INTERNATIONAL LABOR RIGHTS FORUM

Dignity and Justice for Workers Worldwide

BI-ANNUAL REPORT
+ New Strategic Approach 2014-2016
Dear friends,

During the past two years, ILRF has seen some of the most intense media attention to our issues since we began in 1986. We are excited to share with you several major wins in our campaigns against child labor, forced labor and the repression of workers’ rights and our strategies for building on these wins in the coming years. We are redoubling our fight to place workers’ rights and workers’ ability to drive change at the center of solutions to poverty and global injustice.

All of our wins come from working closely with our grassroots partners on the ground and building transnational coalitions to support their goals. We could not have done any of it without our long-time supporters – big and small – who contribute the time, energy and financial support needed to keep our movement going. We are especially grateful to our Board of Directors for their collaboration on a three-year strategic plan to guide our work through 2016. We honed in on ILRF’s three-part approach to driving social change – strengthening grassroots voices, demanding corporate accountability, and securing policy reforms and access to legal remedy for workers – which is presented on page 6. We use this new approach to outline our advances in the three flagship campaigns and two regional programs featured on the following pages.

As we reflect on the past two years we remain shaken by the senseless loss of thousands of garment workers’ lives in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Starting with the Ali Enterprises fire in Pakistan on September 11, 2012, followed by the Tazreen Fashions fire on November 24, 2012 and then, with the horrendous collapse of the Rana Plaza factories on April 24th, 2013, we lost 1,500 garment workers in eight months, most of them young women.

All of these tragedies occurred in factories that had been inspected multiple times by global brands. Yet all of these systems were confidential and voluntary so brands that had safety concerns could pull their orders without telling workers or labor inspectors. Meanwhile, workers who raised concerns about smoke or building safety were told to continue working. ILRF’s vision for change is to turn this approach around: we need to drive corporations out of a secretive, noncommittal approach to workers’ rights, ensure governments are ultimately upholding their duties to protect workers, and enable workers to secure access to justice. Please join us!

Through it all, we haven’t missed a beat in our work to stop child and forced labor – all major chocolate companies are accepting responsibility for monitoring child labor in their cocoa supply; Uzbekistan finally accepted an ILO monitoring mission in their cotton fields; and the palm oil industry has acknowledged the need to restructure their labor rights monitoring. These and all of the wins outlined in this report are only made possible through strategies that empower workers and their communities to organize and stand up for better wages or a fair price for their crops. These are long term struggles, however, and each win brings a new set of challenges to make change sustainable. We hope you’ll continue to participate in and support our work to achieve justice and dignity for workers worldwide.

Thank you for your interest in labor justice and for being a part of the change we want to see. We believe social change is made by workers and their community partners with the support of global solidarity actions. Please join us at www.laborrights.org, where you can take action, sign up for urgent action alerts, and find other ways to join us in strengthening the voices of workers and their ability to secure access to justice.

In Solidarity,

Judy Gearhart
Executive Director
ILRF and Warehouse Workers United released the Narong Report, which exposed child labor, wage theft and other violations in a factory supplying shrimp to Walmart and other western retailers.

In response to a complaint from the U.S. Labor Education in the Americas Project (USLEAP) and an ILRF campaign, Rainforest Alliance announced that it would decertify Tres Hermanas plantations for discrimination against union workers in Honduras.

A ground-breaking investigation by ILRF and Sawit Watch documented labor trafficking and other human rights abuses on Indonesian palm oil plantations certified by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO).

ILRF worked with partners in Malawi to identify trafficking patterns in tobacco communities and bring worker voice into international tobacco control frameworks.

ILRF staff and board members completed a year-long collaborative strategic planning process to set a vision for 2014-2016.

ILRF worked with the New Delhi-based Centre for Worker Management and local tea unions to ensure that equality for women tea workers was a top priority in tripartite collective bargaining negotiations across the Indian state of West Bengal.

For Apparel Industry Trends: From Farm to Factory, we compared over 300 apparel brands’ Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs, finding that only a handful are taking concrete steps to address child and forced labor.

PHILIPPINES PALM OIL
ILRF and Manila-based Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR) supported local palm oil union’s successful negotiation of stronger collective bargaining agreement and reinstatement of 293 illegally fired co-workers by publishing a ground-breaking study on the root causes of child labor on palm oil plantations.

Following an urgent action campaign and an ILRF-COSIBAH report, the COSIBAH union federation reached an agreement with Suragroh (Fyffes) for improved working conditions on melon plantations in southern Honduras.

