

Member's Report  
**STEELWORKERS**  
*Humanity Fund*

June 2016

## Promoting Human and Labour Rights in 2015

*"I didn't choose to become an activist, activism chose me"*

– Faeza Meyer

**F**aeza Meyer was living with her husband and children in a shack in the small backyard of her aunt's home, when the family heard that land on the outskirts of Cape Town, South Africa, would be severed and they could buy a small lot to build a house. They only had to put down a deposit and wait.

On moving day they came with their few possessions and material to build a shack until they could save money for a real house. Their happiness turned to concern and then to horror when they discovered they had been lied to. It was a fraud. Their money was gone and they had no place to live.

It was that day that Faeza began her long journey from a desperate, homeless mother to a strong leader of the Housing Assembly. Supported by Steelworkers Humanity Fund, the

Housing Assembly is an organization fighting for proper housing in Cape Town.

Faeza took daily notes of what happened throughout her struggles.

"I am a person who keeps a personal diary, for my children," she wrote. "In the event I am not there one day, they can read and see what their mother was thinking and feeling and know why I have left them at their grandmother's house."

Koni Benson partnered with Faeza to publish a book to tell people like Faeza that they are not alone, that others have also walked in their shoes, felt their pain and faced similar struggles. The book "Occupying Our Land - Writing Our History" will be published soon.

The Humanity Fund found the book so moving and profound that it decided to print an excerpt. It is a short but powerful read.

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the excerpt, please send an e-mail to the Fund, at [humanityfund@usw.ca](mailto:humanityfund@usw.ca), with your mailing address and contact information. ■



Informal Settlement, Cape Town, South Africa



Tete, Mozambique

## Giving Back Their Voice in Mining Communities in Mozambique

In Tete, Mozambique, mining is booming. Companies and governments talk about the great opportunity for the country. Academics and media outlets repeat what they hear as an unquestionable truth. The people living in the areas in which mines have been opening have another story to tell: a story of displacement, loss of traditional agricultural land, promises of jobs never fulfilled, schools for children moved away and doctors for the elders that never arrived. The Steelworkers Humanity Fund partnered with Association for Community Legal Support and Defense (AAAJC), Bench Marks Foundation and Sekelekani to give those communities the opportunity to tell their stories. The main goals of the project are to teach them how to write articles, prepare radio programs and podcasts, make videos and upload them on the internet and insert information in crowd-mapping. Those tools will give them a chance to be heard at home and abroad. ■



Excited SHF partners arriving in Puerto Cabezas for 2015 seminar on violence against women.

## Stop Violence Against Women

The statistics of violence against women in Latin America are disturbingly high and on the rise, according to a recent report of the United Nations Women organization. Gender-motivated killings have increased by more than half, with El Salvador at the top of the list. Acid attacks on women's faces have quadrupled in the last few years in Colombia. In Nicaragua, more than 70 percent of women have been victims of some kind of violence.

The Steelworkers Humanity Fund is committed to challenging this issue. In 2015, two Women of Steel joined a number of Humanity Fund's women's partner organizations in Nicaragua to share experiences about the lives of women living in extreme poverty and the high rates of violence against women. They also learned about the tireless work of AMICA (Association of Indigenous Women of the Atlantic Coast) to eliminate violence against women. ■



# Financial Highlights Steelworkers Humanity Fund

	<b>2014</b> (audited)	<b>2015</b> (audited)
<b>INCOME</b>		
Negotiated CBA contributions	1,511,121	1,567,160
Government Funding	40,704	230,515
Other Donations	73,311	59,173
Corporate Accountability Program Contributions	32,284	68,450
<u>Investment Income</u>	<u>76,173</u>	<u>29,639</u>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	1,733,593	1,954,937
<b>PROGRAM SPENDING</b>		
Food Banks	151,500	171,100
Administration	224,747	227,957
Project Support & Development	297,376	300,780
Emergency Relief	107,407	105,000
Corporate Accountability Program	42,092	63,898
<u>Projects</u>	<u>748,361</u>	<u>913,743</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	1,571,483	1,782,478
Change (Revenue Less Expenses)	162,110	172,459

**Note:** The Steelworkers Humanity Support Fund (a sister organization, which is not a charity) had revenues of \$99,685 and expenses of \$56,912 in the 12 months ending April 30, 2016. These figures which related to the Global Forestry Program and other projects, are not included in the summary table above.



