

## Final Evaluation Report

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### I. Background

In recent years the Government of Colombia has undertaken a number of initiatives to address the protection of basic worker rights, including the protection of trade unionists from threats and violence. In addition, as part of a tripartite agreement reached in 2006 at the International Labor Organization (ILO) annual conference, the ILO opened a permanent representation office in Bogotá. This office is currently carrying out several technical cooperation projects aimed at promoting decent work and the defense of fundamental rights. Finally, workers, employers, and government representatives have formed two tripartite commissions to promote social dialogue and address key topics in the country's labor relations system.

Despite these steps and the overall increase in awareness of the critical role that unions play in strengthening democracy and the rule of law, trade unionism in Colombia has reached an all-time low in membership rates and levels of collective bargaining coverage. Today in Colombia, only a small fraction of the economically active population is able to organize or join a union and bargain collectively. This is due to dramatic shifts in the employment arrangements used to regulate employer-management relationships. Of the roughly 18 million workers in the country, about eight million receive some form of salary. Approximately half of these salaried employees have a formal labor contract (rather than a civil, commercial, or other non-labor contract). And of those with labor contracts, only 1.8 to 2.0 million workers enjoy full-time, permanent contracts (while about 2.3 million workers labor under temporary contracts). Although both workers employed under formal, full-time contracts and direct fixed-term contracts are regulated through labor law and are legally allowed to join a union, the reality is that only about two million Colombian workers can actually exercise their right to freedom of association. The majority of these are public employees who, though unionized, are not permitted to bargain over working conditions with their employer.<sup>1</sup> Further, union density has declined to a low of around 4.5%, and the number of workers covered under new collective bargaining agreements has fallen from 260,000 to 60,000 in the past 10 years.<sup>2</sup>

The majority of workers in Colombia are hired under flexible, temporary or fixed-term contracts or through service cooperatives where there is no union representation. Young people (under 30)

<sup>1</sup> Interview with economist Ricardo Bonilla, Center for Development Research, National University.

<sup>2</sup> *Los derechos laborales y las libertades sindicales en Colombia: Evaluación y propuestas para el desarrollo del acuerdo tripartite*, eds. CUT, CGT, and CTC (Medellín: Escuela Nacional Sindical. 2007) 82, 76. Data originally compiled by the National Administrative Department for Statistics and the Ministry of Social Protection.

and women workers occupy jobs in the fastest growing sectors of the economy where such arrangements predominate. Because they are hired under these types of flexible arrangements, where union participation is greatly limited, the vast majority have little or no experience in union activity, workplace democracy, or representation of their interests through collective decision-making processes. Unions in Colombia have begun to recognize the need to restructure to build organizations that can represent a broad majority of the workforce and respond to the concerns that new groups of workers have at the workplace, industry, and public policy levels. Several unions have begun to recognize that economic and industry shifts require them to adapt their organizing strategies, methodologies and their approaches to collective bargaining and dispute resolution to address issues relevant to a broad majority of workers in the sector.

The Solidarity Center (SC) program in Colombia will support the rebuilding of Colombian unions as a fundamental pillar of justice and participation by strengthening unions' capacity to involve workers democratically at their workplaces and in broader economic and policy arenas. In order to build trade unions' ability to represent workers both at the workplace and the political front, union leaders and a new generation of activists must improve their skills in the fundamental functions of organizing and collective bargaining. They need to adopt new strategies and methods to cope with the changes that economic modernization and public sector reform have brought about. New tactics, such as using neutrality agreements to extend representation, as well as new subjects for collective bargaining, such as extending representation to new categories of workers, securing health care and pension benefits, and achieving gender equality, need to be incorporated into union platforms so unions can better represent their members.

Tackling this broad set of issues requires a core group of emerging Colombian trade union leaders, with a mandate from their national unions, to undertake development of new strategies for organizing and collective bargaining by sector, industry, work activity, or employment status. To this end the SC will focus on three areas of union building: 1) organizational development, 2) promoting an enabling legal environment, and 3) skills development for union leaders and members in fundamental union functions. These three areas of activities are mutually reinforcing and should be implemented simultaneously in order to ensure sustainability of internal union practices, the relevance of these practices to organizing more workers into solid organizations, and to ensure maximum relevance and effectiveness of labor's policy advocacy efforts. The proposed program will be implemented over a three-year period. Program activities have been designed to evolve as new capacities are developed and milestones/indicators are reached.

## **II. Progress on Objectives**

**Objective 1:** To build the capacity of Colombian unions to develop and implement new organizing, union restructuring, and collective bargaining strategies for inclusion of a greater number of workers, including workers employed under flexible hiring arrangements.

### **Results and Outcomes**

**1.1 Unions or federations in at least two economic sectors restructured from workplace-based unions into sector or industry wide organizations, representing a broad base of workers across the sector.**

*Artisan Sector*

On September 3-5, 2009, 250 regional organizations of artisan workers held the founding congress of the National Federation of Artisan Workers of Colombia FNTAC, affiliated to the Confederación General de Trabajadores (General Workers' Confederation, or CGT). Four hundred delegates participated, as well as the Vice Minister of Labor and several regional congressional representatives. (Also applies to RO1.2)

*Palm Sector*

In the third quarter of 2010, three existing palm sector unions in the Magdalena Medio region—Sintrapalma, Sintraproaceites and Sintrainagro—formed a regional coordinating body for organizing palm workers and improving working conditions on the palm plantations in the region. The coordinating body decided to focus on formalizing subcontracted workers with direct labor contracts with employers as a central theme in their respective efforts and collective bargaining processes.

*Public Sector*

On October 8, 2011, Sinalserpub (National Public Service Union) and eight public sector unions held a unification congress and voted to unify into a single national union. The new national public sector union, SUNET, is the product of a two-year organizing process and is now the largest union in the sector.

**1.2 New union branches created in at least three economic sectors representing workers employed under flexible hiring arrangements.**

*Public Sector*

In the second quarter of 2010, a new union was formed in the public sector by workers subcontracted under service order contracts (known as OPS). The union, ASODISOPS, was formed by workers in the District of Bogotá agencies to represent workers who cannot join a union under present law. The focus of the union is advocacy for the transition from massive subcontracting using temporary civil contracts to formal labor contracts in the public sector.

In the third and fourth quarters of 2010, four new union branches of the national public sector union, Sinalserpub, were founded in Bucaramanga, Barrancabermeja and Velez, Santander, and in Bolívar, representing a total of 800 workers.

In the fourth quarter of 2010, a new branch of the national union, Metrovivienda, was formed in Bogotá, representing 250 workers. The new local branch in the Metrovivienda successfully negotiated its first collective bargaining contract covering workers that were previously excluded, improving working conditions and pay. (Also applies to RO1.3)

### *Ports Sector*

In 2009, the national port workers' union, Union Portuaria (UP), was formed, founding chapters in the four most important ports in the country: July 26, 2009, in Cartagena with 102 participants; September 1, 2009 in Barranquilla with 80 participants; November 22, 2009 in Buenaventura, with 124 participants; and on October 28, 2009 in Santa Marta, with 127 participants. All four processes followed a series of organizing and training activities conducted by the SC, the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (Unitary Workers' Center, or CUT) and key ports leaders. The national union initiated with some 500 members nationally. Within two years, the UP increased membership to approximately 2,000 members. In February 2012, the UP established a new chapter in the banana and plantain port in Turbo, Antioquia. The new chapter was formed with some 400 new members.

### **1.3 New clauses in collective bargaining agreements or other labor-management negotiations negotiated by union partners in at least three economic sectors to address the concerns of workers employed under flexible hiring arrangements.**

### *Ports Sector*

In the first three quarters of 2010 the national port workers union, UP, developed a national bargaining proposal, approved by membership in the four locals, for presentation to the government and ports operators. The proposal focused on formalizing the thousands of ports jobs that are subcontracted through a variety of fraudulent contracting arrangements. The proposal not only set the stage for future negotiations in the sector, but also formed the basis for wider advocacy to formalize work, and contributed to the broader political debate regarding improving labor rights standards in the country.

In the first quarter of 2011, machine operators in the El Bosque pier in Cartagena staged a work action, demanding compliance with contracting and social security laws. In response to calls from the UP, the Ministry of Social Protection (MSP) sent a high-level team to Cartagena to negotiate a settlement with the workers and the employers. The negotiations concluded with a commitment on the part of the MSP to conduct inspections of the contracting conditions, and compliance with social security payments. Employers agreed to abide by the findings of the inspections. The results of this first experience were mixed, because the MSP turned out to be unequipped to inspect contracting arrangements. The implicated employers began to pay the workers' social security as a result.

In the third quarter of 2011, the UP expanded its proposed plan for formalizing work in the ports to incorporate labor subcontractors into the formal production chain (if labor subcontractors are eliminated, then the primary employers will need experienced labor managers to assume their function). As a result of the UP outreach, a growing number of labor subcontractors are meeting with the UP to explore incorporation into the initiative. In Buenaventura, the subcontracting company Corporación de Operadores Portuarios del Pacifico, S.A. joined with the UP to seek inclusion in the process of formalization in Buenaventura (Also applies to RO 3.1)

In January 2012, the UP-Buenaventura, representing 180 machine operators, negotiated the first agreement directly with ports employers (rather than subcontracting intermediaries). The parties

agreed to the immediate direct hiring of 90 workers, and improved contracts and gradual transition from subcontracted to direct contracts for the remaining 90 workers.

### *Palm Sector*

In the second quarter of 2011, the palm union, Sintrainago in Las Minas, Magdalena Medio, negotiated an agreement establishing a quota of permanent contracts for 140 of the 700 workers on the palm plantation.

In the second quarter of 2011, palm workers in Meta organized in Sintrainagra on the Manuelita plantation presented a plan for transitioning hundreds of workers contracted through CTA cooperatives to legal, direct labor contracts. The proposal is based on the prescriptions of Decree 2025 that eliminates the use of CTA cooperatives for labor intermediation. The company has agreed to the transition, but it is still unclear what form of contracting it will establish.

