

# LATIN AMERICA WORKING GROUP

*Action at Home for  
Just Policies Abroad*

**2023** ANNUAL  
REPORT





*Lisa and Gimena Sánchez Garzoli from WOLA  
with 2023 Colombian Human Rights Prize  
Winners at U.S. Capitol.*

PHOTO BY ANA PEREYRA BARON

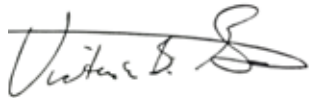
*Cover: Tania Del Moral and LAWG interns supporting the TPS  
redesignation for Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, and the  
designation for Guatemala.*

PHOTO BY INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES

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Our partners in Latin America look to us to make sure that the Biden administration and Congress understand the realities in their countries, and promote policies that address, not escalate, their concerns. Concerns like attacks against land and environmental defenders in Guatemala or Honduras, the arbitrary arrests of thousands of Salvadorans, or threats to the peace process in Colombia. Our partner organizations in the United States expect LAWG to develop joint strategic advocacy strategies; to keep them informed of adverse legislation that goes against social justice principles; and to lead the charge towards just foreign policies. Staffers in congressional offices contact LAWG with specific questions on country conditions. And concerned citizens across the United States like you look to us for opportunities to make your voice heard and take action when we send out alerts on an assassination attempt or repression of a public protest or anti-immigrant legislation.

This is the power of LAWG. It's tough, but we are always busy fighting the good fight. We could not do this without your support. ¡Gracias!



## PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS\*

AFL-CIO

AFL-CIO Solidarity Center

Alianza Americas

Alliance of Baptists

Amazon Watch

American Friends Service Committee

Americans for Indian Opportunity

Center for Economic and Policy Research

Center for Gender and Refugee Studies

Church World Service

Code Pink



*Vicki Gass with  
Global Exchange  
Electoral Mission  
to Guatemala and  
UDEFEQUA Legal  
Advisor.*

PHOTO BY  
FELLOW ACTIVIST



## WHO WE ARE

The Latin America Working Group aims to ensure that U.S. policies advance human rights, peace, and social, environmental, and economic justice in Latin America and the Caribbean. To achieve this, we work with coalition partners in the United States and Latin America to educate policymakers and the public and to mobilize a diverse, and powerful grassroots base that can influence U.S. policymakers to achieve change.

The Latin America Working Group (LAWG), a 501 (c) 4 nonprofit, carries out advocacy and grassroots education. The Latin America Working Group Education Fund (LAWGEF), a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit, sponsors educational events and publishes reports and updates. In this year's activities, lobbying tasks were carried out by LAWG, and educational tasks by LAWGEF.



*LAWG team*

PHOTO BY LAWG INTERN ANA ROIG

Colombia Human Rights Committee

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,  
Global Mission

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,  
Washington Office

Global Exchange

Global Health Partners

Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA

Institute for Policy Studies

International Institute on Race, Equality and  
Human Rights

International Labor Rights Forum

Jesuit Conference Office of Justice  
and Ecology

# WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED IN 2023 WITH YOUR SUPPORT

## **Upholding Justice, Defending the Defenders**

- Co-organized and facilitated a meeting in Mexico City with Guatemalan and international human rights organizations to develop an **international advocacy strategy** on Guatemala post-elections. The expectation was that the VAMOS or Valor party candidates would win in the first or second round, continuing attacks against human rights defenders and justice operators and the closure of civic space. The upset of the Movimiento Semilla party coming in second and forcing a run-off election required a pivot on the agenda and looking at a variety of scenarios and advocacy responses in Guatemala, the U.S., and Europe.
- Co-organized meetings with Washington Office on Latin America and Due Process of Law Foundation on the human rights conditions in El Salvador under the state of exception, including promoting Cristosal's report on the state of exception with Cristosal Executive Director Noah Bullock. Distributed to Congress and the public our [blog](#) on **“Grave Human and Civil Rights Abuses under El Salvador's State of Exception: Is This the New Normal?”**