**Colombia** has one of the largest populations of internally displaced people in the world. By 2014, about six million people, nearly 13% of the

population, had been displaced, and about eight million hectares of land, 14% of Colombia's territory, had been illegally acquired by armed groups.

## Long Road to Recovery in Colombia

Most of these displaced Colombians are women. They are widows, daughters, sisters of peasants killed by paramilitary groups to steal their lands. These women are trying to rebuild their lives and recover their lands. The Steelworkers Humanity Fund provides resources for psychological treatment and legal representation in the area of El Cesar. As most of the women said "we only ask for a bit of peace and tranquility, for a decent job and the possibility to live without fear." ■

## Promoting Respect for Human Rights by Canadian Mining Companies

In 2015, the SHF continued its corporate accountability project, working with other progressive Canadian groups through the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability. The CNCA Open for

Justice Campaign is advocating for the establishment of a human rights ombudsperson in the extractive sector and access to justice in Canadian courts. The SHF provides coordination services to the CNCA coalition. As

part of its corporate accountability activities, in 2015 the SHF also engaged in a project with the Canadian Centre for International Justice (CCIJ), based in Ottawa, which examined legal avenues for victims of human rights abuses in Guatemala and Eritrea. ■

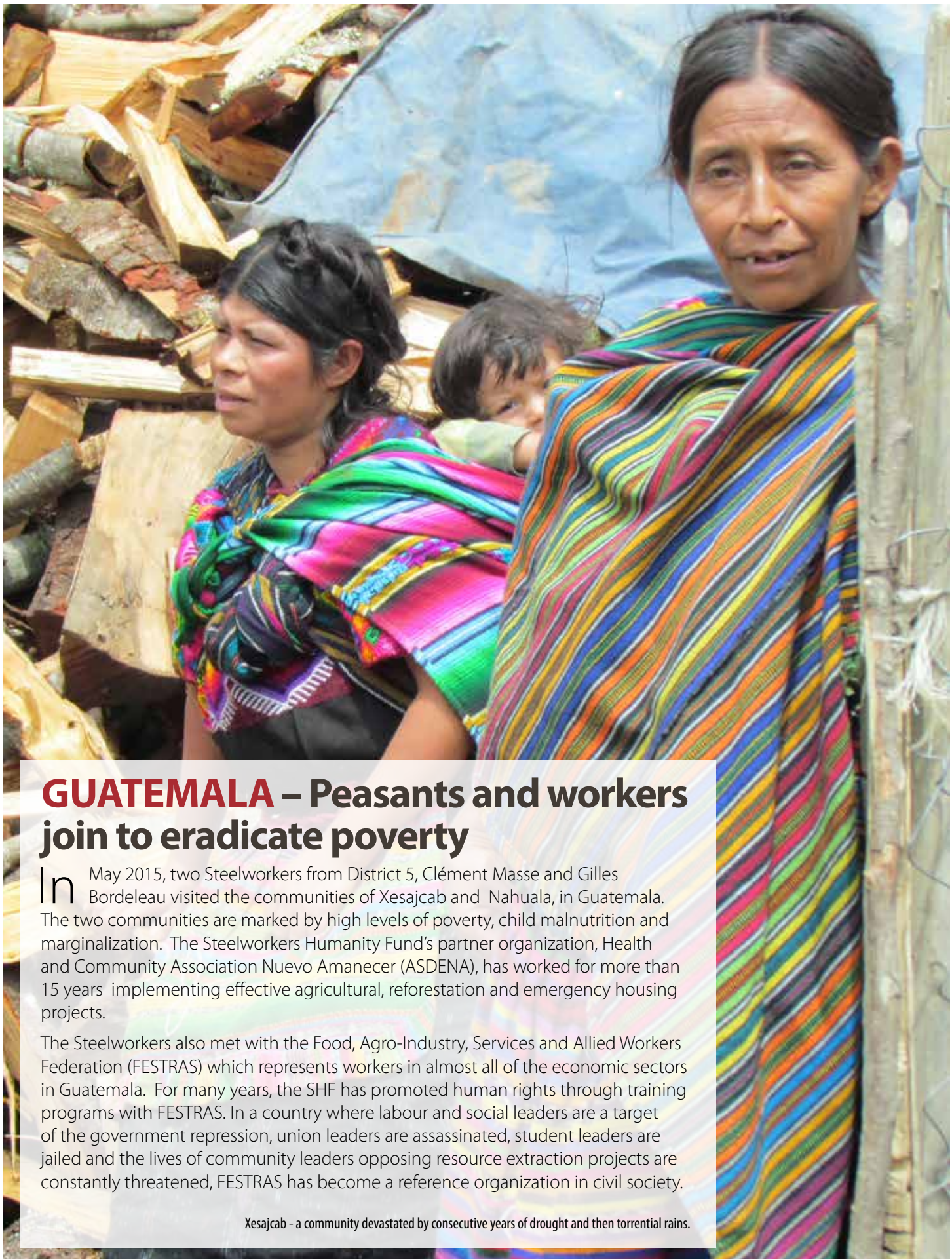
## Syrian Refugees

In 2015, the Steelworkers Humanity Fund set aside \$100,000 to assist refugee

resettlement in Canada. To date the SHF has committed \$7,500 each to 13 different refugee groups that

involve Steelworkers members. More applications for support are welcome. ■





## **GUATEMALA – Peasants and workers join to eradicate poverty**

In May 2015, two Steelworkers from District 5, Clément Masse and Gilles Bordeleau visited the communities of Xesajcab and Nahuala, in Guatemala. The two communities are marked by high levels of poverty, child malnutrition and marginalization. The Steelworkers Humanity Fund's partner organization, Health and Community Association Nuevo Amanecer (ASDNA), has worked for more than 15 years implementing effective agricultural, reforestation and emergency housing projects.