In the fourth quarter of 2011, Sintrainagro-Puerto Wilches, presented an initiative to formalize labor for 4,000 palm workers on some ten plantations in the area of Puerto Wilches. The initiative is also based on the prescriptions of Decree 2025 and Article 63 of Law 1429. The workers' initiative to apply the new laws led to a regional labor conflict. The Vice President's office brokered a negotiation between the employers' association and the union establishing an agreement, signed by the Vice President, the Minister of Social Protection, and the Vice Minister of Labor Relations. The agreement sets out conditions to formalize contracting in the sector regionally, and directs the Ministry of Social Protection to conduct inspections and apply the laws. That process has led to the first applications of the new laws, with two important employers receiving sanctions. The sanctions will be commuted upon compliance with the law, eliminating fraudulent subcontracting. The process is not yet completed, and workers remain vigilant as the process continues.

**Objective 2:** To build the capacity of Colombian trade unionists to develop technically sound proposals for legal reforms that allow union representation for workers hired under flexible hiring arrangements and permit union representation by economic sector at the regional and national levels.

## **Results and Outcomes**

### **2.1 At least one legal reform proposal containing greater protections for exercise of labor rights for a broader section of the Colombian workforce adopted through legislative or administrative processes.**

#### *General*

In the fourth quarter of 2010, two of the three national union centers (CUT and CTC) developed a political proposal for priority legal reforms for protecting fundamental labor rights and presented them to the ILO high-level mission that visited Colombia in February 2011. The proposal represents the fundamental labor reform platform of the labor movement, much of which was later presented as part of the Obama-Santos Labor Action Plan.

In the second quarter of 2011, the three labor centers provided analysis and language for the draft decree for the creation of the new Ministry of Labor. While the process was not public, drafters of the decree were in contact and consultation with the labor sector. The national labor centers, the National Union School, and the SC collaborated closely to provide detailed technical input regarding the structure and functions of the proposed new ministry, and many were incorporated into the draft decree.

#### *Public Sector*

In the first and second quarters of 2011, three national labor centers and the public sector unions negotiated with the Government of Colombia on the draft decree which will regulate Article 16 of the labor code, regulating collective bargaining in the public sector, and derogate Decree 535 of 2009. The new decree represents an important advance in the rights of association and collective bargaining for public employees. On May 25, 2011 the Colombian president and the labor sector, represented by the three national labor centers, signed an accord supporting the draft decree. The decree now awaits the President's signature to become law.

#### *Ports Sector*

In the third quarter of 2010, the national port workers union (UP) developed a proposal for formalizing labor in the ports sector. The UP undertook an advocacy strategy, holding a series of meetings with Colombian Vice President Angelino Garzón, the Vice Minister of the MSP, political party leaders (including Liberal Party leader, Rafael Pardo), representatives in Parliament, USG and Congressional delegations, and national union confederation leaders to advance proposed administrative and legal reforms to formalize work in the ports sector. The Vice President expressed his support for eliminating service cooperatives in the ports, and expressly indicated to the UP that it should increase pressure to eliminate the fraudulent cooperatives in order to formalize work in the sector. The advocacy of the UP underpinned specific positions in the proposal put forth by the national labor centers to the February 2012 ILO mission, influenced the terms of national political discussion regarding improving respect for labor rights, and was reflected in aspects of the Obama-Santos Labor Action Plan.

**Objective 3:** To strengthen the capacity of Colombian trade unions to work in national and international networks and coalitions to effectively advocate for workplace, industry and public policies that provide greater protection of fundamental rights.

### **Results and Outcomes**

#### **3.1 Colombian trade union organizations incorporated into community networks as a key actor with an active role in addressing concerns of a broad base of workers throughout the Colombian workforce.**

##### *Health Care Sector*

In the fourth quarter of 2009 (November 12-14), the national labor center, CUT, and labor representatives from the health sector, participated in the third national conference on health care and social security. More than 400 representatives from a wide range of civil society organizations participated in the conference to develop proposals on health care access and quality. The labor participants included for the first time the issue of decent work in the health sector as an integral part of the proposals to improve the public health care system. (Also applies

to RO 4.3)

#### *Ports Sector*

In the third quarter of 2010, the UP launched a regional campaign to formalize working conditions in the ports. The UP met with and obtained the support of local organizations, the Corporación Veeduría Social de Cartagena, the Fundación de Puerto Buenaventura, and the Red de Veedurías del Caribe. (Also applies to RO 4.3)

In the first quarter of 2011, the UP-Buenaventura branch conducted outreach to community organizations to build support for the UP labor formalization initiative. Among the community organizations contacted were the Pastoral Social of the Catholic Archdiocese, Salvación Buenaventura, Afro-descendant organizations (PCN, Sinucon, and CVC), the women's organization Cabeza de Hogar, artisan fishing organizations, the Mayor's office, and the Pacific University. The local chapter of the UP also met with Oscar Gamboa, Coordinator for the Presidential Program for the Afro-descendant Population, and with the Colombian Vice President's Office to help coordinate a Vice Presidential visit and forum on Afro-Colombian issues in Buenaventura. The Forum was held on March 10, 2011 and included Colombian Vice President Angelino Garzón; the Mayor of Buenaventura, Jose Felix Ocoro Minota; the Bishop of Buenaventura, Hector Epalza; the Bishop of Tumaco, Gustavo Higueta; and representatives from the Pacific University. The UP-Buenaventura, in coordination with the Vice President's office, promoted community participation in the event as part of their community outreach efforts. (Also applies to RO 4.3)

As a reaction to the increasing pressure to eliminate labor intermediation, a growing number of low- and mid-level subcontracting intermediaries have leveled increasingly aggressive threats toward the local UP branches. In the third quarter of 2011, the UP undertook outreach efforts to bring these contractors into the process, and lower the level of threats and potential violence. The UP expanded its proposed plan for formalizing work in the ports to incorporate lower level subcontractors into the formal production chain (if labor subcontractors are eliminated, then the primary employers will need experienced labor managers to assume this function). As a result of the UP outreach, a growing number of labor subcontractors are meeting with the UP to explore incorporation into the initiative. In Buenaventura, the Corporación de Operadores Portuarios del Pacifico, S.A. joined with the UP to seek inclusion in the process of formalization in Buenaventura (Also applies to RO 1.3)

#### *Palm Sector*

In the third quarter of 2010, palm worker organizers in the Magdalena Medio region conducted four, one-day community events to build community support for organizing in the palm plantations surrounding the communities. The public events were conducted in Puerto Wilches, Puente Sogamoso, San Alberto and Yarima. International union delegates from the United States labor movement participated in the events and pledged support from U.S. unions. In later palm worker initiatives in both San Alberto and Puente Sogomoso, the unions received community support for union appeals for more formalized work contracts and improved working conditions. (Also applies to RO 3.2, and RO 4.3)

### **3.2 Colombian trade union organizations incorporated into global labor rights support networks as a central actor with capacity to bring a positive spotlight on the labor rights framework and practice in Colombia.**

#### *Ports Sector*

In the second quarter of 2010, the President of the UP traveled to the U.S. and held meetings with unions, human rights organizations, members of congress and USG officials to talk about the worker rights situation in the ports in Colombia, and the UP proposal to formalize labor relations in the sector. Following meetings conducted in the U.S., the UP affiliated to the International Dock Workers Union in the first quarter of 2011.

**Objective 4:** To improve the skills of Colombian trade union unionists to carry out key union responsibilities, including internal union democracy, union finance and administration, worker representation, and collective bargaining.

#### **Results and Outcomes**

**4.1 Statutes reformed or policies adopted and implemented by at least two union partners to increase membership participation in union decision-making or to increase financial transparency and sustainability.**

#### *Public Sector*

In the first and second quarters of 2010, the national public sector union, Sinalserpub, conducted a series of activities to promote a modification of its statutes to permit the inclusion of subcontracted workers into the union, to conduct organizing visits to regions throughout the country, and to conduct five regional assemblies to expand membership. The membership has increased by over 5,000 since its formation, including over 1,000 subcontracted workers.

In March 2011, Sinalserpub held an assembly of local chapters and voted to conduct elections at the national and regional branch levels, opening participation for recently affiliated members (however, elections were not scheduled at the national level for another three years). The elections will designate leadership for the 2011-2015 term.

#### *Ports Sector*

In the third quarter of 2010, the UP-Barranquilla held an assembly to reform statutes regarding internal democracy and administrative transparency. The executive board was relieved of its duties and a new board elected. The action was taken in response to member dissatisfaction with the internal administration of information and resources.

**4.2 Policies or resolutions adopted and implemented by at least two participating union partners to enter into inter-union coordination or alliances to increase union representation or labor rights protections for a broader base of the Colombian workforce.**

#### *Public Sector*

Throughout 2010 and 2011, the CUT and more than a dozen public sector unions and federations undertook a series of meetings and activities to coordinate policy positions and to discuss a process of organizational unification. The coordination was extended to the two other national

labor centers, the CGT (Central General de Trabajadores) and CTC (Central de Trabajadores de Colombia) and their affiliated unions in the collective bargaining process in the District of Bogotá, and in the negotiation process with the national government regarding the draft decree to regulate collective bargaining in the public sector. On October 8, 2011, Sinalserpub and eight public sector unions held a unification congress and voted to unify into a single national union. The new national public sector union, SUNET, is the product of a two-year process and is now the largest in the sector.

Also see Palm Sector under RO 3.1 for advances on this RO.

#### **4.3 Policies or resolutions adopted and implemented by at least two participating union partners to enter into labor-community alliances to increase union representation or labor rights protections for a broader base of the Colombian workforce.**

On November 12-14, 2009 the CUT and labor representatives from the health sector participated in the third national conference on health care and social security. More than 400 representatives from a wide range of civil society organizations participated in the conference to develop proposals on health care access and quality. The labor participants included for the first time the issue of decent work in the health sector as an integral part of the proposals to improve the public health care system. (Also applies to RO 3.1)

Also see Ports Sector under RO 3.1 and Palm Sector under 3.1 for advances on this RO.

