
INTERNATIONAL LABOR RIGHTS FORUM



2016 ANNUAL REPORT

30 YEARS 1986-2016

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THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR RIGHTS FORUM is a human rights organization advancing dignity and justice for workers in the global economy.

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*Organizations listed for identification purposes only
** Staff list as of July 2017

DEAR FRIENDS,

For three decades, ILRF has worked to strengthen U.S. policies and programs that advance labor standards. We continue to push for U.S. trade policies that protect worker organizers against violence, raise grievances to stop development financing where forced labor is used, and campaign to press corporations to end child and forced labor, prevent discrimination, and ensure workers' rights and safety.

ILRF's campaigns prioritize global solidarity, working from the premise that one worker's struggle for rights is inherently connected to all workers' struggles. We have built a strong community with our allies who share this outlook, working closely with Australian, Korean, and European advocates to harness as much economic leverage as possible in support of workers' rights. This community has grown as our campaigns have moved around the world, supporting flower workers in Colombia, garment workers in Bangladesh, cocoa farmers in Ivory Coast, and tobacco farmworkers in the U.S. and Malawi, to name a few.

Given our commitment to transnational solidarity, we are concerned by the uptick in popular support for far right and nativist political positions in the U.S. and Europe. Promises to protect U.S. workers and jobs and improve enforcement of trade agreements must be viewed in the context of an administration that is prioritizing the interests of wealthy corporations over human rights and labor rights. Openly protectionist stances, whether implemented or not, risk undermining U.S. credibility in applying diplomatic or trade-related pressure. A weaker position on human rights risks undoing many of the advances that have been made in demanding global corporations take on greater responsibility for the human rights violations in their supply chains.

Despite these discouraging signs, the resurgence of grassroots activism around racial justice, women's rights, and immigrant workers' rights gives us hope. Many U.S. immigrant workers see an immediate connection with their brothers and sisters around the globe. They understand intuitively the extent to which all workers' rights are connected. We all stand to learn from their leadership. In the past year, I have been inspired by berry farmworkers from Washington State and tobacco farmworkers from North Carolina, who have sought to engage their peers in Central America's fruit sector or Malawi's tobacco industry. We aim to build on and support more of these transnational, worker-driven campaigns in the coming years.

We are grateful to the community of activists and donors who have helped build and strengthen ILRF's network during the past three decades. If you are already part of that community, we thank you! If you have not yet gotten involved or are looking for more ways to stand up for workers' rights in the U.S. and around the world, [please join us.](#)

IN SOLIDARITY,


JUDY GEARHART
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ILRF



Front & back cover photos - Adobe Stock Images
Illustrations pages 1 & 2 - Rini Tempelton

COLOMBIA



PAKISTAN



1986 - 1995

- Founded by a coalition of trade unions and human rights NGOs that secured the first labor rights clause in U.S. trade policy, the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).
- Formed the Alliance for Responsible Trade with allies to demand transparency and advocate for labor rights provisions in NAFTA.
- Filed successful GSP complaint against Chile's repression of labor rights.
- Advocated for Sanders-Frank Amendment requiring the U.S. to demand rights considerations in World Bank and IMF programs.
- Exposed child labor in the Bangladesh apparel industry, resulting in a tripartite compact to move children into schools.
- Initiated Fairness in Flowers Campaign for workers' rights in Colombia and Ecuador.
- Conducted field studies on gender-based violence at work with grassroots partners in Kenya, Thailand, Mexico, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic.

1996 - 2005

- Filed first human rights case against a corporation under the Alien Tort Statute, John Doe I v. Unocal Corp, later reaching a legal settlement for Unocal's complicity in violations overseas.
- Launched Foul Ball campaign, leading to an ILO-Save the Children-UNICEF initiative to end home-based soccer ball production in Pakistan.
- Campaigned to amend the U.S. Tariff Act to ban the import of goods made with forced labor.
- Campaigned against pregnancy testing in Mexico and Central America.
- Worked with Kailash Satyarthi (2014 Nobel Peace Prize Recipient) to organize the Global March Against Child Labor, engaging 7 million people across 103 countries, for ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor.
- Joined White House initiative on transparency, the Apparel Industry Partnership.
- Filed successful GSP complaint against Thailand, leading to labor law reforms, including a significant reduction in the number of overtime hours.
- Launched Rights for Working Women Campaign to end workplace sexual harassment and other oppressive conditions that disproportionately impact women.
- Formed the China Program to train and foster a new generation of skilled labor law practitioners and provide support for workers' legal claims.