The Steelworkers also met with the Food, Agro-Industry, Services and Allied Workers Federation (FESTRAS) which represents workers in almost all of the economic sectors in Guatemala. For many years, the SHF has promoted human rights through training programs with FESTRAS. In a country where labour and social leaders are a target of the government repression, union leaders are assassinated, student leaders are jailed and the lives of community leaders opposing resource extraction projects are constantly threatened, FESTRAS has become a reference organization in civil society.

*Xesajcab - a community devastated by consecutive years of drought and then torrential rains.*

# Your Contributions at V



## Building Women's Equality

- CEPROMIN, Bolivian Centre for the Promotion of Mining, Bolivia
- FESIMINI, Nicaragua Miners' Federation, Nicaragua
- ProDesc, Project for Economic, Social and Environment Rights, Mexico

## Sustainable Development and Environment

- ASDENA, Development Association Nuevo Amanecer, Guatemala
- DESMI, Social and Economic Development for Indigenous Mexicans, Chiapas Mexico
- CEPROMIN, Bolivian Centre for Promotion of Mining, Bolivia

## Promoting Labour and Human Rights

- Bench Marks Foundation, Mozambique
- International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG), South Africa
- Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity, Bangladesh
- CTF, Chilean Forestry Workers Confederation, Chile
- Vida Viva Colombia Platform, Colombia
- FESTRAS, Federation of Food, Agricultural and Related Workers, Guatemala
- FNTMMSP, Peruvian Mining Federation, Peru
- FAT, Authentic Workers Front, Mexico
- ProDesc, Project for Economic, Social and Environment Rights, Mexico



# Work Around the World



- CEPROMIN, Bolivian Centre for Promotion of Mining, Bolivia
- Housing Assembly, South Africa
- Corporación de Trabajadores de la Tierra, Colombia
- Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Project, Liberia
- Maharastra Building Construction Forest and Wood Workers Union, India
- Working at Altitude Health and safety project, Chile
- Canary Institute for Mining, Environment, and Health, Canada

## 2015 Emergency Relief

- Mozambique Flood relief (\$5,000)
- Mexico Tornado in Ciudad Acuña (\$5,000)

- Burundi Refugee crisis (\$40,000)
- Nepal Earthquake (\$20,000)
- Canada Flood Recovery in Cache Creek, British Colombia (\$20,000)
- Canada Northern Saskatchewan Fires (\$20,000)

## Fighting poverty in Canada (housing, food, education)

- 73 Food banks
- 10 community based charities in Western Canada for \$3,000 each to mark the 30th anniversary of the SHF
- Improvements in Community based charities in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario (including Arch, Soup Kitchen, St. Vincent's, Pauline's Place, Push for Change)



