditions for migrants like him. Photo: Solidarity Center/Evidence Holdings (2017)



PRECARIOUS AND INFORMAL WORK

As part of a worldwide campaign to enshrine labor rights for domestic workers, the Solidarity Center joined other global advocates in pushing for passage of the International Labor Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention 189. Passed in 2011, the convention marked a major milestone, signaling recognition that the 53 million, mostly women workers who labor in households, often in isolation and at risk of exploitation and abuse, deserve full protection of labor laws. And in Zimbabwe, where public and private companies had not been paying tens of thousands of workers for months, or sometimes years, at a time, the Solidarity Center and its union allies documented the crisis of wage theft and raised awareness about its impact on workers, families and communities.



ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The Solidarity Center employed international human rights protocols and legal instruments—among them test cases—

to advocate for marginalized populations, including migrant and women workers, in countries such as Mexico; facilitated access to justice for vulnerable workers seeking unpaid wages and compensation for injuries at work in Ukraine and other countries; and helped establish innovative alternative dispute resolution programs, for example, in Cambodia. Solidarity Center efforts to achieve national labor law reform have meant recognition of workplace rights for millions of workers, most recently in Iraq, where the Solidarity Center helped Iraqi unions coalesce around and draft a labor law, passed in 2015, that provides for collective bargaining, further limits child labor, improves rights for migrant workers and is the country's first legislation to address sexual harassment at work.



GENDER EQUALITY

Working to change entrenched social and economic forces of gender discrimination and inequality at the workplace and within unions, the Solidarity Center has championed equal inclusion of women workers in all its education

programs, providing a foundation for women to take leading roles in their unions, such as in Morocco. In Honduras, since 2009, 48 women from the apparel sector who went through the Solidarity Center's leadership development trainings have taken on leadership roles within their union, federation or confederation—and trained other union women to do the same.

MIGRATION AND TRAFFICKING



The Solidarity Center has helped unions to embrace migrant workers in their unions in the construction sector in the Dominican Republic; persuaded policymakers globally to eliminate onerous recruitment fees for migrant workers, which often result in debt bondage; connected unions in South Asia with unions in the Middle East to facilitate protection of South Asian migrant worker rights; and provided migrant farm workers in South Africa with access to justice when their employer denied them the legal minimum wage, subjected them to violence and evicted them from their homes.



THE FREEDOM TO ASSOCIATE—to form unions and join together to improve workplaces and achieve a voice at work and in society—is a fundamental human right. Yet today, the vast majority of the world’s workers are disenfranchised from their right to association, either by exclusion or outright oppression, according to the 2016 report, **Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association in the Workplace**, to which the Solidarity Center contributed.

In conjunction with the report’s release by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in October, the Solidarity Center co-sponsored a high-level meeting at UN headquarters in New York. Co-sponsors included the AFL-CIO, Ford Foundation, Human Rights Watch and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

As the report points out, without assembly and association rights, workers “have little leverage to change the conditions that entrench poverty, fuel inequality and limit democracy.” And

over the past year, the Solidarity Center has helped educate workers about their workplace rights—whether in factories, on farms, at construction sites or across the public sector.

Longtime Solidarity Center ally, the Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT), and the government of **Tunisia** struck an agreement to boost long-stagnant salaries and provide bonuses for public employees.

Hundreds of miners, forklift drivers and other workers at ArcelorMittal in **Liberia** regained the jobs they lost following the 2014 Ebola epidemic and won back benefits as part of a new collective bargaining agreement negotiated by the United Workers Union of Liberia (UWUL). The chief union negotiator and team members had all participated in Solidarity Center training programs.

In **El Salvador**, the sugarcane cutters union, SITRACANA, affiliated 936 new members between October 2016 and April 2017. In that same timeframe, the Solidarity Center supported SITRACANA

with 13 trainings—labor rights, union organizing, basics of unionism and leadership development—bolstering union leaders’ ability to communicate with and educate workers about their rights and how to represent their interests.