#### **4.4 Union membership increased by 10% over the course of the program in at least two participating unions.**

##### *Artisan Sector*

In September 2009, following a series of preparatory and organizing activities conducted by the CGT, 250 regional organizations of artisan workers held the founding congress of the National Federation of Artisan Workers of Colombia (FNTAC). The new federation represents over 10,000 artisan workers throughout the country.

##### *Public Sector*

In the first and second quarters of 2010, the national public sector union, Sinalserpub undertook a process to reform its statutes to allow for greater inclusion in its membership. Building on the new representation structure, the union increased its membership from about 6,500 in 2009, to 12,000 by the first quarter of 2012.

##### *Ports Sector*

The UP had no members in the first quarter of 2009. By the first quarter of 2012, the UP had 2500 members, with a much greater potential if workers in the sector are transitioned from sub-contracting relationships to direct, formal employment contracts.

##### *Palm Sector*

Palm workers' unions have been working with sub-contracted palm workers in both Meta and Magdalena Medio with a focus on formalizing their labor contracts. In both regions, the unions have developed significant support among subcontracted workers in these regions, but these

workers will not affiliate to the unions until their employment relations are formalized with direct labor contracts, thus providing them the legal protection to organize. Consequently, there is a significant potential for as yet unrealized growth in union membership in the sector.

### **III. Impact Assessment**

The Solidarity Center's project in Colombia has focused on strengthening unions' capacity to both represent workers at their workplaces and in the broader economic and policy arenas. Key fundamental labor rights themes, specifically the right to organize and bargain collectively, underpin the different aspects of the program. Organizational strengthening, advocacy, and policy work all sought to strengthen these fundamental union and worker representation functions. Over the three years of the project, the Solidarity Center has directly contributed to some of the biggest labor advances seen in Colombia in several decades. The gains made by unions to focus efforts on organizational strengthening and improved worker representation, as well as advancements in key labor policy issues, are building an improved framework for respect for labor rights in Colombia.

In several important economic sectors the SC program has had a direct impact on implementing new organizing, restructuring, bargaining and advocacy strategies to improve unions' capacity to represent workers. In the ports sector, where the workforce was essentially unorganized in 2009, the SC program successfully supported the unification and building of a new, national ports union. In addition, in affiliating more than 2,000 mostly subcontracted port workers the ports union has lead the Colombian labor movement in defining one of organized labor's most important goals—formalizing labor contracts and eliminating the numerous forms of subcontracting used to employ hundreds of thousands of workers. The union has complemented its organizing activities with sound policy proposals for formalizing jobs. This foundation has been supplemented with worker mobilization and community support to press for application of new laws designed to formalize work, strategic application of existing rights enforcement mechanisms, and high-level policy advocacy. While sophisticated in its use of different legal tools and advocacy approaches, the port union's strategy was consistently grounded in grassroots base-building and activism. Although still building toward achievement of its goals, the port union's success so far in building its membership base and advancing its worker right goals keenly demonstrates the focus and impact of the SC project.

Similarly, in the palm sector, while organizing new members into their unions as affiliates has proven very difficult, the local unions in Magdalena Medio successfully mobilized 4,000 subcontracted palm workers to demand direct labor contracts and improved working conditions. The unions strategically employed demand-side pressure as well as significant community support to press for the application of new laws, attracting thousands of workers who traditionally were barred from organizing because of their employment arrangements. In June of 2011, unions successfully negotiated the first collective bargaining agreement that increased direct labor contracts in seven years. In October 2011, the local union negotiated a framework agreement, signed by both the Vice President of Colombia and the Minister of Social Protection, paving the way to transition thousands of subcontracted palm workers into direct, full-time positions. As in the case of the port workers, the palm workers successfully brought together worker and

community organizing at the grassroots level and advocacy with national level policymakers, paving the way for the achievement of a collective bargaining agreement in a sector where employers had previously been unwilling to negotiate with unions. The demand-side actions, bottom-up pressure from workers made the palm sector in Magdalena Medio a publicly recognized test case for the new Labor Ministry and the new laws deriving from the Obama-Santos Labor Action Plan. It is the first sector in which the new laws are being applied, and could potentially impact dozens of thousands of workers.

In the public sector, deliberate and strategic union restructuring and reform of internal union statutes made it possible for one of the principle national public sector unions to double its membership in two years, adding nearly 6,000 members. The union is also focusing on the application of legal prescriptions to formalize the thousands of subcontracted workers in the sector (Constitutional Court decision C-614 of 2009, as well as Decree 2025).

The Solidarity Center program initiated work with partners with an emphasis on promoting a labor agenda for critical labor reforms. Notable progress has been made toward its objectives in this aspect. A new presidential administration in Colombia, which shed much of the expressly anti-union discourse of the previous government, opened new opportunities for engagement and dialogue on labor rights policy issues. The Solidarity Center supported union partners to take advantage of this opportunity to address longstanding concerns and discuss solutions with ministers and elected officials that had expressed their openness to constructive engagement with unions. Given the international focus and attention on Colombia in recent years, trade union partners seized the opportunity to consolidate their demands in a reform agenda presented to the ILO's mission to Colombia. The trade union agenda and subsequent ILO recommendations to the government of Colombia laid out a detailed and ambitious path to reforming Colombia's labor rights environment, although the government of Colombia did not initially act on the recommendations. However, much of the agenda developed with the labor movement for the ILO process was taken up and reflected months later in the Obama-Santos Labor Action Plan, which detailed a number of procedural and legal reforms intended to make progress on improving labor rights in Colombia. Subsequently, the SC project then had important success in assisting unions in adopting key measures in the Labor Action Plan as the foundation for their policy initiatives, advocacy, and as a basis for organizing demand-side pressure for compliance. As the project concluded, these trade union efforts were still underway, and had been met with mixed success. On the one hand, trade unions had the legal and institutional backing, as well as presidential commitments, to support their efforts at worker organizing and collective bargaining, and could point to these critical commitments as they sought to defend their rights. As result, trade unions succeeded in negotiating some agreements that would have been impossible just a couple years earlier. On the other, unions continued to face challenges, including employer resistance, limited government capacity, and the ongoing violence, that stymied real progress, in spite of the policy gains they had recently achieved.

#### **IV. Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

- *Programs aimed at supporting the exercise of core labor rights should specifically incorporate inclusion of workers employed under flexible working contracts in efforts to*

*expand representation, regardless of legal barriers to union membership.* The most successful worker organizing under the program occurred within workforces where the majority of workers did not have the right to organize or join unions because of legal or practical restrictions stemming from their (indirect) hiring arrangements. Through successful base-building efforts and demand-side pressure, however, workers built sufficient voice to demand legal reforms that protected subcontracted workers' right to direct employment and all workers' right join a union, which were subsequently reflected in GoC labor rights commitments.

- *Support capacity building activities to increase effective participation in public policy initiatives such as developing and promoting labor law reforms, participation in dialogue and negotiation processes, and developing sound legal initiatives.* In two of the program's key sectors, ports and palm oil, the majority of the workforce was both economically and socially marginalized. Workers not only labored under some of the worst conditions in the country, but also lived in impoverished communities with little voice or influence on national policy issues affecting the communities' livelihoods. By coupling grassroots worker and community organizing in support of labor rights with capacity building for policy advocacy, program activities ensured that union leaders were able to channel the demands of workers from marginalized communities to national-level decision makers at the highest levels of government.
- *Where possible, design economic sector-wide bargaining proposals along with national level policy reform proposals, and use each as a means to promote the other simultaneously.* In Colombia, collective bargaining and traditional union strategies for collective advocacy are severely limited by labor law and interpretations of law. Furthermore, given historical employer intransigence in critical sectors, there was little hope that workers could successfully negotiate collective bargaining agreements absent an enabling policy and legal environment. At the same time, new labor regulations could have languished as abstract, unrealistic policy commitments were they not reflected in concrete worker demands at the workplace level. By supporting unions to advance national labor reform proposals simultaneously with focused, sector-specific collective bargaining proposals, the program ensured that union efforts at the workplace and policy level were mutually reinforcing. At both levels, demand-side pressure and creative proposals as strategies for defense and extension of fundamental rights were key to achieving labor rights advancements.
- *International support for important organizing and collective bargaining initiatives provide essential political cover and support to workers who may be vulnerable to violent responses from employers, government, or illegal actors.* The violence and instability still prevalent in some areas of Colombia make routine union activity dangerous, rendering some of the larger worker actions to defend rights even riskier. Throughout the duration of the program period, program partners were victims of threats and violence. Both to ensure partners' safety and to ensure continuity of program activities, the Solidarity Center used its own resources and counterpart support to draw international attention to partners' cases to protect them from violence.

- *Unions should seek redress from appropriate public institutions regardless of the lack of official political will or responsiveness.* The lack of a functioning labor ministry, and ineffective legal system for defending labor rights, and a political culture that had historically stigmatized trade union activity created an environment in which there was limited, if any, viable recourse for worker rights violations through established mechanisms. International political pressure and international accompaniment, often spearheaded by Solidarity Center ally unions in the US and other countries, were useful in pressing for effective responses at the national level. When those efforts failed, multilateral institutions such as the ILO and in some cases the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) provide international forums that can be used to increase pressure for national level compliance.
- *The internal democracy component of the project should be expanded, to continue to modernize the labor movement and create a sustainable culture of inclusion and democracy within worker organizations.* As trade union partners grew and increased their membership bases by bringing in new members, it was necessary to ensure that those members had the knowledge and skills to become educated, capable, and active union members. Historical stigmatization of trade union activity and concerted violence against trade union leaders has robbed Colombian unions of a generation of leaders and members. Rebuilding the Colombian trade union movement requires not just an increase in membership numbers, but the strengthening of unions as democratic, member-driven organizations.

## **V. Problems/Obstacles to Report**

The program had important positive impacts when union partners' objectives were to build greater representation and more effective policy participation. When union partners' objectives were heavily influenced by ulterior objectives, political or individual agendas, the program had limited positive impact. Hence, it was necessary early on for the project to maximize its focus on important economic sectors with at least some union presence that could benefit from project support.

