



LATIN AMERICA WORKING GROUP

*Action at Home for
Just Policies Abroad*

2015

ANNUAL REPORT

You did it. We did it together! Years of our work together chipping away at the frozen-in-time, senseless travel embargo on Cuba led to President Obama's decision to do what was in his power to end travel restrictions and start to normalize relations with the island. The moment is magic—now on to lift the embargo!

In 2014 we also secured U.S. support for peace in Colombia, advancing towards ending a war that has forced 6 million people to flee their homes and cost over 220,000 lives.

And we faced new challenges in Central America, where the crisis that led 68,000 unaccompanied children to flee is far from over. We will act to protect the rights of migrants and to end the violence that is causing so many children, men and women to risk their lives on this dangerous journey.

We look forward to working together to forge a truly just U.S. policy towards the Americas—and after a year like this, we know we can go far!

Cover: Protestors gather outside U.S. State Department building in Washington, DC on the six-month anniversary of the disappearance of 43 students from the Ayotzinapa school in Mexico.

PHOTO BY ANGELIKA ALBALADEJO.

Lisa Haugward



Members of the Association of Returned Migrants with Disabilities (AMIREDIS) pose in front of the Capitol with LAWG's Emma Buckhout.

PHOTO BY EMMA BUCKHOUT.

Who We Are

The Latin America Working Group serves a coalition of nongovernmental, religious, grassroots and humanitarian agencies. We bring coalition partners together to create advocacy and public education campaigns to encourage U.S. policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean that favors human rights, justice, peace and sustainable development.

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 produces publications. In the list of this year's activities, lobbying activities were carried out by the LAWG, and educational activities by the LAWGEF.



LAWG's Lisa Haugaard and Angelika Albaladejo accompany Honduran LGBT activists to Capitol Hill.

PHOTO BY EMMA BUCKHOUT.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS*

AFL-CIO

AFL-CIO Solidarity Center

Alliance of Baptists

Amazon Watch

American Jewish World Service

Center for Economic and Policy Research

Center for Global Education at Augsburg College

Center for International Policy

Church of the Brethren

Church World Service

Colombia Human Rights Committee

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach



A Returned Migrant Center in San Pedro Sula as documented during a LAWG fact-finding trip to Honduras.

PHOTO BY LISA HAUGAARD.

2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Protecting Migrants' Rights and Human Rights in Central America

- Exposed the dire situation facing women, children and men deported from the United States and Mexico. We carried out a verification mission to Honduras, spoke at a press conference in Tegucigalpa and brought valiant migrant shelter leaders to Washington to speak at the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission in the Congress.
- Created a bilingual guide for Central American and Mexican human rights advocates to understand and attempt to influence rapidly shifting U.S. immigration and foreign policy towards Central America.
- Produced videos with six Honduran migrants disabled by “La Bestia” freight train en route to the United States through Mexico.

- Focused attention on human rights abuses by security forces and corruption in the Northern Triangle of Central America, creating spaces for civil society activists to share their concerns, conducting a field mission to El Salvador and Honduras and ensuring tough Senate human rights conditions on any U.S. security assistance.
- Supported a ground-breaking hearing at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on the detention and return of migrants who might be eligible for protection.



An ineffective poster campaign aimed at deterring child migration as seen during a fact-finding trip to El Salvador.

PHOTO BY ANGELIKA ALBALADEJO.

Cuba: Travel for All

- Succeeded in pushing the Obama Administration to take bold executive action on Cuba travel and trade by issuing new regulations making all but tourist travel to Cuba legal under general licenses and opening new avenues of business, cultural, sports engagement, working with coalition partners. Negotiations between the United States and Cuba continue on a regular basis toward the goal of normalized relations.

- Conference of Major Superiors of Men
- Cuban American Alliance Education Fund
- Disarm Education Fund
- Drug Policy Alliance
- Environmental Investigation Agency
- Episcopal Church
- 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
- Jesuit Refugee Service/USA



Visiting a rural school in Bayamo during an Eastern Cuba people-to-people trip led by LAWGEF and CubaPuentes.

PHOTO BY MAVIS ANDERSON.

- Succeeded in getting Cuba removed from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism and organized thousands of people to respond with thanks to the President's removal of Cuba from this list, something we had worked on for years.
- Secured Commerce and OFAC licenses, and Coast Guard permission, for eight U.S.-flagged sport fishing boats to cruise to Cuba to participate in the Hemingway International Billfish Tournament, the first time in 35 years that U.S. boats had officially participated. An important precedent was set, as boat travel to Cuba now is becoming commonplace. Hemingway grandsons John and Patrick were part of the U.S. delegation arranged by LAWGEF.
- Held a Cuba Consultation 2015 in Washington, with the participation of more than 80 Cuba policy advocates from around the country to strategize and visit members of Congress.
- Supported legislation in both the House and Senate to end the travel ban. Grassroots action was an important factor in increasing the numbers of co-sponsors.

