

INTERNATIONAL LABOR RIGHTS FORUM



2017 ANNUAL REPORT

THE RESURGENCE OF
GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

In 2017, we were inspired by the surge in protests demanding workers' rights, women's rights, and migrant workers' rights – all issues ILRF has worked on for decades. We have also been heartened by growing numbers of investors, human rights groups, and environmentalists joining our demands that global corporations commit to greater transparency and to ensuring workers' access to legal remedy.

At ILRF, we are working to stop human rights abuses in global supply chains, industry by industry and country by country.

- We have turned the global cocoa giants' attention towards strategies that address the poverty among West African cocoa farmers and how poverty is a root cause of child labor and damaging to school enrollment and performance.
- We have pioneered new approaches to corporate accountability in global supply chains, helping to make the legally binding Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety a model for pushing corporations beyond their flawed codes of conduct.
- We have forged critical alliances with environmental rights advocates to expose forced labor and its links to environmental crimes in high demand commodities such as seafood and palm oil.

ILRF's priority campaigns focus on sectors where workers are particularly vulnerable, and where child labor, forced labor and violence against women at work are rampant and under protected. These are sectors where workers' rights to organize and bargain for better wages and working conditions are often violently repressed, making it that much harder to identify and end egregious abuses. ILRF combines policy advocacy, field research, coalition building, and corporate campaigning to drive forward an immediate response to worker grievances and longer term solutions to address the root causes of worker rights violations.

ILRF's experience has shown that labor rights can only advance when workers are able to build power and secure a stronger voice in society. In 2017, we increased our support for our grassroots partners' national level advocacy and ability to negotiate supply chain reforms with multinational corporations. We are advocating for an end to brands' confidential and voluntary approaches to supply chain monitoring, which have sidelined workers' voices and agency. We are advancing alternative, worker-driven solutions to corporate accountability that are enforceable and transparent.

Please join us in our fight to end child labor, forced labor, and all forms of discrimination and harassment at work. With your support, we can continue our campaigns to protect workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively for better wages and working conditions around the world.

In solidarity,

Judy Gearhart



2017 YEAR IN REVIEW

Even as the resurgence of grassroots demonstrations in the U.S. gave us hope, many of our frontline partners around the world faced significant challenges as they stood up to government threats and closing space for civil society activism. ILRF's strategic response has focused on: supporting workers' demands for change; promoting women workers' leadership; partnering with environmental groups to advance workers' rights; and improving trade and development policy mechanisms to protect workers' rights.

STANDING UP FOR HUMAN AND LABOR RIGHTS DEFENDERS

TURKMENISTAN – 51,000 people signed a petition calling on the government of Turkmenistan to release Gaspar Matalaev, a Turkmen human rights activist in prison since October 4, 2016.

UZBEKISTAN – Human rights monitors trained by the Cotton Campaign met with the Uzbek government to discuss forced labor monitoring methodologies while ILRF continued to press for charges against them to be dropped.

CAMBODIA – Secured advocacy of a group representing some of the largest apparel brands in the US and Europe, including Gap, H&M and ASOS, asking the Cambodian government to withdraw proposals to limit workers' rights under proposed reforms to the national Trade Union Law.



BANGLADESH – Demanded the release of 34 activists and workers who were arrested and jailed throughout December 2016 to February 2017 as part of a crackdown in response to demonstrations for higher wages. ILRF, the Clean Clothes Campaign and others also helped secure severance pay for the approximately 1,000 workers dismissed from their jobs during the protests.

THAILAND – 87 civil society groups, worker organizations, businesses, and members of the European Parliament came together to urge the dismissal of criminal defamation charges against 14 poultry farm workers from Myanmar who reported labor abuses in Thailand. Migrant rights activist Andy Hall also faced criminal defamation charges related to the case.

GUATEMALA – 38 NGOs and trade unions in the United States and Europe signed a letter to Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales Cabrera demanding justice for Tomás Francisco Ochoa Salazar, the eighty-seventh labor leader killed in the country since 2004.

COLOMBIA – 3,200 people sent letters calling on the Colombian president to protect threatened labor leaders and fully investigate the murders of several trade unionists.

CHINA – 23 organizations signed onto a letter demanding Ivanka Trump be held accountable for the workers who make her namesake brand's clothing and the release of investigators arrested while documenting violations in the brand's supplier factories. This campaign, coordinated by ILRF, Public Citizen and China Labor Watch, produced a viral video that was viewed more than 15,000 times since November 1, 2017.