The SC project developed representation capacity for a number of organizations and played an important role in achieving and developing important policy reforms. Policy reforms represented in the Obama-Santos Labor Action Plan (LAP) have the potential to transform poorly regulated jobs in formal economic sectors into decent jobs with full labor rights protection. However, this last half year tested the political will and preparedness of the government to put the Labor Action Plan reforms into practice, and revealed some serious challenges to implementing the new regulations and policies, among other things, on formalizing work and eliminating fraudulent subcontracting. In the ports, palm and petroleum sectors, workers seized the opportunity created by the new policies to take up the initiative to formalize work and seek improvements in their working conditions, buoyed by the notion that the Labor Action Plan was a government endorsement of some of their longstanding demands.

In every case, workers' attempts to apply the new prescriptions were met with firm employer resistance, and government institutions proved at once too weak, unprepared, and sometimes unwilling to enforce the law. In the petroleum sector, by far the worst of such recent cases, employer refusal to comply with legal mandates was supported by the use of public security forces to intimidate and oblige workers (most of whom were hired under short-term contracts) to desist in their demands with the threat of deadly force. As a result of this pressure, thousands of workers were forced to resign from their union, and then were obliged to join an employer-imposed union, or be blacklisted and barred from future employment. This resulted in at least 3,000 workers, in essence, being fired for attempting to exercise freedom of association.

In the palm sector, where workers in the Magdalena Medio region sought direct contracting, employer refusal to accept the new contracting conditions led to a protracted work stoppage that was only resolved with government mediation and international pressure. Union leaders in the area have recently begun to receive threats of violence from illegal armed actors that have reappeared in the region.

Real progress in the ports sector has come only because of concerted worker actions in demand of negotiations. Dozens of port worker leaders remain fired today, and hundreds are threatened with blacklisting if they remain in the union.

The examples cited above in the palm, petroleum and ports sectors represent the first cases testing the GoC's effectiveness in applying new laws to improve respect for labor rights. The endemic institutional weakness and culture of permissiveness persists. New legal prescriptions stemming from commitments encased in the Action Plan have not yet been codified in policies or instruments, nor have public servants been instructed in new policies or their application. There is as yet no systemic structure or systematic process for the application of the prescriptions described in the Labor Action Plan.

SC program partners, including public sector unions, the ports union, petroleum unions, sugar sector unions, and the palm workers' unions maintain that formalization of employment and direct hiring are essential to promoting fundamental worker rights. As the new Ministry of Labor takes shape, it will be important for the workers in these sectors to reengage with labor authorities to press for continuation of their cases and to contribute proposals to the new authorities that will facilitate better policies, instruments, and training consistent with the new legal norms and the needs of workers. Supporting unions in their efforts to undertake this critical work will be a priority of upcoming SC programming.

## **VI. Activities**

- In the first week of February 2009 the SC supported unorganized port workers to conduct an assembly to discuss problems with employment in the sector and possibilities to organize in the sector. More than 300 workers and pensioners attended the 6-hour meeting.

- On February 15, 2009 the SC conducted a planning and organizing workshop with leaders of informal sector artisan workers. The meeting was conducted with the CGT labor center, which will provide institutional support to the organizing effort of the artisan workers. The artisan workers are preparing to form a federation that will organize thousands of artisan workers with the goal of establishing standards of pay and working conditions presently imposed by the monopoly organizations that control the marketing of artisan production.
- On February 18, 2009 the SC conducted a planning meeting with leaders from the national health workers union, SINDESS, to plan the initial steps for organizing sub-contracted doctors and health workers on the Caribbean coast.
- On February 23, 2009 the SC conducted a second planning and organizing workshop with leaders of informal sector artisan workers. The meeting was conducted with the CGT labor center.
- On March 3, 2009 the SC conducted an initial planning and organizing workshop with leaders of the public sector. The focus of the activity was organizing public sector workers employed under non-labor, civil contracts.
- On March 6, 2009 the SC conducted a one-day workshop on conflict resolution with local leaders of public sector and health sector workers.
- On March 10, 2009 the SC held a second session with the national health workers union, SINDESS, to continue planning for organizing sub-contracted health workers on the Caribbean coast.
- On March 10, 2009 the SC conducted an organizing workshop with leaders of informal sector artisan workers. The meeting was conducted with the CGT labor center.
- On March 12, 2009 the SC conducted a meeting with the national health workers union, SINDESS, to continue planning for organizing subcontracted health workers on the Caribbean coast.
- On March 19, 2009 the SC supported port worker activists to conduct a second assembly to discuss problems with employment in the sector and organizing possibilities. The activity was conducted in Cartagena, with over 400 participants.
- Between February 5 and March 31, 2009 the SC supported port worker activists to conduct ongoing organizing meetings with port workers in Cartagena, Barranquilla, and Santa Marta.
- The SC conducted meetings with the Ministry of Social Protection with the Vice Minister of Labor Relations, with the Labor Inspector's office (Coordinadora del Grupo del Prevención, Inspección y Vigilancia of the Ministry of Social Protection) in Bolívar; with

Management Systems for Development; with the MIDAS program; and with the International Labor Organization (ILO) office in Colombia.

- In this quarter, April – May 2009, the SC conducted organizing and planning meetings with national confederation leaders and activists in the following sectors: ports (4), palm (6), public service (2), healthcare (2), petroleum (2), mining (3), sugar (1), and artisan workers (11).
- In the month of May 2009, the SC supported the CGT to conduct a series of four work sessions with legal advisors and key artisan sector leaders to design and draft statutes for the founding of the National Federation of Artisan Workers. The founding congress is planned for September, 2009.
- On May 26, 2009 the SC conducted a national forum on organizing and collective bargaining in the public sector. The SC, Sinalserpub and Fenaltrase held the event in the Salón Presidencial del Congreso with 116 local and regional public sector leaders. The event dealt with both the legal obstacles to collective bargaining in the public sector and the inclusion of subcontracted public sector workers in plans for achieving collective bargaining rights.
- On June 2, 2009 the SC assisted leaders from the four ports – Buenaventura, Cartagena, Barranquilla and Santa Marta – in meeting with human rights representatives in the U.S. Embassy. The purpose of the meeting was to inform human rights personnel of working conditions and plans to confront labor problems and informal employment contracting systems. (This activity also corresponds to Objective 3.)
- On June 13 and 14, 2009 the SC conducted a national forum with palm worker organizations on organizing and collective bargaining in the sector. A total of 140 leaders and activists from Meta and Magdalena Medio, as well as the CUT and CUT-Meta, participated. (This also corresponds to Objective 3.)
- On June 15, 2009 the SC supported the CGT in conducting an organizing training for key leaders of the artisan workers. The leaders/activists are affiliating members and local organizations in various parts of the country that are organizing the Federation of Artisan Workers of Colombia. (This also corresponds to Objective 4.)
- On June 19 and 20, 2009 the SC conducted a national strategic planning workshop for the ports sector organizations. The workshop was conducted in Barranquilla with leaders and activists from all four ports: Buenaventura, Cartagena, Barranquilla and Santa Marta.
- On June 23 and 24, 2009 the SC supported the port workers' union in Buenaventura in conducting a series of two-hour organizing meetings with port workers. A representative of the national union-in-formation from the Caribbean coast, the Unión Portuaria, also participated.

- On July 3 - 5, 2009 the SC conducted a national coordinating workshop with 30 national leaders of the CUT and leaders and activists from key economic sectors from around the country. The focus of the activity was to determine which economic sectors the CUT will prioritize regarding organizing new members and confronting sub-contracting.
- The SC conducted meetings with the ILO representatives in Bogotá, labor law experts and a constitutional authority (a magistrate of the Constitutional Court). The purpose of the meetings was to explore jurisprudence, international norms and constitutional prescriptions on labor contracting and labor rights.
- On July 2, 2009 the SC conducted a one-day planning meeting with 36 leaders of the four ports. The focus of the meeting was to plan a coordinated mass action to highlight poor working conditions in the ports sector. On July 3, 2009 workers from all four ports (Buenaventura, Cartagena, Barranquilla and Santa Marta) participated in marches.
- On July 2 - 4, 2009 the SC conducted a three-day strategic planning process with the 32 leaders of the Central Unitario de Trabajadores (CUT). The national center developed a diagnostic of challenges and prospects for expanding organization, improving collective bargaining, and advocating for needed legal changes. The national center identified priority industrial sectors as well as priority labor rights issues on which it will focus its work.
- On July 17, 2009 the SC conducted an organizing meeting with 46 port workers in Barranquilla.
- On July 18-19, 2009 the SC conducted a two-day strategic planning training with 37 local palm sector leaders in the Meta region.
- On July 23-25, 2009 the SC conducted a three-day strategic planning training for 34 local palm sector leaders in the Magdalena Medio region. The purpose of the activity was to develop a work-plan for organizing in the palm sector in that region of the country.
- On July 26, 2009 the SC supported the founding assembly of the Cartagena chapter of the industrial sector union, Union Portuaria. The local chapter of the national union was founded with 102 participants.
- On August 1, 2009 the SC conducted a one-day workshop with 22 leaders of the national nurses union, ANEC. The focus of the meeting was organizing new workers who are employed under flexible contracts in the sector.
- In August 2009 the SC supported a series of seven organizing meetings with national and regional leaders in preparation for the founding congress of the Federation of Artisan Workers of Colombia. The participants prepared the necessary legal documents and selected the delegates for the founding congress.