*Tania Del Moral and intern Gillian Villarroel meeting with Mexican human rights defender Nancy Rosete to discuss gun violence prevention, limits on weapons exports to Mexico, and forced disappearances in Mexico.*

PHOTO BY ACTIVIST JANICE K. GALLAGHER

- Justice in Motion
- Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)
- Lutheran World Relief Office of Public Policy
- Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
- Mennonite Central Committee
- Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Justice and Peace Office
- Oxfam America
- Peace Brigades International, USA
- Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Quixote Center
- Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
- Save the Children



- Moderated a panel at Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights with former Guatemalan justice operators Juan Francisco Sandoval and Erika Aifán and legal advisor to the [Xinca Parliament](#) Quelvin Jiménez. The Xinca, the country's second-largest Indigenous population, were this year's recipients of the RFK Human Rights Award. We discussed **links between attacks against justice operators, corruption, and the Xinca pueblos' fight against the extractive mining industry.**
- At the invitation of Global Exchange, participated in and helped organize an electoral mission from Latin America to **observe the Guatemalan run-off elections on August 20, 2023.** Participated in two Global Exchange webcasts on the elections and U.S. policy before and after August 20 to provide analyses and policy recommendations.
- Participated in numerous high-level meetings with the Biden administration to urge **stronger and more vocal actions to defend the vote of the Guatemalan electorate.**



Graphic on the Colombian government-ELN peace negotiations.

GRAPHIC CREATED BY ANA PEREYRA BARON



## Promoting Peace

- Encouraged the Biden administration and Congress **to support peace negotiations** with Colombia's last remaining major guerrilla group, the ELN, as the Gustavo Petro administration advanced peace talks. Organized a **letter** calling for a U.S. envoy to be appointed, organized visits by Colombian human rights groups to Congress and educated Congress on the need to consolidate **peace**.
- **Supported aid for peace building, human rights, and Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities** as the House chair of the foreign aid subcommittee threatened to cut off all aid to Colombia over vague concerns with Colombia's progressive president. Organized a **letter** from U.S. organizations in support of aid and worked with partners Washington Office on Latin America and Colombia Human Rights Committee to organize similar letters from Colombian nongovernmental groups and Colombian Americans.

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

United Church of Christ

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church & Society

Washington Office on Latin America

Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective

\* This list includes some of the groups participating. Participation does not imply endorsement of all LAWG/LAWGEF efforts. Decisions to endorse statements and campaigns are made on a case-by-case basis by each participating organization.

- Brought together a broad range of activists, scholars, Cuban Americans, and grassroots and humanitarian groups to demand President Biden live up to promises to **open up dialogue and allow humanitarian aid and travel to Cuba**. Urged lifting restrictions in the wake of the Matanzas oil fires.
- **Trained over a hundred local human rights activists** in national and international advocacy in five regions of Colombia with Colombian and European human rights partners.
- **Convened wide-ranging group of organizations and activists** interested in expanding diplomacy and travel to Cuba.
- **Co-organized a meeting in Washington, DC** with Global Exchange, U.S. anti-gun violence movements, the Center for American Progress, U.S. and Mexican human rights groups, and arms control experts.



## Defending the Rights of Migrants and Refugees

- Co-sponsored with Global Exchange and partners in the United States and Mexico the [2023 Peace Summit](#) where more than 300 leaders, activists and representatives from communities and organizations discussed a **binational movement for defending migrants rights and the demilitarization of border areas**.
- Launched series of webinars on the implications of the **end of Title 42** with Alianza Americas, Women's Refugee Commission, and Imumi in Mexico. In this first webinar, over 300 people joined, including asylum seekers trying to get an appointment with the faulty CBP One app.
- Organized support for a [letter](#) signed by 50 members of Congress urging President Biden to use his authority to designate Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) to Colombia, which would **protect over 182,000 Colombians in the United States from deportation** for a specific period.
- Joined CASA and Alianza Americas at a large rally in front of the White House demanding the Biden administration **redesignate TPS for Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, and designate TPS for Guatemala**.