Colombia: Standing with the Victims of Violence

- Urged the U.S. Congress to embrace the Colombian peace process, emphasizing support for the rights of victims of violence. We organized support for a letter signed by 65 members of Congress, organized a Days of Prayer and Action to express support for peace and briefed dozens of offices on the peace process.
- Brought Congresswoman Clara Rojas, who endured six years of captivity by the FARC guerrillas, to Washington to speak to the White House, State Department, Congress and the press on support for peace and the rights of victims.
- Made sure the United States accepted the Colombian government's decision to end the cruel and ineffective aerial spraying program, which had blanketed the Colombian countryside with toxic chemicals. Years of advocating against this program helped create the space for this decisive shift.
- Led an on-line petition to call on the parties to the conflict to make room for Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities at the peace talks.

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

Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and
Human Rights

School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch)

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas



A Colombian human rights defender stands by a mural showing the impact of war in Putumayo, Colombia, including aerial fumigation and bombings.

PHOTO BY LISA HAUGAARD.

Promoting Justice for Mexico & the Borderlands

- Organized congressional letters signed by 82 members of the House and 12 members of the Senate calling for a thorough investigation of case of the forced disappearance of 43 students from a teachers' college in the state of Guerrero and greater accountability and transparency in Mexico.
- With U.S. and Mexican human rights partners ensured that the U.S. government withheld \$5 million in U.S. aid to Mexico due to lack of compliance by the Mexican government with human rights obligations tied to U.S. security aid.
- Raised awareness of the increasing human rights violations against migrants in transit in Mexico. Sponsored a panel at Ecumenical Advocacy Days on militarized immigration enforcement in Mexico and the United States. Published a weekly "Central America/Mexico Migrant News Brief" email digest for 1,300 supporters.

- Led an online petition to call on the Obama administration to protect children and families and to stop pressuring Mexico to escalate immigration enforcement.
- Worked with border-based partners to advance meaningful dialogue with Customs and Border Protection (CBP), especially around proper screening for protection, the care for migrants in detention, and agency accountability and transparency.



LAWG's Daniella Burgi-Palomino leads a strategy session on migration issues with partners from Mexico, Central America and the United States.

PHOTO BY ANGELIKA ALBALADEJO.

United Church of Christ

United Methodist Church,
General Board of Church & Society

United Methodist Church,
General Board of Global Ministries

United Methodist Church, Women's Division

US-Cuba Cultural Exchange

U.S. Jesuit Conference

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.

*LAWG Staff: Angelika, Lisa,
Daniella, Mavis and Emma.*

PHOTO BY ANGELIKA ALBALADEJO.



Acknowledgments

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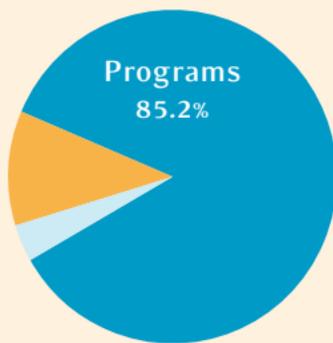
Finances

LAWGEF's income of \$313,750 in 2014 came from foundations as well as from individual donors and nongovernmental organizations. Expenditures for 2014 were \$533,168. Some multiyear grants from 2013 were carried forward to cover 2014 expenses. Contributions to the LAWGEF are tax-deductible.

LAWG's income of \$55,279 in 2014 came from contributions by coalition partners, including humanitarian agencies, nongovernmental and faith-based organizations, funders and individual donors. Expenditures for 2014 were \$165,768. A multiyear grant received in 2013 was carried forward into 2014 to cover 2014 expenses. Contributions to the LAWG are not tax-deductible.

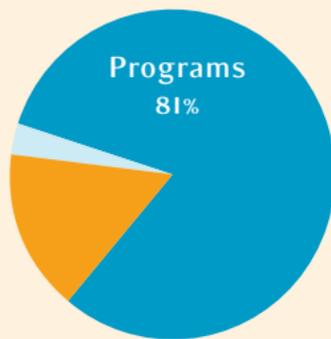
LAWGEF 2014 Expenses

Fundraising
11%
Management
3.8%



LAWG 2014 Expenses

Fundraising
3%
Management
16%



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Latin America Working Group

2029 P Street NW Suite 301

Washington, DC 20036

Tel: 202.546.7010 Fax: 202.543.7647

Email: lawg@lawg.org

www.lawg.org

www.facebook.com/lawgaction

www.twitter.com/lawgaction

See our website to:

- sign up for our newsletter, *The Advocate*, or for the LAWG blog;
- join our e-mail listservs on Cuba, Colombia, Mexico and U.S./Mexico border issues, low-volume e-mail alerts that let you know what you can do to call for just U.S. policies;
- order or view on-line our special reports;
- make a contribution.



Migrant rights defenders from Guatemala and Honduras at the State Department.

PHOTO BY ANGELIKA ALBALADEJO.

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