- On August 2, 2009 the SC conducted a one-day planning meeting with eight leaders of four ports (Santa Marta, Barranquilla, Cartagena and Buenaventura). The focus of the meeting was to develop a sector-wide collective bargaining proposal.
- On August 29-30, 2009 the SC conducted a two-day workshop with 54 leaders of the palm sector in Meta. The focus of the workshop was health and safety on the local palm plantations. Dr. Conde, an expert in health and safety, directed the workshop.
- From August 14-28, 2009 the SC conducted six 6 organizing meetings in the ports sector, with a total of 108 participants. Each meeting was between 2 and 3 hours in duration and focused on the planning of each step in the union organizing process in the ports sector. The meetings were conducted in the following dates and places: August 14 in Cartagena, August 15, 20 and 26 in Barranquilla, and August 16 in Buenaventura.
- On August 28, 2009 the SC supported an assembly of ports workers in Buenaventura to discuss the problems of contracts in the ports and the affiliation of the Sintramarítimo members to the national industrial union, Unión Portuaria. 180 workers participated in the activity.
- From August 30-September 27, 2009 the SC supported the port workers in Buenaventura to conduct 5 community outreach activities to promote affiliation to the port workers union. The activities, called “ollas comunitarias,” or community potlucks, are designed to help the union make contact with workers and their families in their neighborhoods, discuss work and community problems in a secure and friendly environment, and promote affiliation to the union. More than 450 people participated in the five community activities. As part of the activity, students from the Universidad del Pacífico, conducted a survey on working and living conditions of port workers during the community events.
- On September 1, 2009 the SC supported the founding assembly of the Barranquilla chapter of the national industrial union, Unión Portuaria. The local union branch was founded in an assembly of 80 participants.
- On September 3-5, 2009 the SC supported the founding congress of the Federation of Artisan Workers of Colombia. The congress was inaugurated by the Vice Minister of Social Protection with participation of 400 delegates and supporters. The new federation represents 122 organizations in 24 departments.
- From September 4-18, 2009 the SC conducted five organizing meetings in the ports sector, with a total of 90 participants. The meetings were conducted in the following dates and places: September 4 and 10 in Barranquilla, September 11 in Cartagena, September 16 in Buenaventura, and September 18 in Santa Marta.
- On September 5-6, 2009 the SC conducted two one-day workshops with regional leaders of the ports sector in Barranquilla and Cartagena. The focus of the activities was the use of the *contrato sindical* as a bargaining strategy in a coordinated bargaining plan.

- On September 11-12, 2009 the SC conducted a two-day planning session with 16 Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia (CTC) national and regional leaders. The national center identified priorities for 2010 organizing initiatives.
- On September 26-27, 2009 the SC conducted a two-day organizing workshop with 52 workers of the palm sector in Meta. The focus of the activity was work-related injuries, changes that need to be made to avoid them, and the challenges to getting the worker-led safety committees to function properly. The high rate of job related injuries is a key point of interest for many palm workers.
- In August and September, 2009 the SC sponsored union activists and a university student volunteer to conduct three two-day trips to local communities in Meta where palm workers live to conduct interviews regarding working and living conditions in the communities. The information being collected will serve as a basis for recruiting community and labor leaders, and will be used in the upcoming development of a bargaining platform.
- On October 11, 2009 the SC conducted an organizing meeting with 56 port workers in the Pacific port of Buenaventura. The meeting focused on the conditions in the ports, the obstacles to organizing, and SC project support to organizational strengthening efforts.
- From October 24-28, 2009 the SC supported a five-day national assembly of the national agro-industries union, Sintraimagra, with 112 participants. The purpose of the activity was to evaluate possibilities for organizing palm workers, the opportunities and obstacles in different parts of the country, and build support in the base of the national union for the effort.
- On October 28, 2009 the SC supported an assembly of 98 ports workers in Santa Marta, with the purpose of founding the Santa Marta branch of the national port workers union, *Union Portuaria* (UP). The statutes were presented, voted on and passed; and leadership was elected. The paperwork was submitted to the Ministry of Social Protection and registered on November 18, 2009.
- On October 30 and 31, 2009 the SC supported a workshop with the Cartagena branch of the UP to discuss the “*contrato sindical*” (“union contract” hiring system) as a possible model of organizing in the ports sector.
- In November 2009, the SC supported 12 organizing visits to communities in Meta to promote union organizing among palm workers. Organizers were accompanied by a student who conducted interviews with workers and family members regarding working and living conditions.
- In November 2009, the SC supported three community-based organizing events with 104 port workers of Buenaventura. The community potlucks (*ollas comunitarias*) were conducted in working-class neighborhoods where the majority of residents are ports

workers. Community members are invited so they can receive information about the union and its work areas, such as achieving improvements in working conditions.

- Between November 10 and 30, 2009, the SC supported the UP and the National Union School (ENS) to conduct a study of working conditions of port workers in Buenaventura.
- On November 10, 2009 the SC supported 15 representatives of the national ports workers' union, UP, to attend a meeting with the Director of USAID-Colombia, Ken Yamashita, in Santa Marta. The meeting focused on working conditions in the ports, the obstacles to organizing, and the SC project support to union organizing efforts.
- On November 12 and 14, 2009 the SC supported the national labor center, CUT, and 43 health workers and nurses to participate in the third national conference on health care and social security. More than 400 representatives from a wide range of civil society organizations participated in the conference to develop proposals on health care access and quality. For the first time, the labor participation discussed lack of decent work in the health sector as an integral part of the problems plaguing the health care system.
- On November 14 and 15, 2009 the SC supported activists in the palm sector to conduct organizing meetings in the communities of Cumeral and Vereda Pesqueros in the state of Meta.
- On November 17, 2009 the SC supported the UP to bring two leaders to Bogotá and meet with the Vice Minister (VM) of the Ministry of Social Protection (MSP). The UP presented a proposal to the VM to encourage employers to recognize the union, and end the violation of Colombian law through the fraudulent use of Service Cooperatives. This meeting led to the MSP convening ports employers to a tri-partite meeting in Cartagena to discuss union expansion and tax incentives for employers for doing business with the union.
- On November 22, 2009 the SC supported an assembly of 81 port workers in Buenaventura with the purpose of founding the Buenaventura branch of the national port workers union, UP. The statutes were presented, voted and passed, and leadership was elected. The paperwork was presented to the MSP the following week.
- On November 24 and 25, 2009 the SC conducted an assessment of conditions in the palm sector in Magdalena Medio in preparation for activities in the sector. Key factors including security concerns, leadership development, and training needs were studied in the six communities visited.
- On November 29, 2009 the SC conducted a workshop with the CTC and women domestic workers. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss working conditions in the sector and the possibilities for organizing domestic workers into a union that can represent their interests before the government and employers. This was an initial exploratory activity in the sector.

- On December 5 and 6, 2009 the SC conducted a national seminar with 51 ports workers to discuss the different possible strategies for organizing the sector and confronting possible employer and government obstacles.
- On December 7, 2009 the SC organized meetings in Bogotá for key organizers in the Magdalena Medio palm sector with human rights lawyers (*Colectivo de Abogados*) and the national food workers union, Sintraimagra. The meetings focused on legal support to confront political persecution for organizing activity, and organizational structure for emerging groups of workers organizing in the region.
- On December 19, the SC supported an assembly with 175 ports workers for the Santa Marta branch of the Union Portuaria (UP). The activity focused on organizing strategy in the Santa Marta ports, the establishment of a dues structure, and preparing a proposal for the MSP to seek support from the Ministry.
- In the month of January 2010, the SC conducted jointly with union leaders from the ports sector a series of meetings with the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Social Protection to develop Ministry support and good offices in dealing with ports employers' reactions to the formation of the new national ports union, the UP.
- On January 16, 2010 the SC supported an assembly with 65 workers of the Barranquilla local of the *Union Portuaria*. The focus of the assembly was to discuss and vote on the use of the “*contrato sindical*”<sup>3</sup> as a strategy to organize the port workers, and to prepare for an upcoming meeting with the Vice Minister of Social Protection.
- On January 18, 2010 the SC supported the UP as it developed government support for its organizing work in the Barranquilla and Cartagena ports. Following a series of working meetings between the UP and the Vice Minister of Social Protection (MSP), the MSP convened a meeting with the *Sociedad Portuarias*, (SPs – ports operators) of Barranquilla and Cartagena. Representatives of the SPs, the business association, ANDI, 22 representatives of the UP, the Director of labor affairs, and four advisors for the MSP participated.
- On February 5-6, 2010 the SC supported Sintraimagra to conduct a 2-day national evaluation and planning workshop. The workshop addressed organizing work in the palm sector in Meta, possibilities of organizing in the palm sector on the coast, and coordinating actions with palm organizing efforts in the Magdalena Medio region.

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<sup>3</sup>The term “*contrato sindical*” does not translate as “union contract” as understood in U.S. labor law. It is defined in articles 482, 483, and 484 of the labor code (*Código Sustantivo de Trabajo*), and further regulated in presidential decree 657 of 2006. If managed properly, it can be a useful way for a union to establish representation and negotiate better conditions for workers. It was included as one of President Uribe’s *cien puntos* (one hundred points) in his first *programa del gobierno* (government plan). In 2006 the government passed a presidential decree to facilitate its application. Hence, the GoC theoretically supports the use of *contratos sindicales*.

- On February 6, 2010 the SC conducted a collective bargaining workshop with 27 participants from the Barranquilla local of the UP. The specific focus of the workshop was the tariff system, or payment structure and rates for different job functions in the ports.
- On February 21, 2010 the SC conducted a workshop for 30 organizers and workers the domestic work sector. The focus was on working conditions that could be improved through organizing a national union of domestic workers.
- On February 24, 2010 the SC conducted an evaluation and planning session with 12 leaders of Sintraimagra to plan organizing activities in the palm sector in Meta.
- On February 27-28, 2010 the SC supported Sintraimagra to conduct a 2-day planning workshop with 98 activists from the palm sector. The focus of the activity was organizing workers in the palm sector in Meta and discussing problems that have arisen at some work sites.
- On February 6-7, 2010 the SC supported the palm worker organizers in Puente Sogamoso, Magdalena Medio to conduct a 2-day organizing workshop with 33 palm workers and community leaders.
- On February 7, 2010 the SC supported Sintraimagra and Palm worker organizers in Meta to conduct a 1-day organizing workshop with 82 palm workers and community leaders in the town of Veracruz, Meta.
- On February 13-14, 2010 the SC supported the palm worker organizers in Puerto Wilches, Magdalena Medio, to conduct a 2-day organizing workshop with 27 palm workers and community leaders.
- On February 13-14, 2010 the SC supported the palm worker organizers in Kilometro 8, Magdalena Medio, to conduct a 2-day organizing workshop with 23 palm workers and community leaders.
- On February 19, 2010 the SC supported the palm worker organizers to come to Bogotá to meet with the *Colectivo de Abogados* (Lawyers' Collective) to prepare a complaint on discrimination, intimidation, and threats against union leaders on the Manuelita palm plantation in Meta.
- On February 21, 2010 the SC supported the palm worker organizers to conduct an organizing visit to Veracruz, Meta, reaching 23 workers. The focus of the meeting was organizing to improve conditions in the palm plantations.
- On February 20-21, 2010 the SC supported the palm worker organizers in San Alberto, Magdalena Medio, to conduct a 2-day organizing workshop with 25 palm workers and community leaders.