Peter Keculah learning masonry

## Understanding Poverty and More in South Africa

Many poor people without houses, jobs or education, blame themselves for their situation or believe they are unlucky being born where they were. Poverty is more complicated and, in most cases, individuals have little to do with it. The International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG) in Cape Town, South Africa devotes its energy to understanding and demystifying poverty and sharing its knowledge with groups and organizations. From waste pickers to homeless, unemployed, agricultural workers and home-based care givers, ILRIG's work reaches poverty-stricken communities and helps them understand their circumstances. Understanding poverty helps to confront it. In 2015 the SHF conducted an evaluation of ILRIG and found that "ILRIG is engaged with important struggles; ILRIG is having an impact on those struggles; and ILRIG is making good use of its resources". The Evaluation report noted that "ILRIG's key underlying message is one of solidarity: you are not alone, but part of something larger. For many activists that is essential encouragement and the source of hope: it doesn't have to be this way. ■





# Building Skills and Hope for War Affected Youth in Liberia

The 14 years of civil war that ravaged Liberia from 1989 to 2004 left behind serious injuries and untold suffering. One of the most affected groups were children and young people that were used by warlords as child soldiers and instruments of terror. After nearly 12 years of fragile peace there are no supports for war affected youth to reintegrate into society. Many are marginalized, frustrated, angry, and at risk of returning to violence. The Ebola virus worsened acute poverty in the country.

*"When I was fighting in the war my father and mother died. Then I became addicted to drugs and alcohol since I was eight years. Now I am 25 years with two children by did not go to school. I have been living in the street, thinking that there was no better life for me. ... I decided to come to the program. I am now able to lay blocks and build up a house wall. I know that I will be one of the best builders in the region."*

– Peter Keculah, participant in Liberia training project.

The Steelworkers Humanity Fund is supporting a vocational training and support program for 50 ex-combatants. It is a small step when there is so much

need, but the 11-month program is life changing for many of the participants. ■



Cape Town waste pickers at a meeting break at ILRIG.

# Humanitarian Assistance and



Photos: Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity

## Workers' Rights and Safety in Bangladesh

**Garment** workers, a majority of whom are women, in Bangladesh continue to fight for their rights. They fight for their right to a safe workplace. They are determined that their sisters and brothers will not again lose their lives and limbs in factory fires like Tazreen Fashions (2012) or to another Rana Plaza (2013). They look to the day when workplace harassment is addressed, hours of work are properly regulated, and a sustainable garment sector pays living wages. Currently entry level garment workers are about C\$3.50 per day. Experienced operators earn about C\$4.80 per day.

Together with other Canadian trade unions the Steelworkers Humanity Fund supports a project with



Bangladesh garment workers seek support and legal advice at the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity.

the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity (BCWS). The joint project provides training and support to workers to understand and exercise their human rights and the rights set out in Bangladesh labour laws to organize democratic workplace unions that give voice to workers, improve working conditions, and pull workers and their families out of poverty. ■



# Promotion of Human Rights



## Responding to the Nepal Earthquake

In Dachi Nkali municipality, Kathmandu Valley, Balami worked with other women to repair a collapsed irrigation channel which had provided their community's crops with water. The women were paid under Oxfam's cash for work project. Balami says that "If I don't do this work, people won't even be able to eat," adding that "I am going to spend some of the money I am earning on my children's schooling and also on repairing the house".

Balami on break from repair work

Photo: Kieran Doherty/Oxfam



## Fort McMurray and Beyond: Displacement and Refugees in 2015

The Steelworkers Humanity Fund responded to the Fort McMurray fires and the devastation of parts of that community with \$50,000 contribution for relief and recovery. As we did that we were very aware that there are many other disasters and situations of injustice that do not receive the same media attention and the same outpouring of public support.

The United Nations reports that an unprecedented 60 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 20 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18. 42,500 people are forcibly displaced every day as a result of conflict and persecution.

The Steelworkers Humanity Fund allows Steelworkers members to go beyond one-time or ad-hoc contributions to the big humanitarian disasters, and provide support on a more regular basis to less well known, but no less worthy, situations. And it allows Steelworker members to provide resources for workers and communities to assert their rights and create healthy and resilient communities that address the root causes of poverty before a disaster strikes.

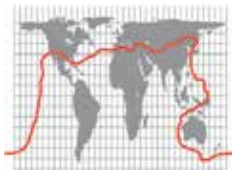
But the needs are great, and we can expect more frequent severe weather events related to climate change in the future. The need to defend rights around the world has never been greater, especially if we are to maintain and extend those rights here at home. Support for the Steelworkers Humanity Fund is as important as ever.

Ken Neumann  
President, Steelworkers Humanity Fund

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