



LATIN AMERICA WORKING GROUP

*Action at Home for
Just Policies Abroad*

2013 ANNUAL REPORT

We started 30 years ago with one simple, though difficult, goal: To stop our government's support for wars in Central America and build support for peace. This year we put body and soul behind a united effort to support the peace process in Colombia and end a half-century of terrifying conflict.

It's not just support for a peace process: It is support for peace with truth and justice, peace on the side of the victims of violence.

We organized support for peace in the U.S. Congress; joined faith leaders meeting with White House; and worked with you, activists and faith communities throughout the United States, in actions for peace. We brought Colombian victims' rights activists, labor leaders, and faith leaders to meet with policymakers and citizens to say how they envision a Colombia with peace and rights for all.

And that's not all. This year we led important efforts to crack open the door at the U.S. Customs and Border Control to tell

them to stop abuses of migrants and deportation practices that make migrants prey to organized crime. We created spaces for migrant defenders, Mexican human rights groups, and Honduran LGBT and environmental leaders to call for justice. And we helped build bridges between the United States and Cuba by promoting citizen travel to Cuba and helping returned travelers become vocal advocates for policy change.

And we could not do it without you.



Cover: Thousands of activists march toward the U.S. Capitol calling for immigration reform at the Camino Americano concert, rally, and march on October 8th, 2013. LAWGEF advocated for immigration reform and for policies that protect the rights of border communities and migrants.

PHOTO BY VANESSA GAMBOA.

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 with panelists from *Until We Find Them: The Disappeared in Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, and Mexico*.
PHOTO BY EMMA BUCKHOUT.


PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS*

AFL-CIO
AFL-CIO Solidarity Center
Alliance of Baptists
American Jewish World Service
Catholic Relief Services
Center for Economic and Policy Research
Center for Global Education at
Augsburg College
Center for International Policy
Christian Peacemaker Teams
Church of the Brethren
Church World Service
Colombia Human Rights Committee
Columban Center for
Advocacy and Outreach

2013 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Colombia: Standing with the Victims of Violence

- Organized support for Colombia's peace process with attention to truth, justice, and victims' rights that strengthened U.S. government support for the peace process. We helped shape and gain signers on a letter by Representatives McGovern and Schakowsky signed by 62 members of Congress; worked with faith groups to craft a letter signed by 56 faith leaders from across the United States; empowered activist and faith communities to organize events and worship services dedicated to peace in Colombia as part of the yearly Days of Prayer and Action; and joined with faith leaders in advocacy visits for peace, with the White House and State Department.
- Carried out a field investigation on Colombia's Caribbean Coast with Lutheran World Relief, revealing that little land has been returned to victims of violence, and land rights leaders, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities face threats and murder. We presented our findings and report, *Far from the Promised Land: Land Restitution on Colombia's Caribbean Coast*, to the Colombian government, State Department and USAID, to spur improved policies to return land and protect land rights activists.



Gustavo Balanta Castillo of Fundación SURCOS meets with the office of Rep. John Lewis to discuss protecting Afro-Colombian lands and hear about the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.

PHOTO BY LISA HAUGAARD.



Colombian Constitutional Court Judge Luis Ernesto Vargas Silva meets Eleanor Roosevelt during a visit to DC.
PHOTO BY LISA HAUGAARD.

- Brought Colombian labor leaders, human rights defenders, families of the disappeared, Afro-Colombian and faith leaders to meet with congressional offices and the public. Organized with the U.S. Office on Colombia a tour by Lilia Peña, a victims' association leader from ASORVIMM (Regional Association of Victims of State Crimes of Magdalena Medio), to meet with activists, students, scholars, and congressional offices in Texas, New York, Florida and Washington, D.C.

- As a juror for Colombia's second national human rights prize in Bogotá, LAWGEF's director helped to highlight human rights defenders and accompanied winning human rights advocates in an advocacy meeting with Colombia's Vice President.

Promoting Justice for Mexico & the Borderlands

- Played a central role in advancing civil society dialogue with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection to express our strong objections to detention and deportation practices that make migrants and border communities more vulnerable to human and civil rights violations.

Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Cuban American Alliance Education Fund
Disarm Education Fund
Drug Policy Alliance
Episcopal Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
Global Mission
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
Washington Office
Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on
Latin America and the Caribbean
Global Exchange
Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA
Institute for Policy Studies
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
US Jesuit Conference



The band Cosita Seria performs at a LAWG/Busboys & Poets event with human rights defenders from Chihuahua and Coahuila, Mexico.

PHOTO BY EMMA BUCKHOUT.

- Released *Perilous Journey: Kidnapping and Violence against Migrants in Transit through Mexico*, a report on the terrors experienced by migrants, including migrant kidnapping survivor testimonies issued by the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center and the Migrant Shelter of Saltillo.
- In a Mexico City press conference, presented findings and recommendations to address threats and attacks against migrant rights defenders in Mexico documented by LAWGEF staff and fellow members of a verification team organized by Project Counselling Service.
- Hosted delegations of human rights defenders from northern and southern Mexico to educate policymakers and the public about ongoing impunity for violence against migrants and other vulnerable populations in Mexico committed by security forces, corrupt officials, and organized crime.
- Organized grassroots and policymaker support for a bi-partisan congressional “Dear Colleague” letter calling on President Obama to place human rights and accountability in the center of bilateral talks between the United States and Mexico.