- On February 24, 2010 the SC conducted an organizing seminar with 82 members of the *Union Portuaria* Santa Marta local.
- On February 26, 2010 the SC supported the UP Santa Marta local to conduct an assembly with 129 participants to evaluate and plan for continued affiliation, and discuss the union's development of a proposal for eventual collective bargaining.
- On February 27-28, 2010 the SC supported the palm worker organizers in Galán, Magdalena Medio, to conduct a 2-day organizing workshop with 47 palm workers and community leaders.
- On February 30-31, 2010 the SC supported the palm worker organizers in Yarima, Magdalena Medio, to conduct a 2-day organizing workshop with 38 palm workers and community leaders.
- On March 23-24, 2010 the SC supported the UP and the Ministry of Social Protection to conduct a meeting on future development of the national ports union, and cooperation in the reorganization of the ports functions with respect to employment.
- On March 26-27, 2010 the SC supported the national ports workers union, UP, to participate in a presentation by the Ministry of Social Protection (MSP) regarding experiences with the *contrato sindical*. The MSP presented examples of several companies and their unions using the *contrato sindical* in Medellín.
- On March 4-6, 2010 the SC supported the national ports workers union, the UP, to participate in the founding assembly of the national transport workers union, SNTT, in Bogotá. Ports union representatives from the four national ports participated in the activity representing their sub-sector and its particular problems, opportunities, and aspirations.
- On March 17, 2010 the SC supported the National Union of Public Service Workers to conduct a regional assembly in Bucaramanga, Santander, with 195 members from 17 municipalities. The participating local unions initiated the process of affiliation to the national union. The process will result in approximately 800 new affiliates to the national union.
- In the month of February 2010, the SC supported the *Union Portuaria* to develop a proposal for legislative reform to clarify the legal parameters of the *contrato sindical* as a form of labor contracting, and provide a sales tax exemption (IVA) for port operators that contract with ports unions via a *contrato sindical*.
- In March 2010, the SC provided technical support to the public sector union, Sinalserpub-CUT, and to analyze the Constitutional Court sentence C-614 / 2009, and develop educational material about the ruling for dissemination. The ruling requires that any and all workers that perform work in the essential functions of an enterprise, are supervised by the enterprise, and receive remuneration for their work be covered and

protected under the labor code. This ruling incorporates the findings of a number of previous decisions in lower courts, demonstrates consistency in the legal determinations regarding labor relations, and indicates measures that must be taken to ensure constitutional compliance in labor contracting. The application of this sentence requires labor code protection for the vast majority of workers presently contracted under cooperatives, subcontracting, temp-contracting, civil contracts, and other non-labor contracting widely used in Colombia.

- On March 7, 2010, the SC supported Sintraimagra and palm worker organizers in Meta to conduct a 1-day organizing workshop with 19 palm workers and community leaders in the town of Cumural, Meta.
- On March 12, 2010, the SC conducted a workshop with the national ports workers union, the UP, to present the *contrato sindical* as a possible strategy for formalizing the workforce and collective bargaining with the port operators in Cartagena. Forty members of the Cartagena local participated.
- On March 15, 2010, the SC supported the Palm worker organizers in Magdalena Medio, to conduct a one-day organizing meeting with 23 palm workers and community leaders in Yarima, Magdalena Medio.
- On March 27-28, 2010, the SC supported Sintraimagra to conduct a 2-day workshop with Palm workers that are members of associated work cooperatives (CTAs).
- From April – June, 2010 the SC supported Sintraimagra and palm worker organizers in Meta to conduct 14 days of organizing visits and meetings with workers in the palm sector in Meta. The meetings serve as pre-workshop first contact with workers, in which the organizers learn about the concerns of the workers and inform the workers about the union.
- On April 10, 2010, the SC supported an organizing meeting with 22 ports workers in Barranquilla. The focus of the one-day activity was expansion of union coverage and collective bargaining strategy.
- On May 5, 2010, the SC conducted a 3 hour meeting with USAID, USAID contractors, and other NGOs working on labor issues. The purpose of the meeting was to share information about programs and developments in labor rights in the Colombia. The Director of USAID, Ken Yamashita, as well as representatives of the US Embassy participated.
- On May 5, 2010, the SC supported an organizing meeting with 26 active and retired port workers in Cali to form the Cali branch of the Union Portuaria. The focus of the one-day activity was to discuss the strategic reasons for including pensioned ports workers in the union (financial support, logistic support, and support with infrastructure).
- On May 22, 2010, the SC supported an organizing assembly with 124 port workers in Santa Marta. The focus of the one-day activity was expansion of union coverage and

collective bargaining strategy.

- On April 9, 2010, the SC supported the National Union of Public Service Workers to conduct a regional assembly in Jamundi, Valle de Cauca. 251 workers from 6 municipalities participated, and initiated the process of affiliation to the national union.
- On April 30, 2010, the SC supported the National Union of Public Service Workers to conduct a regional assembly in Cali, Valle de Cauca. 542 workers from 16 municipalities participated, and initiated the process of affiliation to the national union.
- On May 26, 2010, the SC supported the National Union of Public Service Workers to conduct a regional assembly in Bogota, Cundinamarca. 86 workers from 6 municipalities participated, and initiated the process of affiliation to the national union.
- On June 5, 2010, the SC supported the National Union of Public Service Workers to conduct a regional assembly in Pasto of workers from Cauca, Nariño, and Putumayo. 118 workers from the three regions participated, and initiated the process of affiliation to the national union.
- On April 10-11, 2010, the SC conducted a two-day workshop with regional leaders of the Federation of Artisan Workers of Colombia. The focus of the workshop was negotiating proposals with local governments.
- On April 17-18, 2010, the SC supported the Palm worker organizers in El Llanito, Magdalena Medio, to conduct a 2-day organizing workshop with 28 palm workers and community leaders.
- On April 17-18, 2010, the SC supported Sintraimagra and Palm worker organizers in Meta to conduct a 1-day organizing workshop with 90 palm workers and community leaders in the town of Dinamarca, Meta. Working conditions and health care were key in the discussions.
- On April 17, 2010, the SC supported an organizing meeting with 21 port workers in Barranquilla. The focus of the one-day activity was expansion of union coverage and collective bargaining strategy.
- On April 24, 2010, the SC supported the Palm worker organizers in the Magdalena Medio region to conduct a one-day workshop with 26 palm workers and community leaders on organizing in the palm sector in the region. The participants are team leaders from the various communities in the region.
- On May 1, 2010, the SC supported the palm worker organizers in the Magdalena Medio region to conduct a one-day workshop/meeting to share information about conditions in the different palm plantations in the region, and the progress on organizing workers in the different communities or plantations.
- On May 8, 2010 the SC supported an organizing meeting with 74 ports workers in

Barranquilla. The focus of the one-day activity was expansion of union coverage.

- On May 8, 2010, the SC supported an organizing meeting with 55 ports workers in Cartagena. The focus of the one-day activity was expansion of union coverage and collective bargaining strategy.
- On May 12-14, 2010, the SC conducted a national training and planning workshop with the national and regional organizing departments of the CUT. The activity was conducted in preparation for a national campaign to increase affiliation in industrial sector unions in education, health, transportation, agro-industrial, energy-mining, and public service sectors.
- On May 12-14, 2010, the SC conducted a three day strategic planning activity with the national association of social workers, Asincoltras. The purpose of the activity was to evaluate the state of employment and organization in the sector (public health), and develop a plan to reorganize social workers in the sector.
- On May 16-17, 2010, the SC supported Sintraimagra and Palm worker organizers in Meta to conduct a 2-day organizing workshop with 70 palm workers and community leaders in the town of Dinamarca, Meta.
- On May 22-23, 2010, the SC and Sintraimagra conducted a 2-day organizing workshop with 136 palm workers and community leaders in the town of Palmeros, Meta.
- On May 29, 2010, the SC supported the palm worker organizers in the Magdalena Medio region to conduct a one-day workshop/meeting to share information about conditions in the different palm plantations in the region, and the progress on organizing workers in different communities or plantations.
- On June 4, 2010, the SC supported an organizing meeting with 51 port workers in Cartagena. The focus of the one-day activity was expansion of union coverage and collective bargaining strategy.
- On June 19, 2010 the SC supported an organizing meeting with 41 active and retired port workers in Buenaventura and Cali. The focus of the meeting was organizing sub-contracted workers into the UP and developing the proposal for the *Contrato Sindical*.
- On June 26, 2010, the SC supported the Palm worker organizers in the Magdalena Medio region to conduct a one-day workshop/meeting to share information about conditions in different palm plantations in the region, and the progress on organizing workers in different communities or plantations.
- On July 10, 2010, the SC supported the National Ports Union (*Unión Portuaria – UP*) to conduct a regional assembly of workers from Buenaventura and Barranquilla. The meeting took place in Baranquilla and focused on the contract proposal and proposal for legal reforms for the regulation of port workers.

