

International Labor Rights Forum

*Dignity and Justice for Workers
Worldwide*

Strategic Plan for 2014-2016



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Acknowledgements

ILRF staff and board members are grateful and indebted to **Mary Ochs**, an extraordinary strategist, advisor and social justice enthusiast. A special thanks also goes to the three teams of staff and board members, who coordinated the strategic planning working groups:

- Meta Themes, Vision and Values: Cameron Duncan, Judy Gearhart, and Bjorn Claeson
- Networks and Strategic Partnerships: Eric Dirnbach and Liana Foxvog
- Infrastructure: Katherine Isaac and Jacqueline Starr

We also want to acknowledge the contributions of the following board and staff members:

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Dear Friends

Message from the Executive Director and President of the Board

January 2014

Friends,

We at the International Labor Rights Forum are excited to share with supporters our new, 3-year strategic plan. This plan is the result of a year of discussions and deliberations, listening to our allies and grassroots partners, research and retreats with board and staff members.

What did we learn as we assessed the lessons of our past three decades and looked ahead through 2016? We started by looking at what we could learn from our big wins.

We looked at our recent victories combating child and forced labor in cotton, rubber and cocoa production, driving a holistic approach to child labor – one that does not simply take children out of work, but rather emphasizes the need to secure decent livelihoods for the parents of those children. We looked at the impact of our work to disseminate worker testimony about apparel industry tragedies and our work to help drive forward the most comprehensive binding commitment by companies to date with the Bangladesh Safety Accord.

From this review we have sharpened and narrowed our focus. Here's our new vision:

"ILRF works for a world where everyone is free from child labor, forced labor, and discrimination, a world where workers have the power to speak out and organize to defend and advance their rights and interests; and a world where workers can exercise their rights to form unions and bargain collectively to secure a safe and dignified life for themselves and their families."

Our emphasis is on supporting workers fighting to exercise their rights, and on connecting consumers and worker organizations in winning campaigns for fundamental change. Our campaigns will tap ILRF's core competencies and advance three strategic goals to:

- Hold global corporations accountable for labor rights violations in their supply chain;
- Advance policies and laws that protect workers; and
- Strengthen workers' ability to advocate for their rights.

We've asked some tough questions in this planning process. Where can ILRF have the most impact in the fight against child labor, trafficking and workplace abuse? Who are our strategic partners? And how can we best support them? Our emphasis will be on two sectors that most clearly connect workers in developing countries to the global economy: global apparel production and export agriculture. These are industries where development policy, trade and corporate accountability can be leveraged for

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change and where grassroots worker and farmer organizations struggle to have a voice and the ability to defend their members' rights.

We welcome any of your thoughts on the strategic focus laid out in the pages to follow. We are building campaigns to win in 2014 and beyond – *fighting for dignity and justice for workers worldwide*. Please join us!

In solidarity,



Judy Gearhart
Executive Director



Cameron Duncan
President of the Board

ILRF Overview

Mission, Vision, Values, and Achievements

MISSION

ILRF is dedicated to achieving dignity and justice for workers worldwide.

VISION

ILRF works for a world where everyone is free from child labor, forced labor, and discrimination, a world where workers have the power to speak out and organize to defend and advance their rights and interests; and a world where workers can exercise their rights to form unions and bargain collectively to secure a safe and dignified life for themselves and their families.

VALUES

We believe:

- 1. Labor rights are universal and inalienable. Workers and labor rights advocates need to build global networks to support each other across borders and to ensure labor rights are integrated into national and international laws and upheld by justice systems everywhere. Today, more than ever, “a violation of one worker’s rights is a violation of all workers’ rights.”*
- 2. Labor rights are a central pillar of social justice and economic development. With decent work opportunities for adults, families can afford sending children to school. With a living wage, the right to health is more attainable. When equality is secured, women and minorities are assured a place in society. And with the ability to organize and bargain collectively, workers are better equipped to support and participate in building and maintaining a democratic society.*
- 3. Child labor and forced labor are both the consequences of deeper social injustices and the cause of these same injustices being perpetuated. Child labor, especially bonded child labor, is among the most egregious and exploitative labor practices. It emerges wherever workers have no voice or means to escape poverty. Policy solutions to child labor need to address deeper, causal issues, such as migration policies, workers’ rights to organize and bargain collectively, and workers’ access to a decent wage for fulltime work.*
- 4. Social change is made by workers and their community partners with the support of global solidarity actions. Only workers can make labor rights meaningful; government policies, global trade and business practices should be crafted to enable and protect worker’s exercising of those rights. Only when workers and the organizations that represent them lead the campaigns for change, will power imbalances that foster exploitation be reformed.*
- 5. Consumers have the right to know and the power to advance transparency and accountability, thus connecting consumer and worker interests in advocating for just and dignified jobs. By advancing transparency and solidarity, we can scale the global economy to human size, bridge the gulf between workers and consumers, deepen international solidarity, and combine the strength of workers everywhere in shared struggles for economic and social justice.*