*LAWG with CISPES and Santa Marta Water Defenders and ADES.*

PHOTO BY ACTIVIST

## Supporting Communities' Land, Environmental, and Economic Rights

- Spearheaded a [letter](#) to President Biden and Vice President Harris expressing concern about how the Biden Administration's increasing focus on attracting private investment to Central America will square with the need to **address the root causes of migration, including economic inequality, poverty, corruption, and deteriorating rule of law.** The letter struck a nerve and was followed by a meeting for coalition partners with the Vice President's office, National Security Council, State Department and other agencies.

- Supported a bicameral [letter](#) led by 33 members of Congress urging U.S. Trade Representative Tai and Secretary of State Blinken to **end investor state dispute settlements (ISDS) in existing and future trade agreements**. The letter also requested Biden intervene in the current ISDS case against Honduras for repealing the ZEDES law brought against Honduras. The damages sought in the lawsuit are higher than the amounts of foreign aid the United States has provided to all three northern Central American countries to address the root causes of migration under the last three U.S. presidents. Published an [article](#) and [memo](#) on the reasons why Honduras repealed this extreme ZEDES law permitting investors to broad rights over Honduran territory.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS Latin America Working Group Education Fund

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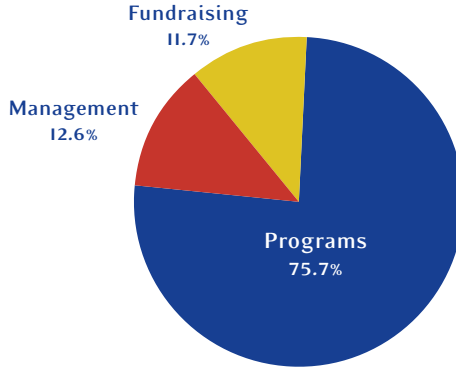
Alaide Vilchis Ibarra  
Value Our Families

## Finances

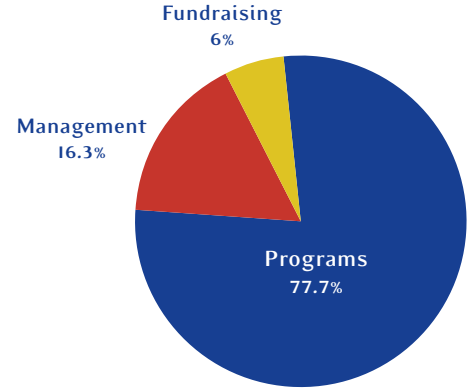
LAWGEF's income of \$440,511 in 2022 came from foundations, individual donors, and nongovernmental organizations. Expenditures for 2022 were \$375,481. Contributions to LAWGEF are tax-deductible.

LAWG's income of \$40,216 in 2022 came from foundations, individual donors, and coalition partners, including humanitarian, nongovernmental, and faith-based organizations. Income was supplemented by a two-year grant received in 2021. Expenditures for 2022 were \$125,563. Contributions to LAWG are not tax-deductible.

**LAWGEF 2022 Expenses**



**LAWG 2022 Expenses**





## Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the following for their contributions to LAWGEF's public education work: Ford Foundation, Foundation to Promote Open Society, Hispanics in Philanthropy, Church World Service, Holthues Trust, Oxfam America, United Church of Christ, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, Washington Office on Latin America, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, and Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Many thanks to the following for their contributions to LAWG: Open Society Policy Center, ELCA Global Mission, Save the Children, Mennonite Central Committee, Alliance of Baptists, Justice in Motion, and Presbyterian Church USA, as well as to the other partner organizations and many generous individuals contributing to both organizations.

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*LAWG team meeting with I-M Defensoras to discuss the situation of women defenders in Mesoamerica.*

PHOTO BY FELLOW ACTIVIST