- On July 15, 2010, the SC supported an organizing meeting with 29 ports workers from Buenaventura and Cali. The focus of the one-day activity was the approval of the collective bargaining proposal to be presented to the new government and ports operators, and organizing in Buenaventura.
- On July 21, 2010, the SC supported palm worker organizers in the Magdalena Medio region to conduct a one-day workshop-meeting with 22 local leaders to share information about organizing efforts in the different palm plantations in the region, and form a regional coordinating body. The new coordinating body includes palm workers, community organizations in the palm zones, and three existing unions: Sintraproaceites, Sintrapalma and Sintrainagro.
- On August 11, 2010, the SC and Sintraimagra conducted a 1-day seminar on organizing and occupational health and safety in the palm sector in Meta. 88 local activists and leaders participated.
- On August 25, 2010, the SC supported the National Ports Union to conduct a local assembly with 30 local leaders in Cartagena. The focus of the meeting was the contract proposal and proposal for legal reforms for the regulation of ports workers.
- On August 28 and 29, 2010, the SC and Sintraimagra conducted a 2-day seminar on organizing and occupational health and safety in the palm sector in Meta. 102 local activists and leaders from the Dinamarca area participated. Dr. Juan Vicente Conde, specialist in occupational health and safety, served as a consultant and trainer.
- On August 29, 2010, the SC supported the National Ports Union to conduct an assembly for local leaders of the Buenaventura chapter of the UP. The focus of the meeting was the collective bargaining proposal and proposal for legal reforms for the regulation of port workers. Thirty local leaders participated.
- On September 15, 2010, the SC supported the National Ports Union to conduct a regional assembly in Santa Marta. The focus of the meeting was the contract proposal and proposal for legal reforms for the regulation of port workers. Thirty-seven local leaders participated.
- Between July 1 and September 30, 2010, the SC supported the new union of subcontracted public sector workers, ASODISOPS, to conduct a series of 20 mini-workshops with public sector workers in the District of Bogotá. The workshops are 90 minutes in duration and are focused on possibilities for organizing and establishing legal protections for sub-contracted public sector workers in the District.
- Between July – September, 2010, the SC supported Sintraimagra to conduct a series of 15 mini-workshops with palm workers in the Meta region.
- On July 7, 2010 the SC supported the National Union of Public Service Workers to

conduct a Departmental Assembly to present legal proposals for guaranteeing labor rights within the process of decentralization of city governments. The activity was conducted in Barranquilla with 213 participants.

- On July 3-5, 2010, the SC and Sintraimagra conducted a 3-day leadership development workshop with 27 palm workers and community leaders from the Meta region. Working conditions, organizing sub-contracted workers, and health and safety were the main topics.
- On July 5, 2010, the SC supported the National Ports Union to conduct a 1-day training workshop with 37 local leaders. The workshop focused on basic union functions for new leaders of the recently established Buenaventura chapter of the Union.
- On July 19-24, 2010, the SC and Sintraimagra conducted a 6-day leadership development workshop with 15 palm workers from the Meta region. The training session focused on basic union functions, working conditions, organizing sub-contracted workers, and health and safety.
- On July 21, 2010, the SC supported the National Ports Union to conduct a 1-day training workshop with 37 local leaders on basic union functions for new leaders of the recently established Buenaventura chapter of the union. This was the first in a series of leadership training workshops geared to build skills of a core group of leaders in the new union.
- On July 27, 2010, the SC supported the National Ports Union to launch a regional campaign for the formalization of working conditions in the ports. The initiative is supported by the Corporación Veeduría Social de Cartagena, the Fundación de Puerto Buenaventura, and the Red de Veedurías del Caribe. The union produced 25,000 pamphlets on basic worker rights to be distributed throughout the ports.
- On August 3-8, 2010, the SC supported palm worker organizers in the Magdalena Medio region to conduct four one-day community events to establish community support for organizing in the palm plantations surrounding the communities. The public events were conducted in Puerto Wilches, Sogamoso, San Alberto and Yarima.
- On August 13-16, 2010, the SC supported the National Ports Union to conduct a 3-day training workshop with 40 local leaders on basic union functions for new leaders of the recently established Buenaventura chapter of the union. .
- On September 24, 2010, the SC supported the National Union of Public Service Workers to conduct a Departmental Assembly with 235 participants to present legal proposals for guaranteeing labor rights in the context of decentralization of city governments. The activity was conducted in Bogotá in the compound of the National Assembly, and received national televised coverage on the National Assembly channel.
- On September 27, 2010, the SC supported the National Union of Public Service Workers to conduct a Departmental Assembly in Cali with 400 participants to present legal

proposals for guaranteeing labor rights within the context of decentralization of city governments.

- In September 2010, the SC provided technical support to the National Ports Union (UP) to develop a proposal for the formalization of labor in the ports sector. The UP proposal coincides with the announced policy of the national government to formalize 500,000 jobs.
- On September 11, 2010, the SC supported the National Ports Union to conduct a 1-day training workshop with 37 local leaders on basic union functions for new leaders of the recently established Buenaventura chapter of the union.
- Between September 20 and October 12, 2010, the SC supported the National Ports Union (UP) to conduct local organizing visits with ports workers in Buenaventura. The visits were conducted over 21 days, and resulted in the affiliation of 50 workers to the Buenaventura branch of the UP.
- Between October 1 and December 15, 2010, the SC supported the new union of subcontracted public sector workers, ASODISOPS, to conduct a series of 14 group information-organizing meetings with public sector workers in the District of Bogotá. The new union has affiliated 350 members.
- Between October 1 and December 15, 2010, the SC supported the new union of subcontracted social workers, ASINCOLTRAS, to conduct a series of nine group information-organizing meetings with social workers in the public health service.
- Between October 1 and November 30, 2010, the SC supported Sintraimagra to conduct a series of 11 organizing meetings in plantations in the Meta region. Activists visited plantations employing workers in service cooperatives to inform them of possibilities to organize and improve working conditions.
- On October 7, 2010, the SC supported the National Union of Public Service Workers to conduct a Regional Assembly with 59 participants to form a new union branch in Velez, Santander.
- On October 7, 2010, the SC supported the National Union of Public Service Workers to conduct a Departmental Assembly to present legal proposals for guaranteeing labor rights within the process of decentralization of city governments. The activity was conducted in Cartagena with 155 participants. A new chapter of Sinalsepub was formed in Bolivar.
- On October 12, 2010, the SC supported an organizing meeting with ports workers in Buenaventura. The UP proposal for formalizing employment in the ports was presented to the workers as part of the organizing platform that union promoters will use in recruitment activities.
- On October 13 and 14, 2010, the SC provided legal support to Sintraimagra to provide

legal support to several palm workers who were fired for talking to union representatives.

- On October 16, 2010, the SC supported an organizing meeting with ports workers in Barranquilla. The UP proposal for formalizing employment in the ports was presented to the workers as part of the organizing platform that union promoters will use in recruitment activities.
- On October 16 and 17, 2010, the SC and Sintraimagra conducted a 2-day organizing workshop with 21 local activists in the palm sector in Meta. The focus of the activity was organizing sub-contracted worker on the palm plantations.
- On October 23-24, 2010, the SC supported CUT to conduct a 2-day training workshop with new leaders of the Buenaventura chapter of the national ports union, UP. The focus of the training was basic union administration, records keeping, and relationship to the national confederation.
- On October 24, 2010, the SC supported an organizing meeting with heavy equipment operators in the Buenaventura ports. The focus of the activity was the UP proposal for formalizing employment in the ports and the benefits for skilled ports equipment operators.
- On October 24, 2010, the SC supported an assembly with ports workers in Santa Marta. The UP proposal for formalizing employment in the ports was presented to the workers as part of the organizing platform that union promoters will use in recruitment activities.
- On November 6 and 7, 2010, the SC and Sintraimagra conducted a 2-day organizing workshop with 69 regional leaders and activists in the palm sector in Meta. The focus of the activity was organizing and health and safety.
- On November 12, 2010, the SC supported an organizing meeting with ports workers in Barranquilla. The focus of the meeting was organizing progress and strategy. In addition, the UP proposal for formalizing employment in the ports was further discussed with as part of the organizing platform that union promoters will use in recruitment activities.
- On November 17, 2010, the SC supported the UP to bring 6 leaders from the four principal maritime ports to conduct meetings with the Minister and VM of Social Protection and Labor Relations, and the Vice President of Colombia.
- On November 18, 2010, the SC supported a national seminar/assembly with ports workers from the four major ports in Colombia, (Santa Marta, Barranquilla, Cartagena, and Buenaventura).
- On December 5, 2010, the SC and Sintraimagra conducted a 1-day organizing meeting and health and safety workshop with 57 local palm workers of Veracruz, Meta. The focus of the activity was organizing and health and safety.

- Between September 1 and November 30, 2010, the SC collaborated with the National Union School (ENS) to provide technical support to the three labor centers to analyze legislative initiatives and emerging jurisprudence and develop a platform for legislative changes to improve the labor rights legal framework in Colombia.
- In the months of October through December 2010, the SC conducted 4, four-hour meetings with the confederation lawyers and one 2-day workshop with constitutional experts in the ENS to 1) develop a legal strategy to support organizing effort based on recent high court rulings based on “preeminence of reality” in labor contracting, and 2) develop a union platform for legal reforms for labor rights legislation.
- In the months of October through December 2010, the SC and the UP conducted four meetings with the Vice Minister of Labor Relations and one meeting with the Vice President. The focus of the meetings was the formalization of employment in the ports sector, and the work of the UP.
- On January 10, 2011, the SC supported an organizing meeting with 317 ports workers in Barranquilla. The Port Workers Union (UP) proposal for formalization of employment and the UP complaint before the MSP were presented to the workers as part of the organizing platform that union promoters will use in recruitment activities. Similar activities were conducted on January 18<sup>th</sup> with 19 workers in Barranquilla, February 4<sup>th</sup> with 80 workers in Cartagena, and on February 5<sup>th</sup> with 34 workers in Barranquilla. (Also applies to C-2 activity 1)
- On January 24-27, 2011, the SC provided economic and technical support to the National Union of Public Service Workers, Sinalsepub, to conduct a Departmental Seminar and Assembly in Santander.
- In February 2011, the SC provided economic and technical support to the National Ports Workers Union (UP) in Buenaventura to identify and reach out to community organizations to build support for the labor formalization initiative promoted by the UP.
- On February 21-23, 2011, the SC and Sintraimagra conducted organizing meetings with local palm workers of Veracruz and Dinamarca, Meta. The focus of the activity was labor contracting methods, organizing and health and safety.
- On February 23, 2011, the SC provided economic and technical support to the national port workers’ union (341 port workers participated) to conduct a national seminar on reforms of labor contracting, negotiating and collective bargaining.
- On February 27, 2011, the SC and Sintraimagra conducted a workshop with 17 Afro-Colombian palm workers and supporters in the Afro Colombian community in Meta. The focus of the workshop was working conditions and discrimination in the palm industry, and linking workplace and community issues in the Afro Colombian community in Meta.