Colombian flower worker - Nora Ferm
Pakistani children - BBA

UZBEKISTAN



MALAWI



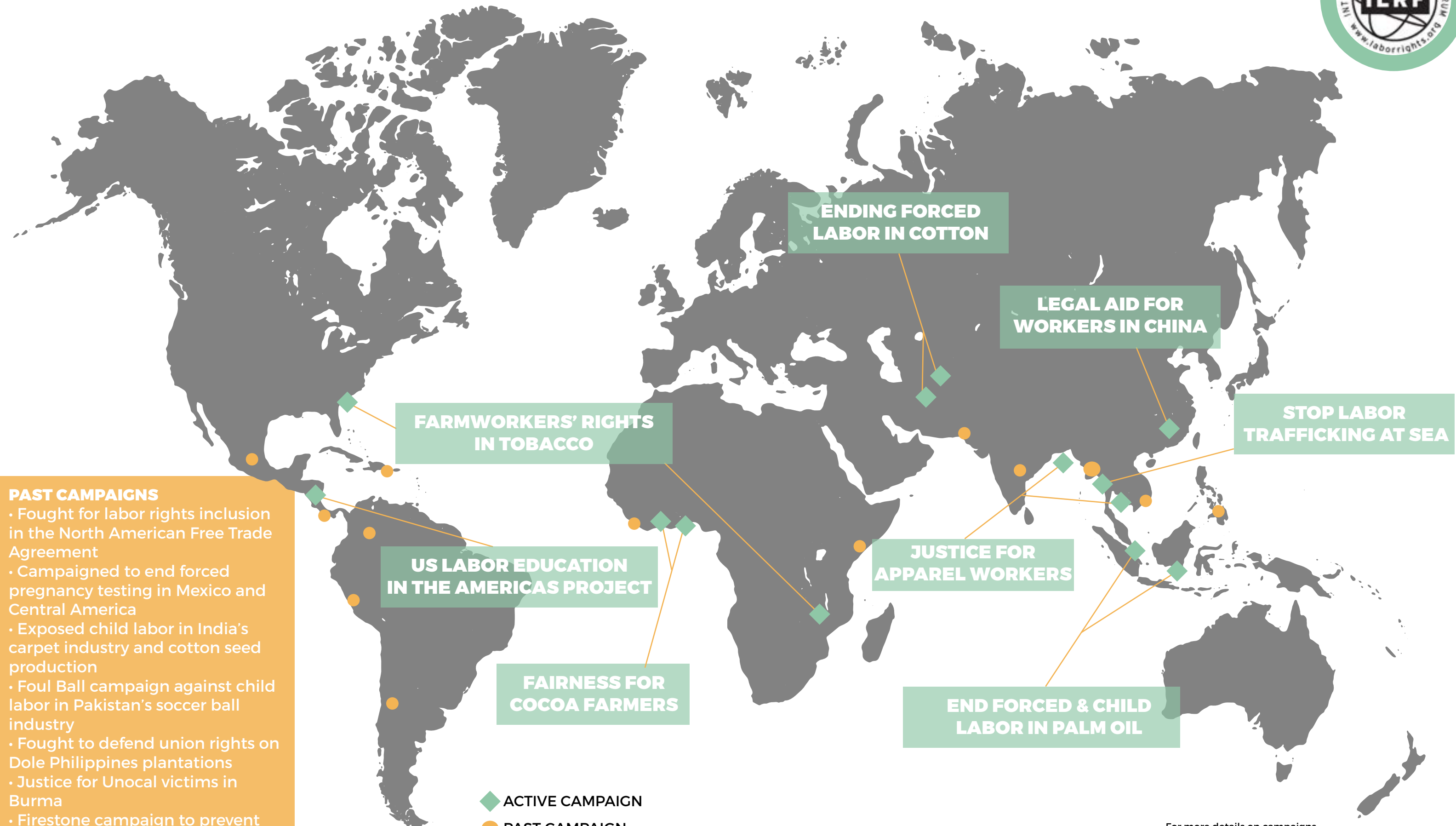
2006 - 2015

- Co-founded the Cotton Campaign, a global coalition of human rights NGOs, and labor, investor and business representatives to end state-run forced labor in cotton in Uzbekistan.
- Mobilized global support for Liberian rubber tappers' independent union, FAWUL, to expose child labor and win their first democratically negotiated collective bargaining agreement with Firestone.
- Documented rights violations at Dole Philippines and advocated for a high-level ILO mission to investigate intimidation by the armed forces.
- Inspired thousands of screenings of the Dark Side of Chocolate, exposing forced child labor in cocoa, and presented Hershey's with 100,000 petition signatures to "Raise the Bar," leading to Hershey's reform of its accountability policies.
- Supported negotiations and became a witness signatory to the transparent and legally-binding Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety, with over 200 apparel companies signing on.
- U.S. Labor Education in the Americas Project (USLEAP) becomes an ILRF program.
- Launched Seafood Working Group to advance workers' rights in Thailand's seafood industry.
- Led Cotton Campaign advocacy to pressure Uzbekistan to end use of forced child labor, the first time the government stopped forcing all children to pick cotton.
- Convened tobacco unions from Malawi and the U.S.-TOAWUM and FLOC - to launch a transnational campaign via the International Union of Food and Agricultural Workers Federation.
- Led a coalition of 26 NGOs to draft and drive uptake of the "Fair Labor Principles" in palm oil.
- Filed a Free Trade Agreement complaint on behalf of Peruvian unions against abusive, short-term contracts in export industries.
- Pressured apparel brands to fully fund a \$30 million dollar compensation fund for garment workers affected by the 2013 Rana Plaza building collapse.



Illustration - Rini Tempelton
Uzbek child in cotton field - UGF
Malawi women - Wikimedia Commons

OUR GLOBAL REACH



PAST CAMPAIGNS

- Fought for labor rights inclusion in the North American Free Trade Agreement
- Campaigned to end forced pregnancy testing in Mexico and Central America
- Exposed child labor in India's carpet industry and cotton seed production