Nearly 7,000 manufacturing, automotive and technical workers in **Thailand** joined unions such as the Thai Confederation of Electrical Appliances and the Thailand Electronic Automobile and Metalworkers, whose leaders took part in Solidarity Center organizing and other support trainings.

In **Georgia**, the Educators and Scientists Free Trade Union (ESFTUG) signed an agreement with the Minister of Education in March recognizing the union as the national representative of teachers. The Solidarity Center provided legal support and training for leaders and union activists.

In **Myanmar**, the Confederation of Trade Unions-Myanmar (CTUM) added 7,000 members with Solidarity Center support—including stipends for 14 full-time organizers and organizing trainings.

Knitter Abduraim ulu Yman with some 200 co-workers—of whom 90 percent are between the ages of 18 and 25—negotiated to improve safety and health conditions at their Kyrgyzstan factory. Photo: Solidarity Center/ Lola Abdukadyrova (2017)



TODAY, MORE THAN 60 PERCENT of the world's workers labor in the informal economy, where employment relationships are not legally regulated or socially protected. Many workers in informal employment comprise the hidden workforce of global supply chain production, and although they are integral to the global economy, the push by global companies for suppliers to squeeze wages often means workers endure poverty paychecks, dangerous and unsafe working conditions, and eroding rights on the job.

In partnership with a broad array of worker rights advocates around the world, the Solidarity Center provides trainings and programs to help precarious workers better understand their rights, organize unions to mitigate job vulnerabilities, and learn to bargain for improved conditions and wages. Solidarity Center programs connect workers with unions, legal services and pro-worker organizations to challenge exploitation.

In **Kenya**, 2.5 million people struggle to make a living by doing irregular, precarious work. The lack of decent jobs pushes many to migrate, among them women who travel to the Middle East for often abusive household jobs. The Solidarity Center is supporting a campaign by KUDHEIHA union to educate migrant domestic workers about their rights—and the potential abuse they face—before they go abroad, and to demand good jobs at home.

In **Ukraine**, organizers for the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine, supported by the Solidarity Center, led bargaining campaigns for workers harmed by informalization and short-term contracts. The confederation helped limit short-term contracting for some 800 workers in music and arts institutions; addressed shift length and understaffing for 200 public transportation workers; and helped more than 2,000 street and market vendors negotiate for leases and secure commitments to halt evictions.

In rural **Brazil**, the Solidarity Center and longtime partner, the General Union of Workers (UGT), worked with members of the Karaja and Javae indigenous communities to generate sustainable livelihoods through the promotion of recycling and ecotourism projects. The UGT also is working with the communities to promote sustainable development and plan for climate change.

Through cooperation with the Solidarity Center and Iraqi unions, the government of **Iraq** began implementing the labor law that went into effect in 2015. Iraq's Minister of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) clarified that the law covers all contract and daily wage workers at all public ministries and announced that labor inspectors monitor locations with those workers. Working with the ministry, the Solidarity Center is helping train inspectors on the new law, resulting in one inspector reporting the first case of forced labor found during a labor inspection.

The Colombia Port Workers' union, in coalition with 66 civil-society organizations, rallied for full-time jobs in Buenaventura, Colombia's largest port, and basic public services. Photo: Solidarity Center/Mauricio Rodríguez Amaya (2017)



IN WORKING TO EMPOWER DISENFRANCHISED WORKERS and their families, the Solidarity Center over the past year furthered the inclusion of workers in democratic processes, including fair election laws; helped them right injustices by providing legal aid; addressed workplace discrimination and abusive labor practices, such as forced and child labor; and championed the civil liberties required to strengthen the role of unions as a fundamental segment of civil society.

In **Ukraine**, the Labor Initiative (LI) worker rights center, a project of the Solidarity Center and partner unions, fought to preserve gender and LGBT non-discrimination language in the Ukrainian labor code. LI helped organize national civil-society coalitions to strengthen and preserve protections in labor law. In March, Ukraine's president announced he would not sign new labor legislation absent non-discrimination clauses.