- On February 27, 2011, the SC and Sintraimagra conducted an assembly of 72 palm workers contracted through cooperatives.
- During the month of March 2011, the SC provided financial and technical support to Sintraimagra to conduct educational meetings with local palm workers of Veracruz, Dinamarca, Acacias and Guaymal in Meta.
- On March 22 and 23, 2011, the SC provided economic and technical support to the national port worker's union to conduct a two-day training with 50 crane operators on negotiation and collective bargaining, focusing on developing a bargaining proposal.
- On March 24-26, 2011, the SC provided economic and technical support to the National Union of Public Service Workers to conduct a Departmental seminar with 151 participants, to present legal proposals for transitioning workers contracted with civil contracts (OPS) to provisional direct labor contracts, and guaranteeing labor rights within the process of decentralization of city governments.
- On April 2, 2011, the SC supported the National Port Workers Union to conduct a one-day meeting with the Vice President, Angelino Garzón, and 47 union leaders from the four ports. The focus of the meeting was labor conditions and labor contracting systems in the ports, and possibilities for formalizing labor contracting in the sector.
- On April 15, 2011, the SC supported the UP-Barranquilla to conduct a one-day seminar with 78 ports workers on labor conditions and labor contracting systems in the ports.
- On April 16, 2011, the SC supported the UP-Santa Marta to conduct a one-day seminar with 160 port workers on labor conditions and labor contracting systems in the ports.
- On April 17, 2011, the SC supported the UP-Buenaventura to conduct a one-day seminar with 117 ports workers on labor conditions and labor contracting systems in the ports.
- On April 25, May 6, 17, 19, 20, 21, 30 and 31, 2011, the SC provided economic and support to the national port worker union in Buenaventura to perform worksite visits to gather information regarding working and contracting conditions, and inform workers of the Santos-Obama Labor Action Plan (S-O LAP) and the UP initiative for formalizing work in the ports. The organizing activity is being developed to produce demand-side pressure for implementation of the S-O LAP.
- On May 10, 2011, the SC supported an organizing meeting with 22 ports workers in Barranquilla. The UP proposal for formalization of employment and the UP complaint before the MSP were presented to the workers as part of the organizing platform that union promoters will use in recruitment activities. The complaint focuses on the fraudulent use of subcontracting.
- On May 7-12, 2011, the SC provided technical support to palm workers of Sintrainagro-Minas on collective bargaining. The union had gone on strike three weeks earlier in

response the company's refusal to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement, and its insistence on elimination of direct employment contracting. A resolution was negotiated after 60 days on strike, establishing 20 additional direct, permanent employment contracts, bringing the total number of direct, permanent contracts to 140 of the 700 workers on the palm plantation.

- In the period of May-June, 2011, the SC conducted 37 meetings with local, regional and national union leaders and Colombian government officials to develop work plans to implementation of the Labor Action Plan.
- In the period March-May, 2011, the SC provided technical and advocacy support to the three labor centers and the public sector unions in the analysis and drafting of the draft decree which will regulate article 16 of the labor code, and derogate Decree 535 of 2009. The new decree represents an important advance in the rights of association and collective bargaining of public employees. On May 25, the President and the labor sector, represented by the three labor centers, signed an accord supporting the draft decree. The decree now awaits the President's signature to become law.
- In the period April-June, 2011 the SC provided technical and advocacy support to the three labor centers in the analysis and drafting of the draft decree that will create the new Ministry of Labor. On request, the SC provided detailed technical suggestions regarding the structure and functions of the proposed new ministry to some interested parties involved in the design of the ministry and the drafting of the decree for its creation. This work remains in progress.
- In the period May-June, 2011, the SC provided technical and advocacy support to the three labor centers to analyze the Decree that will reform Article 200 of the penal code (criminalizing actions to deny workers' freedom of association) and to formulate revisions to correct the serious deficiencies in the decree, which do not protect labor activists against persecution.
- On June 9, 2011, the SC conducted a one-day workshop with 21 local ports workers leaders on labor conditions, labor contracting systems in the ports, and aspects of the Santos-Obama Labor Action Plan, signed on April 7<sup>th</sup>, and the relationship to the UP initiative to formalize work in the ports.
- On July 31, the SC conducted a seminar with 112 participants from the palm sector in Villavicencio, Meta.
- In August 2011, the SC provided economic and technical support to the Union Portuaria (Ports Union, or UP) to prepare a proposal for a meeting with the Vice President of Colombia, Angelino Garzon.
- In August 2011, the SC provided technical support to the national oil workers' union, Union Sindical Obrera (USO), to prepare a proposal for a meeting with the Vice Presidency and the initiation of a negotiating process in Meta. Given the persistent use

fraudulent sub-contracting and continued violations of labor rights in the petroleum sector in Meta, Vice President Garzon inaugurated negotiation round tables in the region on August 3, 2011.

- On August 1, the SC provided economic and technical support to the UP to prepare a report and meet with the Vice Minister of Labor and the Ombudsman (*procurador*) for labor issues.
- On August 14, the SC provided economic and technical support to the UP to conduct educational workshop/meeting with 32 port operators who are labor sub-contractors.
- On August 18-20, 2011 the SC provided economic support to the Sintraimagra agricultural workers' union to conduct follow-up meetings with local leaders and workers in the palm sector in Meta to track developments in employment relations following the promulgation of Decree 2025. On August 20, Sintraimagra leaders met with local leaders to discuss possible next steps in organizing strategy.
- On August 23-26, the SC provided economic and technical support to USO to conduct worksite organizing visits and prepare for negotiations with various employers in the Meta region. As part of the support, the SC conducted a workshop with 56 participants on August 23, 2011.
- On August 27, the SC provided economic and technical support to the UP to conduct an assembly with 116 port workers from Cartagena.
- On August 27, the SC provided economic and technical support to the UP to conduct an assembly with 94 port workers from Barranquilla.
- On August 28, the SC provided economic and technical support to the Union Portuaria to conduct an assembly with 53 port workers from Buenaventura.
- On August 30, the SC provided economic support to Sintraimagra to conduct follow-up meetings with local leaders and workers in the palm sector in Meta to track developments in employment relations following the promulgation of Decree 2025. The union also met with managers of five different CTA cooperatives.
- In September 2011, the SC provided technical assistance to the security union, Sintrabrinks, to develop a collective bargaining proposal and strategy for upcoming collective bargaining.
- On September 2, 2011 the SC provided economic and technical support to the UP to conduct a leadership workshop with 58 port workers from Santa Marta.
- On September 10-11, 2011 the SC provided economic support to Sintraimagra to conduct follow-up meetings with local leaders and workers in the palm sector in Meta to track developments in employment relations following the promulgation of Decree 2025.

- On September 17-19, 2011 the SC provided technical assistance and training to Sintrainagro and workers of four plantations in the Puerto Wilches, Magdalena Medio region via mini-work shops. On September 20, the SC met with the Vice Minister of Labor of Colombia's Ministry of Social Protection (MSP) to advocate for a solution in the Puerto Wilches conflict.
- On September 21, 2011 the SC provided economic and technical support to Sintraimagra to conduct follow-up meetings with workers in the palm sector in Meta.
- In September 2011, the SC provided technical support to the UP to prepare for meetings with the Vice Minister of Labor of the MSP and the Vice President regarding employer reprisals against UP members and formalizing labor in the ports sector.
- In the third quarter of 2011, the SC provided on-going technical support to GM workers regarding occupational health and safety, organizing and negotiating.
- In September and October, 2011, the SC provided economic and technical support to the Sintrainagro agricultural workers' union at Puerto Wilches. During this period, the SC accompanied the union during a labor dispute with palm oil companies, providing technical support to reach a resolution to the dispute. The negotiations included the Ministry of Labor and the Vice President's office, and ultimately led to an agreement to begin the process of formalizing the contracting in the sector.
- In September and October, 2011, the SC conducted eight mini-workshops with a total of 288 activists in the palm sector in Magdalena Medio, with Sintrainagro at Puerto Wilches. The focus of the activities was conflict management and negotiation.
- On October 5-8, 2011, the SC provided technical support to Sinalserpub and eight public sector unions to unify into a single national union. This activity was conducted as follow-up to a series of previous activities in support of the public sector organizing and unification process. The unions merged into a new national public sector union, SUNET, on October 8.
- On October 11, 2011, the SC provided economic and technical support to Sintraimagra to conduct a two-day training workshop with 27 palm activists on organizing and bargaining.
- On October 22, 2011 the SC provided economic and technical support to Sintrainagro at Puerto Wilches, to conduct an assembly of 162 local leaders from 6 palm plantations in the region. The focus of the assembly was bargaining positions and conflict management during the labor dispute.
- On October 21-22, 2011 the SC provided economic and technical support to Sintraimagra to conduct worksite visits to eight palm plantations to inform workers of their rights, organizing and bargaining initiatives.

- In November 2011, the SC provided technical and economic support to the national ports union, Union Portuaria, in Buenaventura, to conduct worksite and house visits to inform workers of their rights, the new legal prescriptions for eliminating sub-contracting and the UP initiative to formalize work in the ports.
- On November 6-7, 2011 the SC provided economic and technical support to Sintraimagra to conduct one two-day training workshop with 20 palm activists on organizing and bargaining.