



# LATIN AMERICA WORKING GROUP

*Action at Home for  
Just Policies Abroad*

## 2018

### ANNUAL REPORT

# **It was a year when we said NO: You cannot separate migrant children from their families. That's not who we are as a nation.**

That's why we launched the first major online petition against family separation, and that's why you signed it. That's why we marched and organized.

We had to stand up for what's right, whether we won or not. We had to say no to revoking the Temporary Protected Status of 300,000 Central Americans who had fled wars, floods, and earthquakes and had rooted their lives in our neighborhoods. No to deporting children, men, and women with clear grounds for asylum. No to cutting humanitarian aid to Latin America.

And together we made a dent: We ended the official policy of family separation just as it began. We stopped the slashing of humanitarian aid to Latin America, including for the Colombian peace accords. We stood in the way of a complete rollback of the diplomatic opening to Cuba. We stood up for threatened human rights defenders, student protesters, Afro-descendant and indigenous social leaders in Central America, Mexico, and Colombia.

It is such a challenging time. But we are proud to stand with you.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Lisa Haugard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

*Cover: Rally to deliver petition to end family separation outside the Capitol.* PHOTO BY LILY FOLKERTS.

## 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 the list of this year's activities, lobbying tasks were carried out by LAWG, and educational tasks by LAWGEF.



*LAWG Staff: Mavis Anderson, Lisa Haugaard, Daniella Burgi-Palomino, Andrea Fernández Aponte, and Lily Folkerts.*

PHOTO BY EMMA WHITE.

## PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS\*

AFL-CIO

AFL-CIO Solidarity Center

Alianza Americas

Alliance of Baptists

Amazon Watch

American Jewish World Service

Americans for Indian Opportunity

Augsburg University Center for  
Global Education and Experience

Center for Economic and Policy Research

Center for International Environmental Law

Center for International Policy



*Lily and former intern Anna at a protest against family separation.* PHOTO BY LILY FOLKERTS.

## 2018 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Defending the Rights of Migrants and Refugees

- Delivered a petition that received over 130,000 signatures to the Department of Homeland Security and organized a rally and social media campaign that **contributed** to the rollback of the Trump Administration's egregious family separation policy.
- Mobilized **opposition** to the administration's moves to restrict to access asylum, end Temporary Protected Status for Hondurans, Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, and Haitians who had fled wars and natural disasters, terminate protections for Dreamers, and increase funding for Customs and Border Patrol and ICE. We galvanized support for congressional dear colleague letters and disseminated **educational** infographics to over 500,000 people.
- Educated the public, policymakers, immigrant rights organizations and the press on the conditions driving forced migration from Central America, forging **common** messaging and actions among organizations and advocates.

- Organized a **visit** by Mexican migrant shelter workers to educate policymakers around the harmful impacts of a proposed “safe third country agreement” with Mexico and led civil society **responses** against plans to pressure Mexico to increase its deportations.
- Encouraged the United States to provide humanitarian aid for Venezuelan refugees.



*Lisa and Andrea with Honduran human rights defender outside Senate building.*

PHOTO BY ANDREA FERNÁNDEZ APONTE.

## Promoting Peace

- Successfully advocated with Congress and USAID to ensure U.S. support for implementing the historic peace accords in Colombia, including support for victims’ rights to truth and justice.
- Brought the Afro-Colombian, indigenous, and women activists who were **winners** of the Colombian National Human Rights Prize to the United States with partner WOLA to meet with policymakers and advocate for support for peace and protection of human rights defenders.

Church World Service

Colombia Human Rights Committee

Cuban American Alliance Education Fund

Disarm Education Fund

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,  
Global Mission

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,  
Washington Office

Global Exchange

Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA

Institute for Policy Studies

Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights

International Labor Rights Forum



*Colombian human rights defender speaking at a public event in Washington, DC.*

PHOTO BY LILY FOLKERTS.



*Mavis with a faith-based delegation in Havana, Cuba.*

PHOTO BY CAROLINE KURITZKES.

- Conducted a verification mission to a still highly-conflicted area of Colombia, Tumaco, issuing a **report** on weaknesses in peace accord implementation and danger to communities.
- Published an open letter upon the inauguration of Colombian President Iván Duque urging him to commit to full implementation of the peace accords and the ELN peace process.
- Organized **events** on sexual violence in the Colombian conflict, with feminist organizers and a victim of such violence, with partner Oxfam America.
- Advocated for rights-respecting citizen security policies in Central America and **Mexico** and the withdrawal of the military from policing, raising these issues with the State Department, embassies, the Southern Command and Congress.

## **Organizing to End the Embargo on Cuba**

- Published the *Cuba Advocacy Toolkit*, an activists' guide to taking action to end the travel ban and trade embargo against Cuba. The toolkit empowers individuals and groups to use their travel experiences to make a real impact in the effort to change U.S. policy toward Cuba.

- Organized a delegation by religious leaders from the Cuban Council of Churches. The delegation spoke with members of Congress and the administration about freedom to worship and the growth of churches in Cuba. They emphasized the hardship caused by the downsizing of the U.S. Embassy in Havana and the closure of the U.S. Consulate, making securing visas to visit family basically out of reach.
- Helped organize and participated in a delegation to Cuba of leaders of church denominations who have been working for decades to end the embargo on Cuba, hosted by the Cuban Council of Churches. The delegation came home with a commitment to continue our advocacy and to work specifically to restore the ability of Cubans to apply for visas at the U.S. Embassy in Havana.