ILRF IN BRIEF

The International Labor Rights Forum is a human rights organization that advocates for workers globally.

1. We hold global corporations accountable for labor rights violations in their supply chain.
2. We advance policies and laws that protect workers.
3. We strengthen workers' ability to advocate for their rights.

ILRF advocates for solutions to end egregious labor rights violations such as child and forced labor. We expose abuse and promote workers' rights to organize, bargain collectively and be free from discrimination. ILRF works with trade unions, faith-based organizations, and community groups to support workers and their families, leading on initiatives such as: stopping the exploitation of children in the cotton fields of Uzbekistan; advocating a better price for cocoa farmers so they can send their children to school in the Ivory Coast and Ghana; making apparel factories safe in Bangladesh; supporting labor law clinics in China; and supporting threatened union leaders in Latin America's banana sector.

ACTIVITIES and ACHIEVEMENTS

ILRF's key strategy for change is to strengthen the voices of workers and ensure they have access to justice. We work with a network of grassroots partners around the world to expose child labor, forced labor and other worker rights abuses and to develop and promote solutions. We build transnational coalitions to sustain and drive strategic campaigns to support workers' struggles and integrate labor justice into trade and development policies.

ILRF has three core work streams:

1. *Holding global corporations accountable for all core labor rights violations in their supply chains, particularly those relating to child labor, forced labor, discrimination, and restrictions on organizing and collective bargaining rights.*
 - **Corporate Accountability in Global Supply Chains:** ILRF has a history of proposing, testing and working to improve programs for holding global corporations accountable throughout their far-reaching global supply chains. Starting with strategies to weed out child labor from global supply chains, ILRF established what is now GoodWeave, an innovative program, which moves child laborers in the carpet industry from work to school and helps create a system of international governance to ensure the elimination of child labor in the carpet industry. ILRF has been a leading innovator and critic of corporate supply chain monitoring programs; most recently successfully campaigning to secure corporate commitments to a legally binding agreement with trade unions to ensure workers' rights and welfare in the Bangladeshi apparel industry. ILRF evaluates corporate accountability programs in agriculture, the apparel and electronics industries, including programs designed to guarantee worker safety and the elimination of forced and child labor in the supply chain. We test worker grievance mechanisms in "fair trade" and other social compliance certification systems and work to ensure consumers can depend on the integrity of labels and certifications that purport to guarantee decent working conditions for workers who make the products. We research and promote products made by workers who are organized in democratic unions or worker-

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owned cooperatives through our Shop with a Conscience Consumer Guide. ILRF is working to make corporate global supply chains more transparent so consumers can use their dollars to stand with workers.