Cambodia has seen a spate of garment factory closures where unscrupulous owners flee the country to avoid paying workers back wages and severance. The Solidarity Center helps unions provide legal advice and representation for hundreds of workers. In January, after an eight-month battle in the courts and Arbitration Council and with legal support from the Solidarity Center, a major garment factory was forced to pay nearly \$170,000 to its abandoned workers, who had made high-end men's clothing for export before the factory closed.

The Solidarity Center partnered with the Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) to file claims on behalf of family and survivors of the 2012 massacre of 34 striking Marikana mine workers in **South Africa**, many whom are impoverished.

The **Honduran** government in January approved a new labor inspection law

that significantly boosts enforcement of the labor code and increases fines for violations. This new law stemmed from five years of Solidarity Center technical support to the Honduran trade union movement—the General Workers Central, Confederation of Honduran Workers and the Unified Confederation of Honduran Workers (CUTH)—and close coordination with the AFL-CIO.

In **Thailand**, a Chinese tire manufacturer agreed to re-assign pregnant workers to less hazardous work after two women suffered miscarriages and honored pregnant workers' right to take further time off in addition to their 90-day paid maternity leave, after Thai Labor Solidarity Committee, a Solidarity Center ally, filed a complaint with the Labor Protection and Welfare Department. The company has set up a committee, which includes union representatives, to resolve workplace safety concerns and other issues.

Iraqi workers pushed for an expansive labor law that provides for collective bargaining, improves migrant-worker rights and addresses sexual harassment at work. Photo: GFITU (2015)



TOO MANY WOMEN WORKERS GLOBALLY LABOR FOR VERY LOW WAGES, in unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, with little or no job security or social protections.

Through Solidarity Center programs that provide the training and foster the leadership skills needed to give women a voice in their unions and workplaces, women workers faced with the reality of gender discrimination and exploitative labor conditions have mobilized to assert and expand their rights at work. They are joining and leading unions, advocating for themselves and their families, and standing up for the rights of all workers worldwide.

Gender-based violence is regarded as the most prevalent human rights violation in the world, and women disproportionately experience **gender-based violence at work**. Yet with a lack of remedy for, and even recognition of this worldwide problem, the Solidarity Center is among global organizations

leading the campaign for international recognition of gender-based violence at work.

At the 2016 **Association of Women's Rights in Development (AWID)** forum, the Solidarity Center convened a two-day keynote session on gender-based violence at work and its links to larger struggles for economic and gender justice. Also at the September conference, where nearly 3,000 participants strategized around "Feminist Futures: Building Collective Power for Rights and Justice," Solidarity Center staff positioned working women's issues within the broader feminist development community.

The global union movement, together with the Solidarity Center and the AFL-CIO, brought together some 200 labor activists from around the world to New York for the annual **UN Commission on the Status of Women** meeting in March, conducting workshops and a four-day women's leadership training led

by the AFL-CIO. Labor and allied sessions included a Solidarity Center workshop on eliminating gender-based violence at work and a discussion on the "Impact of Corporate Power on Women's Economic Empowerment," co-sponsored by AWID and the Solidarity Center.

In **Honduras**, a committee of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted many recommendations by the Solidarity Center, Honduran trade unions and civil-society partners on ending gender-based violence. Among them: the need to implement measures to close the gender pay gap and allocate resources for labor inspectors to monitor working conditions, including instances of sexual harassment. The recommendations stemmed from a Solidarity Center fact-finding mission to Honduras that looked at issues of maternity protection, gender-based violence at work and non-discrimination of women in the agricultural and maquila sectors.

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Morocco's economy, and employs many women. At one farm, workers represented by the Democratic Labor Confederation (CDT) signed their first collective bargaining agreement in 2015, covering nearly 1,000 agricultural workers. Photo: Fadel Senna/AFP/Getty Images (2016)



GLOBALIZATION IS TAKING PLACE in the context of the largest migration of people in human history, from rural to urban areas, within countries and across borders. According to recent International Labor Organization estimates, 150.3 million migrant workers toil around the world.