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

- Organized showings of the documentary on the attacks against Colombian human rights defenders, “**They Are Killing Us,**” along with the filmmakers, an Afro-Colombian social leader and other human rights defenders. The events coordinated with partners included a packed house at Busboys & Poets and a congressional showing.

Jesuit Conference of the United States  
and Canada

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

National Security Archive

Oxfam America

Peace Brigades International, USA

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship



*Lily and former interns Grace and Diego protesting outside the U.S. Department of State.*

PHOTO BY JACOB BLICKENOV/CISPES.

- Organized support for congressional letter demanding protection and justice for Colombian human rights defenders signed by over 70 members of Congress.
- Insisted that the State Department and Congress denounce the murder of protesters in Honduras in the wake of the contested elections. Successfully pressed State Department to raise these and other human rights concerns in U.S. bilateral dialogue with Honduras. Documented violations of human rights conditions on U.S. aid to Honduras; some assistance was held up pending progress.
- Brought Honduran human rights defender Joaquín Mejía and journalist Claudia Mendoza to speak to the public and policymakers about threats against defenders with partner Alianza Americas. Presented recommendations for U.S. policy at a congressional briefing before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.
- Organized support for efforts against the Guatemalan and Honduran governments' attempts to expel or undercut mandates of UN and OAS anti-corruption mechanisms.
- Accompanied families of the disappeared in Mexico to meetings with U.S. policymakers, educating about the obstacles in their fight for justice and ensured attention to specific cases and challenges with the implementation of the new Disappearance Law.

- Created an **advocacy toolkit** for activists to call attention to the fourth anniversary of the disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa, Mexico.

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

- Trained Colombian environmental and land rights activists in advocacy methods.
- Organized a U.S. tour for Ofelia Castillo, an Afro-Colombian leader of displaced persons, with partner Colombia Human Rights Committee. This included meetings with policymakers and events with universities and Colombian-American audiences in New York, New Jersey, and Washington, DC.
- Organized a civil society **statement** denouncing obstacles to justice in the trial of those accused of the murder of Honduran indigenous environmental activist Berta Cáceres.



*Maya Mam Elder speaking at congressional briefing on indigenous peoples, human rights, and food security in Guatemala.*

PHOTO BY LILY FOLKERTS.

Quixote Center

Robert F. Kennedy Center for  
Justice and Human Rights

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

United Church of Christ

United Methodist Church,  
General Board of Church & Society

US-Cuba Cultural Exchange

Washington Office on Latin America

Witness for Peace

\* 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.



*Daniella with Mexican NGO partner CADHAC in Monterrey, Mexico.*

PHOTO BY DANIELLA BURGI-PALOMINO.

## Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the following for their contributions to LAWGEF's public education work: Foundation to Promote Open Society, CAMMINA, Moriah Fund, Stewart Mott Charitable Trust, Holthues Trust, Oxfam America, United Church of Christ, AFL-CIO, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, Lutheran World Relief, and Washington Office on Latin America.

Many thanks to the following for their contributions to LAWG: Open Society Policy Center, Church World Service, ELCA Global Mission, Mennonite Central Committee, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Alliance of Baptists, and Presbyterian Church USA, as well as to the other partner organizations and many generous individuals contributing to both organizations.

## Finances

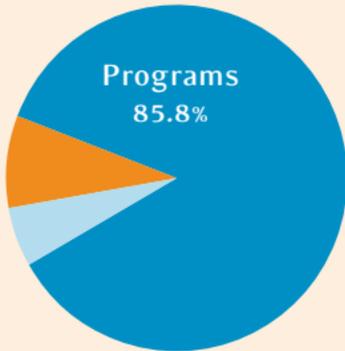
LAWGEF's income of \$379,279 in 2017 came from foundations as well as from individual donors and nongovernmental organizations. Expenditures for 2017 were \$350,390. Contributions to LAWGEF are tax-deductible.

LAWG's income of \$113,666 in 2017 came from contributions by coalition partners, including humanitarian agencies, nongovernmental and faith-based organizations, funders and individual donors. Expenditures for 2017 were \$100,129. Contributions to LAWG are not tax-deductible.

### LAWGEF 2017 Expenses

Fundraising  
8.6%

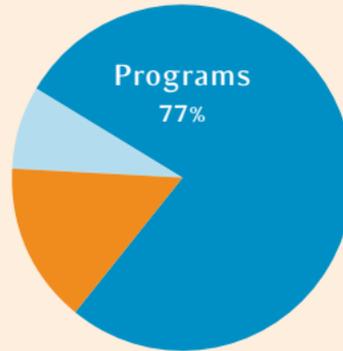
Management  
5.6%



### LAWG 2017 Expenses

Fundraising  
8%

Management  
15%



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See our website to:

- Sign up for our newsletter, *The Advocate*, and for the LAWG blog;
- Join our e-alert lists to learn ways to take action for just U.S. policies;
- Order or view online our special reports;
- Make a contribution.

*Andrea and Lily at the 2018  
Ecumenical Advocacy Days.*

PHOTO BY GRACE LARIA.



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