2. *Advancing policies and laws that protect workers: ILRF continually tests and proposes reforms that enable workers and their organizations to leverage trade and development policies to protect their rights.*
 - Trade and Development Policy: In 1984, ILRF founders created and successfully advocated for the first workers' rights protection clause in U.S. trade legislation. Since then we have used this Workers' Rights Conditionality Clause in the General System of Preferences (GSP) many times to defend workers' rights, leveraging the GSP review process for both local and international advocacy. ILRF staff also develops and promotes other innovative linkages between workers' rights and trade, procurement, and foreign assistance policies, including the OECD complaint mechanism, ILO review processes, and bilateral trade agreements, among others. In addition, ILRF is linking local policy advocacy in the United States with grassroots organizing abroad through our SweatFree Communities Campaign, which is mobilizing local community groups to urge state and city governments to purchase only products made in decent working conditions.
3. *Strengthening workers' ability to advocate for their rights: ILRF works with trade unions and community based labor rights advocates to expose violations of workers' rights and strengthen local capacity to advocate for worker's rights to organize and bargain for just and dignified working conditions and for the eradication of child labor, forced labor, and discrimination.*
 - Worker-driven organizations and solutions: All of ILRF's field research is conducted in collaboration with local partners and designed to help strengthen the advocacy and leadership of grassroots community and worker organizations. ILRF has a strong track record of credible, action-oriented research supporting sustainable change. For example, in Liberia, ILRF's child labor research helped support an independent rubber tappers union to negotiate for better wages and enlist farmers' support to end child labor. In China, we support local researchers to address the need for more judges, labor law practitioners, and workers who are trained in the content of the country's labor laws and in the advocacy skills needed to better represent worker's claims in arbitration and court. In Latin America, we support a confederation of banana worker's unions to shine a spotlight on violations of workers' rights in their industry.

Priorities, Goals and Strategies

Win Strategic Campaigns to Advance Workers' Access to Justice Globally

ILRF Strategic Goals: 2014-2016

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

- Benchmark and make public corporations' efforts to combat child and forced labor, and to ensure equality and workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively
- Advocate for and secure 3 new agreements between employers and unions, which include effective grievance mechanisms, based on legally binding commitments
- Ensure the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Accord is effective, monitoring the management and implementation of the program and working with Accord signatories to strengthen its programs and measure its impact.
- Document and expose flaws in unilateral, corporate accountability mechanisms in order to secure a leadership role for workers and trade unions in the governance and implementation of change.
- Advocate for living wages in corporate accountability policies (create/join campaigns in 3 industries)

2. *Advance policies and laws that protect workers*

- Advocate the incorporation of child labor and livelihood goals into international drivers of development, education and agriculture policies, such as bilateral and multilateral aid programs and corporate supply chain monitoring.
- Test and propose legal mechanisms and reforms (Better Work, OECD, World Bank complaints, Tariff Act, etc) that can 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 US and multilateral agencies' policies, including the US OECD NCP policies, the investment screens of global development banks, and others
- Document and make known cases where trade agreements or procurement policies fail workers (e.g. FTAs, child labor EO)

3. *Strengthen workers' ability to advocate for their rights.*

- Strengthen ILRF's Child Labor Action Fund partners' ability to develop and execute child and forced labor advocacy campaigns: 5 Child Labor Action Fund (CLAF) partners secure legal reforms locally and ILRF triples its re-granting capacity for local grassroots partners

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- Promote Labor Justice and affordable legal aid for workers, supporting labor law clinics and local grassroots outreach, strengthening existing legal aid clinic partners in China and raising funds to build similar programs in two more countries.
- Strengthen partner capacity to file complaints and urgent actions using legal and voluntary regulations: 10 partners file complaints and secure a response and remedy
- Maintain and strengthen ILRF's Urgent Action network and ability to respond to partners in need
- Strengthen South-South linkages and the overall influence of ILRF's partners by sharing advocacy strategies among partners, establishing a regular communications mechanism on these initiatives, and developing common platforms for mutual support.

How We Work

ILRF Campaigns and Tactics

ILRF's campaigns build transnational solidarity and raise public awareness about working conditions in global low wage industries -- especially in the garment, light manufacturing and agriculture industries -- and educates consumers to push companies and governments for change.

ILRF builds transnational campaigns in consultation with the workers who stand to benefit directly. ILRF has established long term partnerships in key countries with the groups most committed to worker empowerment, which are both connected to grassroots workers' movements and able to advocate solutions. Working with allies around the world – labor unions, religious and community-based organizations, human rights organizations, and student groups – ILRF continuously looks to broaden support for workers and the grassroots partners closest to their struggle. ILRF's network of community organizations and consumer activists support worker rights campaigns and advocate for legal reforms and corporate accountability through social media, in-the-street protests and worker tours to drive support and transnational solidarity for workers' rights.