2017 YEAR IN REVIEW

SUPPORTING WORKERS' DEMANDS FOR CHANGE



LAUNCHED a global campaign called “Freedom and Fairness for Fyffes Workers” in support of melon and pineapple workers in Central America. In response to ILRF letters, several U.S. supermarkets raised concerns to Fyffes about labor rights abuses in their supply chain and the UK-based Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) suspended Fyffes’ membership, demanding they meet with international and local unions to discuss labor abuses on its Central American plantations.

CAMPAIGNED for brands to publicly disclose information about the factories producing their goods in alignment with the Apparel and Footwear Supply Chain Transparency Pledge and released a joint report, *Follow the Thread: The Need for Supply Chain Transparency in the Garment and Footwear Industry*, with Human Rights Watch, Clean Clothes Campaign, and others. Seventeen brands came into alignment with the pledge.

PRESSURED brands to sign the 2018 Transition Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, a three-year extension of the legally-binding agreement that has made buildings safer for 2.5 million garment workers across 1,600 factories. More than 180 brands have signed the renewed Accord, which includes additional protections for freedom of association and an option to extend coverage to textile suppliers. ILRF remains a witness signatory to the Accord.

WORKED with the Tobacco and Allied Workers Union of Malawi, the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Association, and other allies to challenge public-private partnerships that have sidelined tobacco farmers and farm workers’ voices in developing and implementing programs to prevent child labor, farmers’ exposure to the potentially deadly green tobacco sickness, and persistent debt bondage.

CONTINUED advocating for living incomes for cocoa farmers in West Africa, joining the Voice Network and serving as a commentator and co-publisher of the Cocoa Barometer, which reports on challenges to industry reforms and the fight to end child labor in cocoa. ILRF was also cited in HuffPost article “Chocolate Is Bittersweet: How Sustainability Practices Affect Shareholder Value.”



2017 YEAR IN REVIEW

EXPOSED the shortcomings of Ivanka Trump’s women’s empowerment messaging and the lack of transparency and labor rights commitments by her brand through coverage in Newsweek, Washington Post, South China Morning Post, and EcoTextile. A blog by ILRF executive director Judy Gearhart called on the First Daughter to help turn the tide and create permanent preventive solutions to the pervasive sexual violence endured by women everywhere.

ORGANIZED a briefing on Capitol Hill in coordination with Representatives Jan Schakowsky, Marcy Kaptur, Mark Pocan, and Jackie Speier, where leaders from our partner organizations in Honduras and Bangladesh gave testimony on gender-based violence at work and urged support for the creation of a new International Labour Organization Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.

CO-ORGANIZED the Women Workers Rising march and rally at the U.S. Department of Labor for International Women’s Day, as part of a coalition with One Billion Rising, Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, National Nurses United, and many more. The gathering featured speeches and performances by women workers, who recounted their experiences of violence on the job.



PROMOTING WOMEN WORKERS’ LEADERSHIP

ORGANIZED the Women Workers Resist speaking tour, together with United Students Against Sweatshops, featuring Sophorn Yang, president of the Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions. She spoke at universities, community events, and city meetings about her experiences witnessing violence against her female coworkers and deciding to become an organizer.

PUBLISHED *Time for Change: Advancing Legal Protections on Gender-Based Violence at Work*, a policy brief that outlines the piecemeal legal infrastructure currently in place that leaves workers vulnerable to gender-based violence and advocates for a new ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. We presented the report at a briefing on Capitol Hill hosted by Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, where Tarana Burke, the founder of the #MeToo movement, also spoke.



2017 YEAR IN REVIEW

PARTNERING WITH ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS TO ADVANCE WORKERS' RIGHTS



PUBLISHED *The Human Cost of Conflict Palm Oil Revisited*, documenting ongoing labor exploitation on RSPO-certified plantations supplying PepsiCo. The report, released with ILRF partners Rainforest Action Network and Indonesian labor rights NGO OPPUK, is the second in two years to show widespread labor rights violations on plantations owned by Indonesian palm oil giant Indofood. ILRF staff also directly questioned PepsiCo's CEO during their annual shareholder meeting about Pepsi's failure to hold its joint venture partner Indofood accountable for abuses on its Indonesian palm plantations.

COORDINATED the Thai Seafood Working Group with environmental, labor, and human rights organizations, which successfully encouraged the world's largest tuna company, Thai Union, to sign an agreement with Greenpeace to "source more sustainably and responsibly" to tackle practices in its supply chain that fuel illegal fishing activity and worker exploitation.



COMMENCED the Independent Monitoring at Sea (IM@Sea) project with a goal of illuminating some of the vulnerabilities of migrant seafood workers. The pilot project, that included surveying workers through tech platforms while at sea, advanced ILRF's objectives of preventing and remediating forced labor and human trafficking on fishing vessels and reduce the illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing that is rapidly depleting fish stocks worldwide.