- Foul Ball campaign against child labor in Pakistan's soccer ball industry
- Fought to defend union rights on Dole Philippines plantations
- Justice for Unocal victims in Burma
- Firestone campaign to prevent child labor in Liberia's rubber sector

- ◆ ACTIVE CAMPAIGN
- PAST CAMPAIGN

For more details on campaigns, please visit laborrights.org/30years

2016 YEAR IN REVIEW

PUBLISHED *Financing Forced Labor*, an indictment of how World Bank loans to Uzbekistan are aiding and abetting the country's state-run forced labor regime.

FILED A COMPLAINT, jointly with Uzbek victims of forced labor, at the Compliance Advisory Ombudsman of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), challenging loans the IFC has made to several private companies operating in Uzbekistan's cotton sector.

JOINED OECD WATCH, an NGO coalition dedicated to making the OECD National Contact Point system more responsive to workers seeking to hold corporations accountable.

CONVENED CIVIL SOCIETY AND INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES to discuss fairness for cocoa farmers in Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire, and launched a Child Labor Coalition working group.

ORGANIZED A CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING on Capitol Hill to launch *Our Voices, Our Safety*. Speakers included Representatives Levin, Schakowsky, and Speier, as well as officials from the AFL-CIO and the National Organization for Women. The report inspired Senator Murray and Congresswoman Speier to introduce a resolution supporting women workers' rights.

INVESTIGATED & EXPOSED the lack of transparency and delays in the U.S. corporate initiative, Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, securing a Guardian article on Walmart, Gap, VF, Target & Hudson's Bay's failure to address deadly hazards in dozens of factories.

WON WORKER REINSTATEMENT for 59 workers with a leading Honduran melon exporter, Suragroh, which had fired the workers after they organized a union.

CONVINCED Philip Morris International (PMI) to convene a meeting for Tobacco and Allied Workers Union of Malawi (TOAWUM) with the two largest tobacco leaf brokers in Malawi.

PRESSURED FELDA, a Malaysian palm oil giant, to stop holding workers' passports, and PepsiCo to address labor violations on the Indonesian palm plantations of its partner, Indofood's.