To protect migrant workers from exploitation in the global economy and challenge powerful entities that control wealth and manipulate political systems, the Solidarity Center helps migrant workers raise their voices for just and equitable working conditions through freedom of association, the most effective means by which workers can achieve justice.

Of the 34 million African migrants, the vast majority are in search of decent work across borders in **Africa**. In January, the Solidarity Center conference, “Achieving Fair Migration: Roles of African Trade Unions and Their Partners,” brought

together some 140 union leaders and migrant worker activists from across the continent to **South Africa** to develop concrete steps around union cross-border cooperation, pre-departure assistance for workers seeking to migrate, organizing migrant workers and empowering workers migrating to **Middle East** countries.

The General Federation of **Bahrain** Trade Unions has successfully negotiated with three companies on behalf of some 4,200 non-union workers, including nearly 3,730 migrant workers, who were denied wages for more than three months. The Solidarity Center and GFBTU collaborate to develop innovative ways to protect and represent vulnerable categories of workers.

In **Sri Lanka**, the Solidarity Center-supported online labor rights portal Wedabima was accessed by users across 140 countries, including tens of thousands of Sri Lankans working in **Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea** and the **United Arab Emirates**.

More than 100 workers in **Kyrgyzstan** seeking to emigrate to **Russia** for jobs took part in Solidarity Center pre-departure training, learning about their legal rights, the conditions they may encounter as migrant workers and sources of assistance, including a Solidarity Center hotline established to address immediate needs of migrant workers.

Forced labor and human trafficking often go hand in hand, and in collaboration with the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (SBMI) and Jakarta Legal Aid Association, the Solidarity Center assisted the repatriation of migrant workers who had been trafficked to **Malaysia** from **Indonesia**, and helped Indonesian seafarers who had been trafficked onto foreign fishing vessels in **Trinidad** and **Tobago** win restitution.

Some 200 people attended a migrant worker rights forum in Mombasa, Kenya, spearheaded by long-time Solidarity Center partner KUDHEIHA, as part of a campaign to educate workers on the perils of migrating to the Middle East. Photo: Solidarity Center/ Deddeh Tulay (2017)

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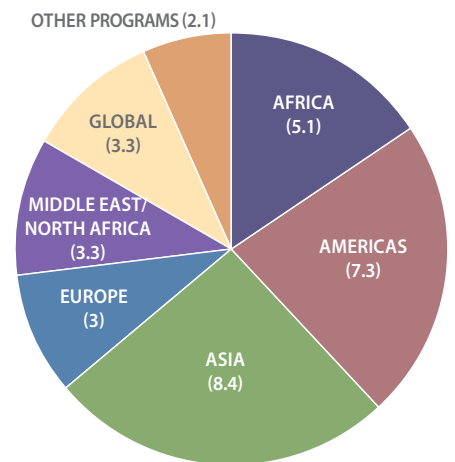
Darcy Wertz, Director of Operations

Solidarity Center

YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2016 AND 2015

SUPPORT AND REVENUE	2016	2015
Federal awards	\$ 29,976,848	\$ 29,698,228
In-kind contributions for federal awards	\$ 1,130,451	\$ 1,130,341
Other contributions (AFL-CIO, foundations and affiliates)	\$ 935,358	\$ 597,694
Other revenues	\$ 161,757	(\$76,686)
Total support and revenue	\$ 32,204,414	\$ 31,349,577

FY 2016 REGIONAL SPENDING
(\$ in millions)



In 2016–2017, the Solidarity Center published the following reports:

Challenging Corporate Power: Struggles for Women’s Rights, Economic and Gender Justice, co-released with the Association of Women in Development (2016)

Rebuilding Nepal: Creating Good Jobs Amid Reconstruction and Migration, co-produced with JustJobs Network (2017)

Workers in Post-Civil War Jaffna (Sri Lanka) (2016)



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