2017 YEAR IN REVIEW

LEVERAGING TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY TO STOP FORCED LABOR

SUCCESSFULLY PRESSURED Uzbekistan's President Mirziyoyev to finally acknowledge the forced labor in Uzbekistan's cotton sector, after ten years of campaigning and coalition building. President Mirziyoyev acknowledged the presence of forced labor during his speech to the UN General Assembly, the first time an Uzbek president has ever publicly acknowledged this issue on the international stage.

LAUNCHED a petition asking the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), a law enforcement agency of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, to use its authority under Section 307 of the Tariff Act to ban the importation of all goods made with Turkmen cotton based on overwhelming evidence it is produced with forced labor. On May 18, 2018, CBP issued a Withhold Release Order (WRO), formally banning the importation of "all Turkmenistan cotton or products produced in whole or in part with Turkmenistan cotton."

MET with senior officials with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to discuss our concerns around CBP's narrow approach to Tariff Act enforcement. Months later DHS created a "Forced Labor Task Force" with DHS and CBP to spearhead the implementation of the Tariff Act ban on goods made with forced labor. Reuters published a story on mounting Congressional pressure on CBP to increase resources for enforcement of the Tariff Act, with a quote from ILRF's Legal & Policy Director.

PARTICIPATED in the Peer Review of the U.S. National Contract Point (NCP) for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, providing in-person testimony on how the U.S. NCP could be more responsive to workers and

communities that are negatively impacted by the overseas activities of U.S. multinational corporations. Ahead of the peer review, ILRF, Accountability Counsel, and the International Corporate Accountability Roundtable (ICAR) co-published a blog outlining our collective goals for making the U.S. NCP more accountable to workers and communities.

JOINED with allies to deliver more than 100,000 petition signatures outside hearings on NAFTA renegotiation at the International Trade Commission as part of the broad coalition that derailed the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The rally highlighted the importance of developing a trade agreement that includes workers as equals at the bargaining table.



