

A man wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, dark pants, and a dark cap is standing next to large bunches of green bananas. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. A red-handled tool is visible in his belt. The background shows more banana bunches and some blue plastic covering.

SOLIDARITY CENTER

PROMOTING WORKER RIGHTS
WORLDWIDE

2021 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 Education Fund is a registered charitable organization tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent of applicable laws. A summary of activities for 2020 and financial highlights for the year ending November 30, 2020, are described in this report. For more information or to make a contribution, please contact Arina Lester, lead development officer, at alester@solidaritycenter.org.

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Design: Deepika Mehta

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ON THE COVER:

A worker at a multinational banana company selects bananas for export in Colombia, where unions are seeking to protect agricultural workers' rights, health and dignity. Photo: Luis Acosta/AFP via Getty Images



DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, the world took a big first step toward acknowledging essential workers and their vital role in taking care of us. But the reality is that half of the workers around the globe had no social safety nets before COVID-19. Without a push from workers and their allies, working people are not going to magically gain steady paychecks, respect on the job and democracy that delivers.

That's why the Solidarity Center, together with the global labor movement, is committed to building a post-pandemic future in which workers everywhere have a new social contract. We saw the importance of social protection systems in mitigating the pandemic's health and economic impacts. A new social contract would protect workers against such future shocks.

The global economic model has failed working people. Many toil in global supply chains that facilitate exploitation and oppression. The growing gig economy is another way corporations

shirk responsibility and squeeze workers while making millions in profits. Women, who comprise the majority of essential workers, and migrant workers, millions of whom were stranded without pay during lockdowns, have especially suffered, as discrimination and marginalization lead to low pay and, often, no job security.

And, increasingly, workers and their communities are confronting a global climate crisis that is costing them their jobs and health. That's why this year, the Solidarity Center launched a climate justice initiative, joining with allies to build a movement in which workers are at the table to ensure a just transition to green jobs that support workers and their families.

Violations of worker rights restrict democracy, and COVID-19 has intensified the trend toward such repression. The rights to strike and form unions are fundamental to civic participation, and a new social contract will safeguard the freedom to form organizations and collectively bargain for workplace rights.

One of the strongest champions of worker rights in the United States and the world was AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, who's passing this year was mourned by the global labor movement. The Solidarity Center benefited immensely from his leadership of the Board of Trustees, where he shared his vision of a world where workers across borders have a collective voice in achieving safe and dignified work, balancing power toward greater equality within the global economy.

Workers are able to achieve this future. Despite COVID-19 they have connected, building the collective strength to win concrete changes. The Solidarity Center is supporting their efforts to make real a future centered on fairness and equality that workers everywhere deserve.

In Solidarity,

Shawna Bader-Blau, Executive Director

The Solidarity Center launched a climate justice initiative this year, joining with allies to build a worker-centered global climate justice movement. Photo: Rafiqur Rahman Raqu/DFID



THE PANDEMIC HAS EXPOSED WIDESPREAD INEQUITIES, including a yawning wealth gap and the devastation of workers' economic security worldwide. Together with our partners and in allied coalitions, the Solidarity Center is pressing for reform of the global economic model to create a new social contract for a just and sustainable future. For essential workers, and all workers, that means ensuring rights on the job like living minimum wages, workplace health and safety, universal social protection and an end to discrimination. A new social contract—shaped by and with workers—must include creation of climate-friendly jobs through a just transition that secures the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities.

Despite challenges arising from the pandemic, essential workers and Solidarity Center partners made significant gains in 2021. Street vendors in **Brazil**, through the National Union of Street Vendors Workers (UNICAB),

achieved basic emergency income to ensure they could survive during lockdowns. UNICAB also won support of the Brazil National Congress to create a Parliamentary Front to defend informal traders' rights, the first time they will be represented at the national level.

In **Nigeria**, informal economy workers used their collective power through the Federation of Informal Workers' Organizations of Nigeria to build coalitions to end evictions during the pandemic, address unfair taxation of vendors and win recognition by government and society that they must have the same rights and respect as all workers.

Agricultural workers in **Jordan** successfully campaigned for a landmark law that will bring them safer jobs, overtime pay, paid sick leave and annual leave, and 10 weeks paid maternity leave.

Garment workers and their union in **Haiti** negotiated a landmark settlement

with a factory in Port-au-Prince that provided a total of \$15,480 in back pay to 1,200 workers.

In **Ukraine**, when the food delivery company, Bolt, instituted a 50 percent wage cut, workers waged a digital strike, collectively logging out of the app at 2 p.m. and disrupting the company's ability to fulfill evening dinner orders.

In September, the Solidarity Center co-sponsored a first-of-its-kind worldwide virtual gathering where workers who provided essential services during the pandemic joined with actors, global union leaders and policymakers to share their experiences and demand a response that urgently and effectively protects all people, especially the most marginalized. Hosted by actor Sophia Bush, the **Essential Workers Summit: Building a Just Future for All**, included Solidarity Center partners from **Bangladesh, Jordan, Kenya, and Mexico and Tunisia**.

Amina Lawal, a Solidarity Center-trained GBVH researcher, guides Nigerian Labor Congress leaders in Lagos's Mile 12 market. Photo: Solidarity Center/Nkechi Odinukwe



WOMEN WORKERS, many of whom hold essential jobs, have disproportionately experienced hardship throughout the pandemic, contending with higher rates of unemployment, discrimination and exposure to the virus, and skyrocketing rates of gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH). The pandemic also has exacerbated discrimination and exclusion that violate the human rights of workers from the Black, Brown, Indigenous, LGBTQ and disability communities, preventing their full access to education, health care and employment. Unions worldwide are organizing to demand that government responses to the pandemic's economic and social impacts center on addressing the needs and experiences of all who have been denied their full rights at the workplace, ensuring safety and respect for all workers.

A legally binding and worker-led agreement that targets gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) went into effect for 10,000 textile workers at

five factories in **Lesotho** who produce jeans for global brands. The program provides GBVH awareness training, a confidential reporting system and independent enforcement processes. The Solidarity Center is among signatories to the agreement, along with the factory owner, brands, local unions and worker and women's rights NGOs.

Throughout **Southeast Europe**, the Solidarity Center is partnering with a broad union network, including U.S.-based **Pride at Work**, to dismantle barriers for LGBTQ workers by addressing harassment and discrimination on the job.

Union women and Solidarity Center partners from the **Middle East** and **North Africa** spearheaded a petition calling for governments to ratify International Labor Organization Convention 190, the landmark global labor standard adopted in June 2019 to eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work, including GBVH.

In conjunction with International Women's Day, the Solidarity Center partnered with the **Coalition of Labor Union Women** (CLUW) and other allies in leading three events during the United Nations NGO Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) Virtual Forum. Among them, the panel "Ever Essential: Women's Work Is the Backbone of the Global Economy," with Solidarity Center partners from **Colombia, Ghana** and **Ukraine**.

Women agricultural workers in **Jordan, Morocco** and **Tunisia** are campaigning for workplace safety on their commute and job, including from violence and harassment. The Solidarity Center supported partners in outreach to the workers.

The Solidarity Center updated its popular **whiteboard animation video** that explains GBVH at work to include Convention 190 and highlight how union activists can ensure countries ratify this landmark agreement.

Women agricultural workers in Morocco are among those in North Africa campaigning for a workplace free of violence and harassment on their commute and at their job. Photo: Solidarity Center/ Zineb Arraki



EVEN AS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC deepened economic and social precarity and exacerbated long-standing workplace inequities, workers mobilized in a groundswell of demand for fundamental rights and safety at work, fighting for assistance for those hardest hit. Workers and their unions, who had been building grassroots power long before the pandemic struck, are leading a response to COVID-19 that aims to rebuild through more democratic, accountable and sustainable economies, and resilient societies. They are championing issues core to an inclusive future of work: universal social protection; maximum working hours; occupational health and safety as a human right; and realization of fundamental worker rights, especially the right to form unions and collectively bargain.

The 4 million members of the Nigerian Labor Congress successfully stood up against attempts by the government in **Nigeria** to raise taxes on basic goods and decrease subsidies on key items like fuel—even as millions of workers struggled without jobs or wages during the pandemic—forcing the government to enact policies to help workers during COVID-19.

In **Thailand**, where migrant rights groups estimate that, since the pandemic, 700,000 workers are either unemployed or not receiving full pay. Thai unions connected jobless migrant workers with aid organizations and other vital support.

Teachers across **Morocco** protested a government crackdown on their fundamental freedom to strike, demanded improved working conditions for contractual teachers and called on the government to engage in real social dialogue to develop legislation consistent with international law.

After mine workers in **Ukraine** waged large-scale rallies to protest \$71 million in wage theft perpetrated by state-owned coal-mining enterprises, the country's Ministry of Energy agreed to broad concessions, including transferring more than \$30 million to state-owned coal mining companies' accounts to pay back wages.

Fishers in Maldives rally, urging authorities to address safety and health concerns and stop environmentally damaging practices that impact fisheries. Photo: Maldives Trade Union Congress



MANY, LARGELY ESSENTIAL WORKERS, remain outside the scope of labor law—either through explicit exclusion or because their jobs lie in the informal economy. Unions around the world are re-envisioning worker organizing and representation to center on those excluded from labor law protections and traditional employment, such as informal-sector, gig and migrant workers.

Worker justice also is increasingly connected to climate justice, as flooding, drought and extreme weather events push workers to migrate, often into low-wage jobs under dangerous conditions, while workers in highly polluting industries face the dual impacts of occupational health and safety hazards and environmental degradation. Marginalized workers already are experiencing some of the worst impacts of climate change. Workers and their unions are building a global climate justice movement, bolstered by their support from, and participation in, broad-based coalitions as well as long-term experience in people-centered policy and legislative

advocacy in their respective countries.

The Solidarity Center launched a partner-informed, inclusive **just transition plan** to support worker- and union-driven climate solutions to establish a more equitable and sustainable economy around the world while ensuring decent work and a strong labor movement.

With its partners in **Southeast Asia**, the Solidarity Center launched a Justice for Wage Theft campaign demanding governments address wage theft perpetrated against millions of migrant workers in the wake of the pandemic—including those forcibly repatriated and now trapped in debt bondage, one of the most prevalent forms of forced labor worldwide.

Long denied workplace injury compensation, **South Africa's** 1 million privately employed domestic workers celebrated a landmark legal win making them eligible for compensation for disability, medical expenses and survivor benefits. The Solidarity Center and its

partners in South Africa supported their efforts for equal treatment under the law.

In **Palestine**, the formation this year of a 41-member National Alliance for Social Justice, headed by the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), seeks to bolster workers' efforts to achieve rights and respect at work by crafting Palestinian labor law in line with international labor standards and expand equitable legislation for all Palestinians.

Among Solidarity Center partners moving forward with just transition programs, COTU-Kenya successfully represented the interests of **Kenya's** most vulnerable citizens in multiple fora and is a member of Kenya's National Climate Change Council that advises government.

Unions representing **Colombia's** energy and mining sector workers are supporting the country's transition to cleaner energy while preserving decades-long, hard-fought progress in turning often unsafe and poorly paid jobs into safer, family-sustaining livelihoods.

In Kenya, Solidarity Center partners are moving forward with just transition plans that ensure environmentally sound practices and good jobs.
Photo: ILO



WITH DEMOCRACY UNDER SIEGE

GLOBALLY workers and their unions—even under brutal conditions—are joining to stand up for their rights on the job and in their communities. As active champions of democratic freedoms, workers, their unions and associations are the most powerful antidote to authoritarianism. In country after country, they are demanding government transparency and an end to corruption that drains resources from communities, and pushing employers to pay decent wages and provide safe workplaces. And in some countries, such as Belarus and Myanmar, workers are leading nationwide protests and risking their lives to oppose dictatorships tearing apart the fabric of civic freedom.

Because the freedom to organize and bargain collectively is a cornerstone of democracy, the Solidarity Center co-sponsored an official Summit for Democracy side event featuring U.S. Secretary of Labor Martin J. Walsh and AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler, together

with representatives of the International Trade Union Confederation, U.S. Agency for International Development and U.S. Department of State in December. The event highlighted the role of worker voice and rights as fundamental to democracy and was designed to spur global action in support of freedom of association and collective bargaining.