SUPPORTED CHINESE ORGANIZATIONS THAT PROVIDED LEGAL CONSULTATION to 10,763 rural Chinese migrant workers, in 430 labor dispute cases.

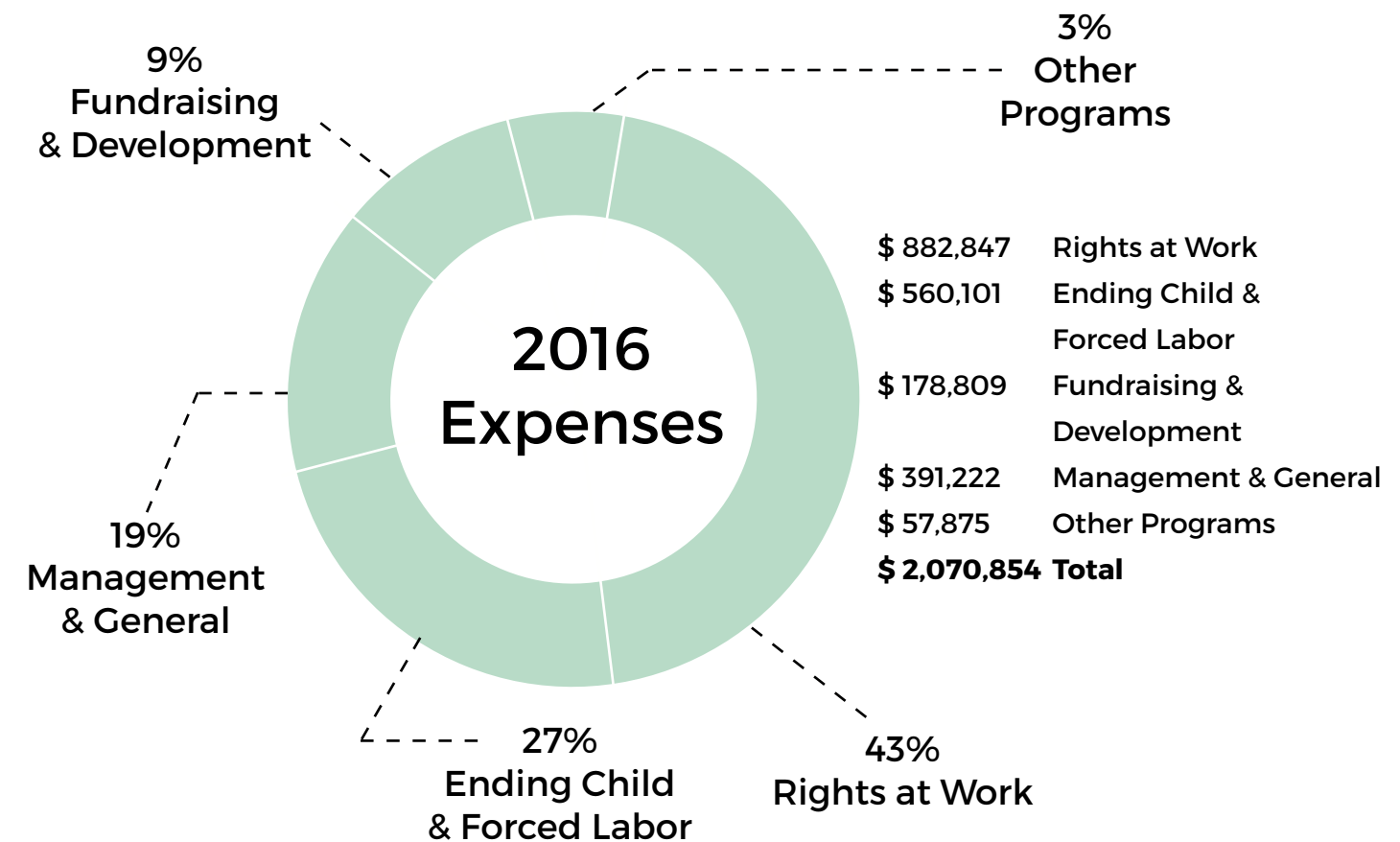
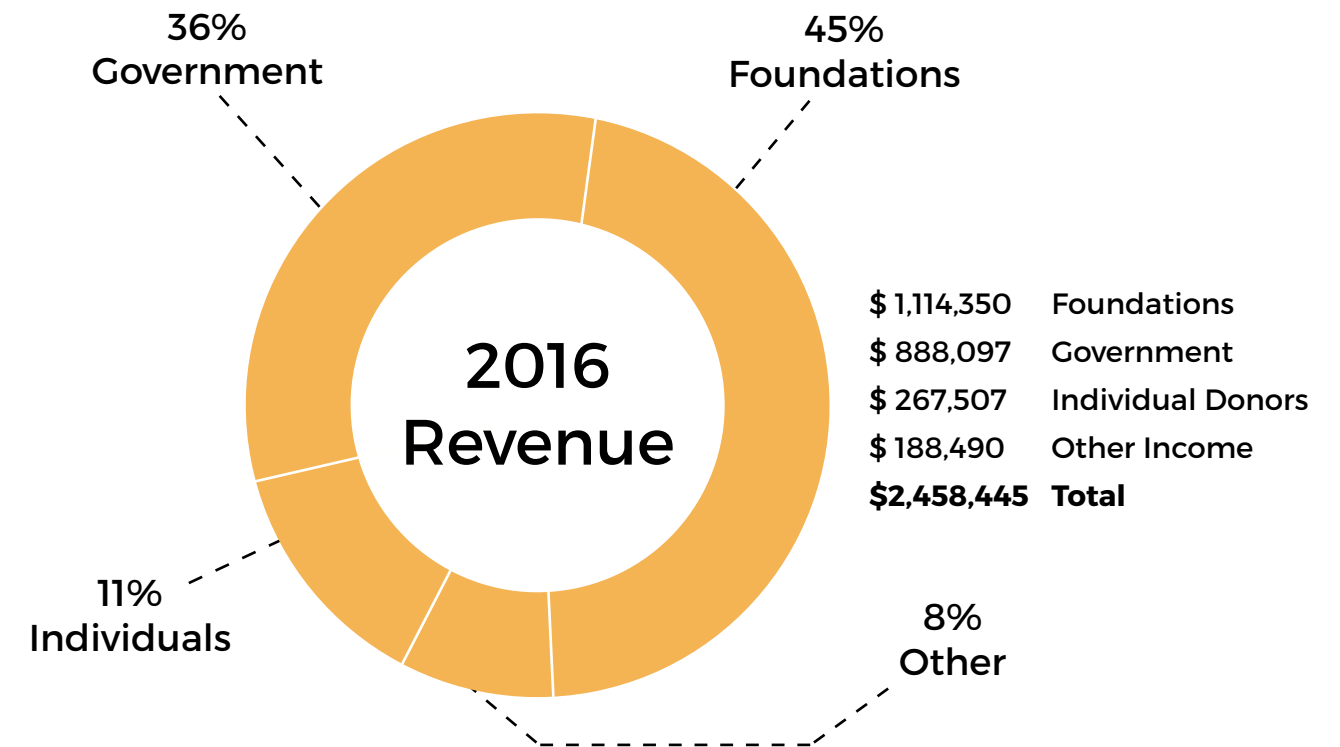
HOSTED A 3-DAY CONFERENCE in Hong Kong on labor rights of women workers in global apparel supply chains with women leaders from six countries.

CAMPAIGNED FOR THE RELEASE OF DOZENS OF LABOR ACTIVISTS imprisoned in Bangladesh under falsified criminal charges in retaliation for peaceful demonstrations demanding higher wages.

RAISED AWARENESS of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as part of the 16 Days of Action campaign, which included daily graphics about the prevalence of GBV in the workplace.

LAUNCHED INDEPENDENT MONITORING @ SEA with a consensus-based process among government, industry, and civil society to develop trafficking indicators and a monitoring tool.

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United Auto Workers
United Food & Commercial Workers
United Steelworkers
WOLA (Washington Office on Latin America)

*Recurring donors who individually gave over \$100 in 2016

The background of the entire page is a photograph. It shows a pair of hands, likely belonging to a person of African descent, cupping a mound of dark, rich soil. A small, vibrant green seedling with three leaves is growing out of the soil. The background is dark with soft, out-of-focus light spots (bokeh) in shades of yellow and green, suggesting an indoor setting with warm lighting.

ADVANCING DIGNITY AND JUSTICE FOR
WORKERS IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY