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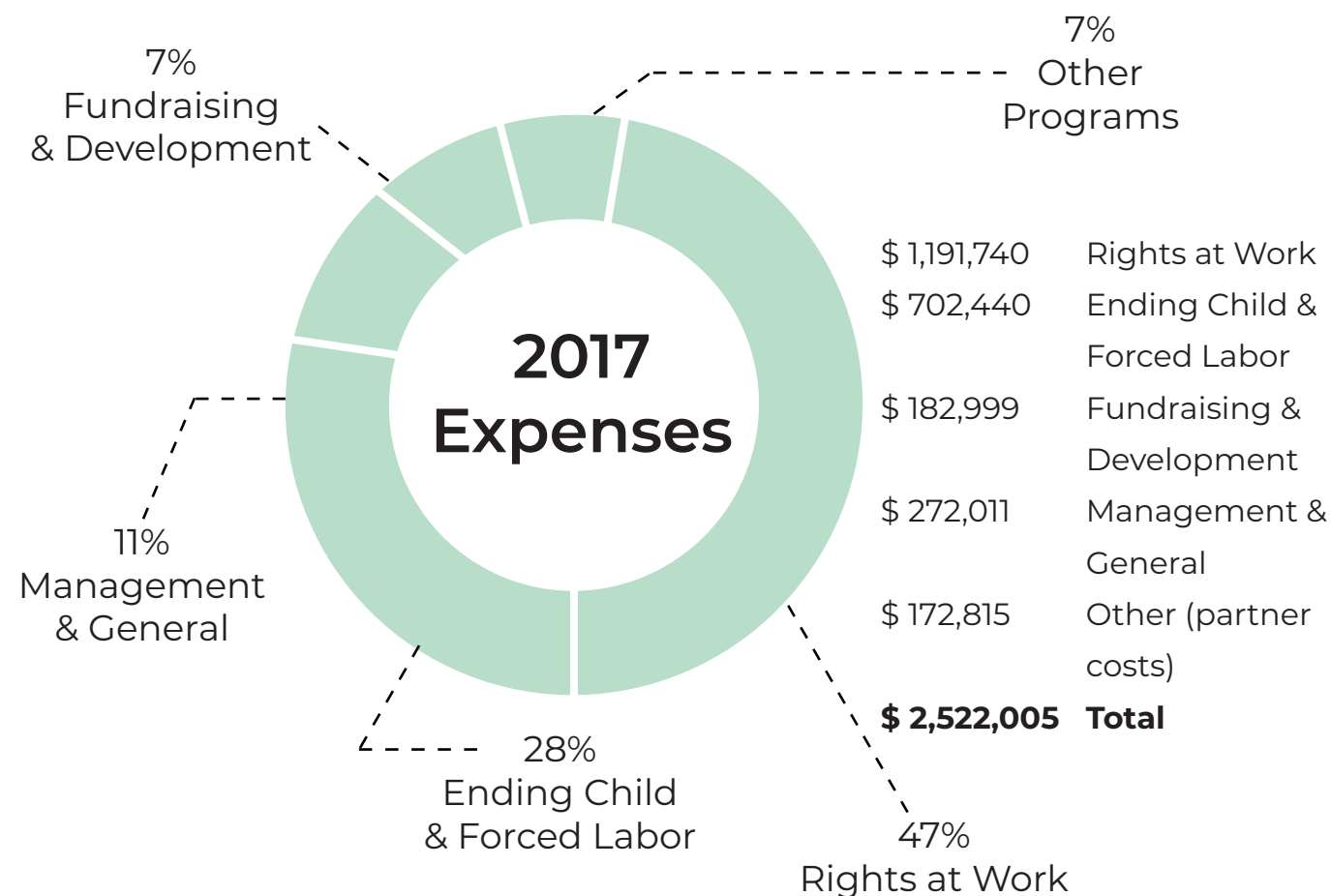
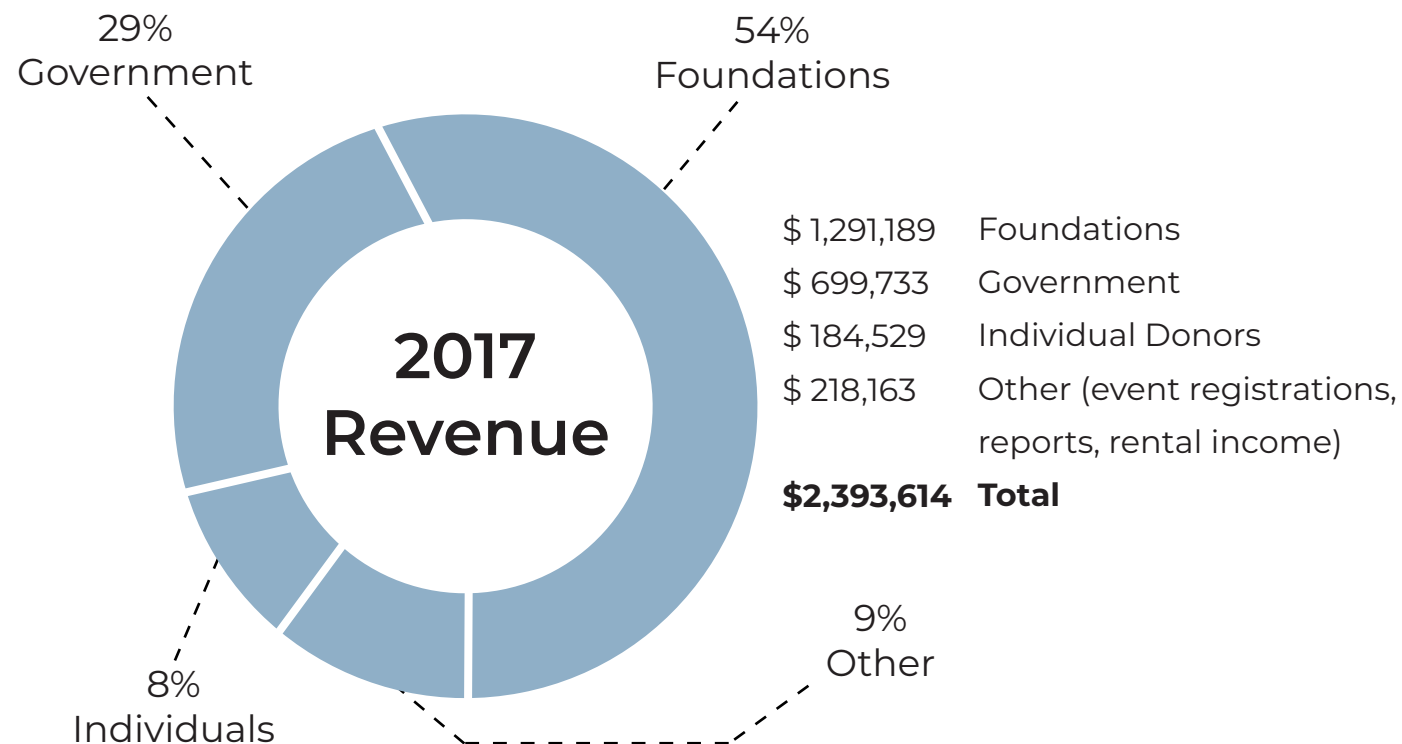
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