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At ILRF, We Believe:

1. Labor rights are universal and inalienable.
2. Labor rights are a central pillar of social justice and economic development.
3. Child labor, forced labor, and trafficking are the consequences of deeper social injustices and the cause of these same injustices being perpetuated.
4. Social change is made by workers and their community partners with the support of global solidarity actions.
5. Consumers have the power to advance transparency and accountability, thus connecting consumer and worker interests in advocating for just and dignified jobs.

Our Strategic Approach:

**Advance policies and laws that protect workers**

- Advocate a holistic approach to child labor, forced labor and trafficking, building in workers’ wage and livelihood goals.
- Test and improve legal mechanisms that leverage trade and development aid to ensure workers’ rights.
- Incorporate labor rights screens into the purchasing policies of local, state and national procurement agencies.
- Secure greater transparency within U.S. and multilateral agencies’ policies to protect workers’ rights.
- Expose cases where trade agreements or procurement policies fail workers.

**Hold global corporations accountable for labor rights violations in their supply chain**

- Benchmark and evaluate corporations’ accountability initiatives.
- Secure binding agreements between global brands and unions.
- Ensure precedents in corporate accountability, such as the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, are effective.
- Secure a leadership role for workers and trade unions in the governance and implementation of industry change.
- Advocate for living wages in corporate accountability policies.

**Strengthen workers’ ability to advocate for their rights**

- Strengthen the advocacy capacity of frontline labor rights defenders.
- Promote labor justice and accessible legal aid for workers.
- Strengthen partner capacity to file complaints and develop urgent actions, leveraging legal mechanisms and brands’ voluntary commitments.
- Strengthen South-South linkages and the overall influence of ILRF’s partners.

We are dedicated to achieving **dignity & justice for workers worldwide.**

**COTTON in Uzbekistan**

**Holding Corporations Accountable**

- After ILRF and the Cotton Campaign* filed a complaint, the U.S. Government began an investigation of Daewoo International and Indorama Corporation, two of the largest manufacturers of cotton textiles in Uzbekistan, for alleged violations of U.S. law prohibiting a company from importing into the United States any product made with forced labor.
- After a year-long campaign led by ILRF, six major companies (Nike, H&M, Ikea, C&A, Jones Apparel and Michael Kors) pushed South Korean company Daewoo Int’l, the largest cotton manufacturer in Uzbekistan, out of their supply chains because it directly supports the forced-labor system.

**Advancing Policies to Protect Workers**

- In response to nine years of pressure from the Cotton Campaign, the Uzbek Government reduced the number of children younger than age 16 forced to pick cotton and accepted monitoring by the ILO in the 2013 harvest.
- In 2015, the U.S. Government placed Uzbekistan in Tier 3, the lowest ranking in the Trafficking in Persons Report, reserved for governments that do not comply with minimum standards to combat human trafficking mandating a consideration of sanctions.
- The International Labour Organization, United Nations Committee Against Torture and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child reported serious concern about forced labor of children and adults in Uzbekistan.

**Strengthening Worker Voice**

- ILRF supported Uzbek partners to monitor and report labor violations throughout 2013, contributing to the Chronicle of Forced Labor, Review of the 2013 Cotton Harvest in Uzbekistan, and Forced Labor in Uzbekistan reports, provided to policymakers and companies globally.
- ILRF organized a labor rights training for staff of the only registered human rights organization in Uzbekistan, Ezgulik, which led them to produce a public report on forced labor.

* The Cotton Campaign is a global coalition of human rights, labor, investor and business organizations coalesced to end forced labor in the cotton sector in Uzbekistan. ILRF is a leading member.

**$1 billion**

estimated annual cotton revenue diverted to slush fund for Uzbek Government elites

**11**

Uzbek citizens reportedly killed in the 2013 cotton harvest

**4th**

Uzbekistan’s ranking in world cotton exports

**5 million**

estimated number of citizens the Uzbek Government forced to harvest cotton in 2013 (16% of the population)
A mother in a cocoa community in Côte d’Ivoire, who expresses her desire for her child to get an education rather than work in the cocoa fields at a young age.

Holding Corporations Accountable
- Exposed brands and retailers responsible for unsafe working conditions and failing to pay fair compensation; see Still Waiting, ILRF’s joint report with Clean Clothes Campaign.
- Helped craft the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, and campaigned for U.S. companies to join, mobilizing online actions, store protests, and media exposés.
- Published Deadly Secrets, exposing the deadly flaws in corporations’ voluntary and confidential monitoring programs.

Advancing Policies to Protect Workers
- Successfully advocated for Marine Corps to require licensees supplying garments from Bangladesh to comply with the Accord.
- Provided evidence supporting a successful AFL-CIO petition to suspend Bangladesh’s trade benefits under the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences program (GSP).
- Networked and guided sweatfree campaigns in eight states.

Strengthening Worker Voice
- Connected reporters to garment workers and their unions in several countries and helped give voice to worker demands.
- Coordinated speaking tours with garment workers and labor leaders from Bangladesh, Haiti and Honduras, including meetings with advocates, media, and Members of Congress.
- Campaigned to free Bangladeshi labor leaders Kalpona Akter and Babul Akhter of false criminal charges, which were finally dropped. After the torture and murder of trade unionist Aminul Islam, ILRF urged an independent, transparent investigation and end to impunity.

35 cities with protests on the June 29, 2013 Day of Action Against Deathtraps

1,530 workers killed in garment factory disasters in Bangladesh and Pakistan, 2012-2013

1.3 million signatures on petitions demanding brands sign the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh

125 companies sign the Bangladesh Accord

$11.4 billion estimated value of all cocoa sold in global markets in 2012

58% of the global cocoa supply is produced in just two countries: Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire

$1.56, $1.01 estimated average daily earnings of cocoa farmers in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana, respectively

0.5 mil. - 1 mil. child laborers estimated on cocoa farms in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire

Hershey’s announced the week before the Super Bowl that it would source independently-certified cocoa for its Bliss and Dagoba lines by the end of 2012, after ILRF threatened to show an ad about Hershey’s products and child labor on a jumbotron during the Superbowl.

Whole Foods Market pulled Hershey’s products from the shelves until the company pledged to use independently certified cocoa after ILRF and allies pressured the company to remove Hershey’s from its stores.

After two years of intense pressure from the Raise the Bar Hershey! Campaign, Hershey’s finally committed to purchasing only certified cocoa by 2020.

ILRF advocated for increased farmer voice to government representatives from Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire in country and during the International Labour Organization’s 4th World Conference on Child Labor in Brazil.

In a survey of 100 cocoa farmers and cooperative representatives in Côte d’Ivoire, ILRF identified factors that promote secure farmer livelihoods and those that restrict income, including cocoa price setting and access to market.

In 2013, ILRF co-organized a workshop for cocoa farmers with University of Cocody’s Social Anthropology Department to explore their access to information from certifiers and other stakeholders.

A child of a Rana Plaza victim demands justice from global brand.

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A mother in a cocoa community in Côte d’Ivoire, who expresses her desire for her child to get an education rather than work in the cocoa fields at a young age.
Holding Corporations Accountable

- ILRF partners submitted 100 collective cases on wage arrears to municipal-level and province-level courts on behalf of migrant workers. In each of these cases, the partners successfully won wage payments that companies owed to workers. Research and publications on these cases is underway.

Advancing Policies to Protect Workers

- During the 3rd National Conference on Labor Law Clinic Education at Nanjing University Law School, attendees announced the establishment of the “Professional Committee of Labor Law Clinic Education” to promote public interest legal services on behalf of workers and improve the legal and policy environment for labor law reform.
- Raised Chinese workers’ awareness of their legal rights with community-based training courses that include labor law, health and safety, and job skills training. Participants have resolved workplace disputes through legal channels and worker-initiated complaints, winning compensation for work injuries, unpaid wages, illegal dismissal, or other labor disputes.

Strengthening Worker Voice

- Two university-based, student-run labor law clinics represented more than 400 clients in labour hearings, and provided legal counseling to at least 8,000 more migrant workers. ILRF partnered with universities, civil society organizations, and legal practitioners to teach labor law students how to manage the clinics and casework, encouraging a new generation of law students to look to public interest law as an area of specialization.
- Organized trainings with provincial and local level branches of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and the Ministry of Justice’s legal aid centers in five provinces, focusing on difficult, complex legal cases commonly faced by migrant workers.

Advancing Policies to Protect Workers

- Exposed labor rights violations in the melon industry in southern Honduras, pressuring a major producer to negotiate a 20 percent increase in wages, full compliance with social security laws, and other benefits for hundreds of workers.
- After two years of campaigning against worker rights violations on the Tres Hermanas banana plantations in Honduras, Rainforest Alliance revoked the farm’s sustainability certification and Chiquita bought the farm, dismissing management and opening the way for negotiations with an independent union.

Strengthening Worker Voice

- Built a strategic alliance with the Food Chain Workers Alliance to support labor rights in U.S. retailer supply chains and on plantations across Latin America.
- ILRF and USLEAP boards agreed to continue USLEAP’s mission of advocating for workers’ rights to organize and bargain collectively in the Americas by creating the program USLEAP@ILRF. USLEAP@ILRF is focused on exposing violence against trade unionists, advocating more just trade policy and building a campaign for justice in the banana sector.

Workers and activists protest in Lima, Peru, against a government proposal to weaken health and safety standards and cap fines for employers who routinely violate labor laws.

At least 184 banana workers in Ecuador dismissed for exercising their labor rights from 2012 to 2013

64 number of union leaders killed in Guatemala between 2007 and 2013 (0 people convicted for those murders)

$20 vs. $4 average daily earnings, including benefits, for a unionized banana worker versus a non-union banana worker in Colombia

Guatemalan workers have been waiting this long for their labor rights complaint to be resolved through Central America Free Trade Agreement labor provisions

Migrant workers catch a moment of rest outside a factory in China.

8 partners providing legal support services to workers

675 workers’ cases brought to mediation and arbitration by ILRF partners

36,000 legal consultations provided to migrant workers by ILRF partners

260 million migrant workers in China

RULE OF LAW in China

RIGHT TO ORGANIZE in Latin America
CAMPAIGN TO END CHILD AND FORCED LABOR

ILRF works with grassroots advocates and field researchers to document abuse, expose perpetrators and advocate for effective government interventions and support. Our partners, featured here, are the driving force for all our campaigns.

TOBACCO
United States
Advocacy to address child labor in the International Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
Partners: Prof. Marty Otañez (University of Colorado - Denver)

FLOWERS
Colombia
Research and video on impact of low wages on children among flower workers
Partner: Corporación Cactus

COCOA
Côte d’Ivoire
Field research on child labor and access to decent livelihoods
Partner: Niava Landry, researcher

VEGETABLES
Guatemala
Field study on child labor in vegetable production
Partner: Commission for the Verification of Codes of Conduct

RUBBER
Liberia
Research and video to document the successes of efforts to end child labor
Partners: Firestone Agricultural Workers Union of Liberia, P.H. Balanced Films (USA), U Roberto Romano, filmmaker (USA)

COTTON
Pakistan, India, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan
Research and advocacy campaigns against forced and child labor in harvesting and processing
Partners: National Trade Union Federation of Pakistan, Prayas Center for Labor Research and Action (India), Sund SVG Society Development (Tajikistan), Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, Ezgulik (Uzbekistan)

CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS
Cambodia, Bangladesh
Research, awareness raising and legal aid for victims
Partners: Cambodian Legal Education Center, Alternative Movement for Resources and Freedom Society

FLOWERS
Colombia
Research and video on impact of low wages on children among flower workers
Partner: Corporación Cactus

TEA
India, Sri Lanka
Field research, video documentation and community education programs on child labor
Partners: Center for Worker Management (India), Plantation Rural Education Development Organization (PRÉDO), Organization for Visual Progression (OVP) (Sri Lanka)

SEAFOOD
Thailand
Research and advocacy campaign on labor rights for migrant workers
Partner: Migrant Workers Rights Network

PALM OIL
Philippines, Indonesia, Liberia
Field research on labor trafficking and support for worker negotiations
Partners: Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (Philippines), Sawit Watch (Indonesia), Firestone Agricultural Workers Union of Liberia

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CATHY FEINGOLD Director, International Department, AFL-CIO
JUDY GEARHART Executive Director, International Labor Rights Forum
KEN GROSSINGER Principal, Democracy Partners
SARITA GUPTA Executive Director, Jobs with Justice
MARK HARRISON Peace with Justice Program, United Methodist General Board of Church and Society
YVETTE HERRERA Senior Director, Communications Workers of America
OWEN HERRNSTADT Director, Trade and Globalization, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers
DR. LORRETTA JOHNSON Secretary-Treasurer, American Federation of Teachers
YVETTE PEÑA-O’SULLIVAN Assistant Director of Legislation, Laborers International Union of North America
PATRICIA JUAN PINEDA El Frente Auténtico de Trabajo, Mexico
KAILASH SATYARTHI Chairperson, Global March Against Child Labour
REPRESENTATIVE JAN SCHAKOWSKY U.S. House of Representatives (D-IL)
DANIEL SMITH ILRF General Counsel (Attorney, Amalgamated Transit Union)
CHRISTOPHER TOWNSEND Director of Field Mobilization, Amalgamated Transit Union

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