Cuba: Travel for All

- Facilitated people-to-people travel by grassroots groups under license from Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), while at the same time urging OFAC—through a grassroots alert that generated nearly 3,000 messages to OFAC and the State Department—to expedite issuing licenses in accord with the President's policy.
- Created a campaign to get Cuba removed from the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism, where Cuba does not belong. The campaign includes our popular YouTube video, "Why Is Cuba on the U.S. list of State Sponsors of Terrorism?" and our on-line petition to the President to remove Cuba from the list, which has grown to nearly 10,000 signers.
- Hosted educational delegations to Congress and the Obama Administration requesting greater dialogue, travel and exchange with Cuba: Cuban Americans for Engagement (CAFÉ); Cuban Council of Churches; President of the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Matanzas, Cuba; a Cuban scholar; and Cuban Americans from South Florida.

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

Project Counselling Service

Robert F. Kennedy Center for
Justice and Human Rights

School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch)

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

TransAfrica Forum



Cuban Americans for Engagement (CAFE) visit Washington, DC.

PHOTO BY ROBERTO RIZO, CAFE.

- Promoted and kept updated our on-line resource on “How-to Travel to Cuba” which advises on how to navigate the OFAC licensing website, lists organizations holding people-to-people licenses and a schedule of up-coming delegations to Cuba.
- Engaged the on-line community in our campaign to end the travel ban on Cuba. LAWG’s Facebook page, EndtheTravelBan, has 32,000 “likes” and offers daily spirited comments and exchanges.

Defending Human Rights in Central America

- Testified before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission in Congress on human rights violations in Honduras.
- Organized a visit by Honduran LGBT leader Pepe Palacios to meet with the State Department, U.S. LGBT rights organizations, and Congress, along with the Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America and the Honduras Solidarity Network.
- Highlighted threats and violence against anti-mining activists and international accompaniers in Honduras in a letter sent to the State Department and meetings with the U.S. Embassy in Honduras, State Department and Congress.

- Participated in a mining delegation to El Salvador organized by the National Roundtable against Metal Mining.

Monitoring Military Aid

- Exposed trends in U.S. military aid to Latin America—including greater use of Special Forces and using Colombian security forces to train other nation's police and military—and the U.S. deafness to the growing clamor from Latin America for change in drug policy, in *Time to Listen*, a special trends report by LAWGEF with the Center for International Policy and WOLA.
- With Colombian partner Coordinación Colombia Europa Estados Unidos, trained Paraguayan human rights groups on the model of international advocacy used by Colombian, European and U.S. human rights groups. Led a training workshop on monitoring military aid and spending for Latin American anti-corruption groups.



LAWG's Omar Martinez joins international mission against mining in El Salvador.

PHOTO BY RON CARVER, INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES.

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
US/Labor Education in the Americas Project
US Office on Colombia
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: Noah Montague, Mavis Anderson, Omar Martinez, Jennifer Johnson, Lisa Haugaard, Ruth Isabel Robles, Vanessa Gamboa, and Emily Chow.

Acknowledgments

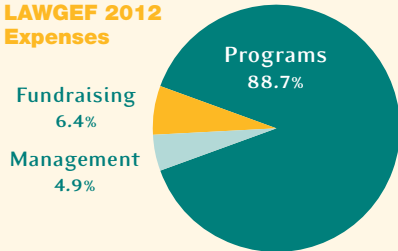
Many thanks to the following for their contributions to the LAWGEF's public education work: Open Society Foundations, Ford Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Moriah Fund, Christopher Reynolds Foundation, Arca Foundation, Stewart Mott Charitable Trust, Lutheran World Relief, Oblate Charitable Fund, United Church of Christ, and Washington Office on Latin America. Many thanks to Church World Service, ELCA Global Mission, Catholic Relief Services, Presbyterian Church (USA), Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, and many other organizations that have contributed to the LAWG, as well as to the many generous individuals contributing to both organizations. Our deepest thanks to the family of Stephen Coats. We will always fondly remember Stephen, friend and collaborator, and his pioneering spirit on international labor rights issues.

Finances

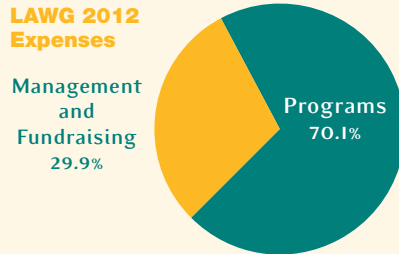
LAWGEF's income of \$724,914 in 2012 came from foundations as well as from individual donors and nongovernmental organizations. Expenditures for 2012 were \$521,938. Income included multi-year grants that will be carried forward to 2014. Contributions to the LAWGEF are tax-deductible.

LAWG's income of \$45,446 in 2012 came from contributions by coalition partners, including humanitarian agencies, nongovernmental and faith-based organizations, funders and individual donors. Expenditures for 2012 were \$43,594. Contributions to the LAWG are not tax-deductible.

LAWGEF 2012 Expenses



LAWG 2012 Expenses



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Latin America Working Group
424 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002
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.



Cuba—Old and New

PHOTO BY LEWIS WATTS ©.

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