After the military overthrew **Myanmar's** democratically elected government, the country's garment workers, most young women, were the first to stand up to defend their right to a free society. The government moved quickly to ban unions because of their important role in standing for democracy, and thousands of workers and union leaders were forced to flee. Now part of the country-wide Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), they are speaking out from safe houses, urging multinational corporations to help workers by not reopening garment factories, cease investing in the country and cast their support for a peaceful return to democracy.

Workers and their unions—many of them women—also have been on the frontlines in the uprising against the repressive regime in **Belarus**, undaunted by state-sponsored violence after launching protests in 2020 to demand peaceful and democratic elections. They are defying widespread arrests, firings and repression to demand fair elections, and the repeal of laws that restrict the freedom to peacefully gather, form unions, bargain collectively and strike.

Colombian workers and their unions, in coalition with women, Black and Indigenous communities, rural workers, the LGBTQ community and young people, halted the government's attempt to give wealthy corporations and rich individuals huge tax breaks while raising taxes on working people. Through the National Strike Committee, hundreds of thousands of Colombians took to the streets for weeks in spring, defying the state's violence was directed against workers, women and marginalized communities.

Garment workers were among the first to protest the military coup in Myanmar, donning hard hats as protection against government violence. Photo: Federation of General Workers Myanmar

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What Difference Does a Union Make? Banana Plantations in the North and South of Guatemala

(January 2021, English, Spanish)

What Happens Underground Stays Underground: A Study of Experiences of Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment of Women Workers in the South African Mining Industry (January 2021)**The COVID-19 Pandemic and Workers in Cambodia** (March 2021)**Strawberry Global Supply Chains in Mexico** (March 2021)**Fighting for Work with Dignity in the Fields: Agriculture Global Supply Chains in Morocco, Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico** (August 2021)**Breaking the Silence: Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria's World of Work** (October 2021)**Overworked and Underpaid: Sri Lanka's Garment Workers Left Hanging by a Thread** (October 2021)**The Persistence of Private Power: Sacrificing Rights for Wages—A Qualitative Survey of Human Rights Violations Against Live-in Domestic Workers in South Africa** (December 2021)**International Lawyers Assisting Workers Network/Solidarity Center****Taken for a Ride: Litigating the Digital Platform Model** (March 2021)

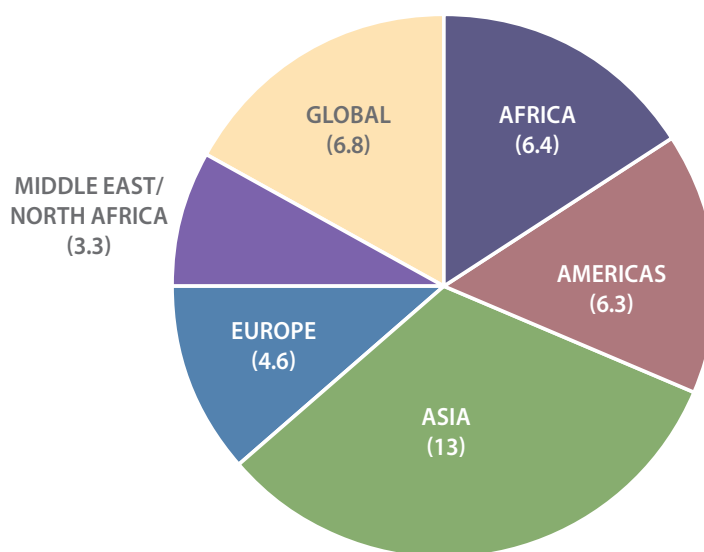
Solidarity Center

YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020, AND 2019

SUPPORT AND REVENUE	2020	2019
Federal awards	\$38,862,870	\$36,382,487
In-kind contributions for federal awards	557,413	1,330,533
Other contributions (unions, foundations, institutional donors, individuals)	1,538,169	1,306,477
Other revenues	1,029,002	618,358
Total support and revenue	\$41,987,454	\$39,637,855

FY 2020 REGIONAL SPENDING

(\$ in millions)





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