Five Strategic Campaigns:

ILRF country priorities are determined by where we are able to leverage our networks to support local worker struggles and where strategic campaigns have the potential to reshape the debate on global labor rights solutions. These priorities shift over time, but we continuously build our network of partners around the world. The following campaigns are some examples of ILRF's campaigns.

Ending Child Labor in Cocoa in Cote D'Ivoire and Ghana:

Cocoa is a highly visible consumer good with a long history of forced and child labor. Seventy percent (70%) of the world's cocoa production comes from West Africa, a region where the abysmal infrastructure leaves farmers with little information or means to secure a better price for their cocoa and where poverty-driven migration fuels the supply of child and forced labor. ILRF's cocoa campaign has mobilized consumers, changed how chocolate companies monitor their supply chains, and effectively moved the debate around cocoa industry solutions from a focus on simply removing children from work to a root cause approach that prioritizes improving parents' livelihoods and corporations' accountability to treat those farmers fairly.

Promoting Legal Recourse in China's Light Manufacturing Sector:

Often called the factory of the world, China is the largest exporter of apparel, toys, and electronics. In China, internal migration of workers to take formal sector jobs in light manufacturing has resulted in abusive labor conditions with virtually no legal aid infrastructure capable of supporting a work force of this scale. China has woefully too few lawyers versed in labor law proportional to the number of workers in the burgeoning manufacturing sector. Given the scale of manufacturing in China, there is no one corporate campaign that can create the change that is needed. Through

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local partners, ILRF is helping build the legal aid and worker-support infrastructure that will enable workers to defend their rights directly and eventually develop local advocacy campaigns.

Securing Worker Safety and Women's Participation in Bangladesh's Apparel Sector:

Bangladesh has had the fastest growing apparel industry in the world for a decade. Yet workers' rights and welfare in this women-dominated workforce have been largely disregarded. Despite investing millions, global brands were incapable of preventing the largest accidents in industrial history in 2013. ILRF has documented worker testimony about how their concerns were disregarded and their right to refuse dangerous work repeatedly denied. Despite having employed millions of women, many for the first time in jobs outside the home, the apparel industry has not advanced women's rights because it has consistently denied workers' voice and ability to raise concerns about their industry. ILRF helped to develop and is a witness signatory to the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Accord, which is a breakthrough in corporate accountability agreements, involving transparent, legally binding programs that involve local and international trade unions in the governance and implementation of the solution. The Accord represents a significant shift forward in corporate supply chain accountability – primarily because it gives workers and their organizations a meaningful role in the industry reform process.

Ending Forced and Child Labor in Cotton in Uzbekistan:

ILRF has documented child labor throughout global cotton production, but the Uzbek government's draconian system of forced child and adult labor during the cotton harvest has enabled ILRF and allies to build a broad, multi-stakeholder coalition with allies in North America, Europe, Korea and Australia. The stark system of abuse in Uzbekistan has brought dozens of global brands to support the coalition's demands on international diplomats and the Uzbek government and to study further the weaknesses of their supply chain controls. ILRF has led the policy advocacy strategy of the coalition, leveraging US trade law and ILO mechanisms to build diplomatic pressure and most recently get the Uzbek government to begin to shift away from the use of forced child labor. Throughout the campaign, ILRF has invested in and promoted the leadership voice of Uzbek expats and, to the extent they are ready to do so, that of Uzbek NGOs willing to speak out internationally on this issue.

Supporting Workers Rights to Organize in Latin America's Banana Sector:

Long the highest earner for supermarkets across the US, the banana industry has been one of the most highly unionized agricultural sector workforces in the Americas. These once strong unions have reached out to expose egregious abuses and support workers in other agricultural sectors in their region. Sadly, however, the ability of these workers to bargain collectively and maintain decent conditions has been undercut by global production shifts to Africa and direct purchasing by super markets such as Walmart and Tesco, fueling the downward pressure on wages and the rise in the abuse of workers' bargaining rights. ILRF's longtime partner, the US Labor Education in the Americas Project, has been a beacon of solidarity for these workers and their struggle. In 2014, ILRF agreed to house USLEAP, effectively doubling our ability to promote solidarity with the banana unions and other workers' struggles in the Americas. The bananas campaign is thus a critical opportunity to sustain and build solidarity in the Americas.