



▲ During the District 5 Annual Assembly, more than a hundred Quebec Steelworkers visited the local Mark's branch.

Photo : Guillaume Charbonneau



Members' Report 2021

STEELWORKERS HUMANITY FUND

▲ Bangladeshi garment workers demonstrating for better working conditions.

Photo : Anisur Rahman

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The impact of worker-to-worker solidarity

Credit photo: Vecteezy.com

The year 2021 has shown us once again that solidarity is in Steelworkers' DNA. There was no lack of opportunities for the Steelworkers Humanity Fund to lend a hand, such as when the province of British Columbia faced repeated environmental disasters, or standing up to the injustices faced by garment sector workers in Bangladesh – halfway across the world.

For many years, union leaders in this densely populated Asian country have been fighting for safer workplaces and living wages for the millions of workers, mostly women, who make the clothes we wear. But to address the problem at its source, it is also up to companies here to understand that they cannot get away with exploiting labour in the Global South. This is why throughout the fall, Steelworkers across the country mobilized to denounce the working and living conditions of women workers employed by Canadian brands in Bangladesh, including the factories that supply Mark's and its owner, Canadian Tire.

Thanks to the hard work of Steelworker activists, a petition asking the CEO of Canadian Tire to pay living wages to workers in its supply chain has gathered more than 1100 signatures, and more than 35 Canadian Tire and Mark's stores were visited, communicating a clear message: workers near and far are connected and will stand up for each other's rights.

This member's report aims to reflect all the richness of this borderless solidarity, and the relationships we have built together. ■



- ◀ Union rights training in Madagascar.
Photo : FHM
- ▶ Community activists learning to tell their own story.
Photo : Benchmarks
- ▼ CCDA using popular education methodology to train its members.
Photo : CCDA



Fighting for human and labour rights

Thanks to the contributions provided by thousands of Steelworkers members, together we were able to provide resources to workers and communities to promote and defend labour and human rights. This year we highlight the work of two partners from Africa, and one from Guatemala.

Contracting out of jobs is a common management strategy often used in the mining industry to undercut union power and undermine workers' rights. On the southern tip of Madagascar, the SHF supports two unions representing workers at a Rio Tinto mine to enable them to train workers on rights, and represent workers in labour courts. SVS and SEKRIMA are determined to raise living standards and working conditions for all workers, including workers employed by subcontractors, as well as ensuring that local communities share in the benefits of the mine.

Poor and marginalized people and communities around the world are routinely ignored and not listened to. The fight for rights begins with the ability to speak up and advocate for yourself. In the coal-mining district of South Africa, the Benchmarks Foundation has, with the support of the SHF, been able to extend its Community Monitors program to train and support unemployed community activists build their skills to observe, document, report, and understand root causes of community problems.

Indigenous and peasant communities who have been dispossessed and marginalized over centuries are fighting back and building their own economies. In 2021, the SHF approved a new two-year project with the Comité Campesino del Altiplano – CCDA. The SHF funding allows the CCDA to provide practical tools and training in ecologically sustainable farming methods suited for small family plots in the Guatemalan high plains. The project includes activities addressing alarming levels of violence against women in some of those communities. ■



Women workers building a stronger global labour movement

THANI, a labour organization in Peru, provided training to 100 union workers, mainly women, from five different sectors including mining, retail and education services, to increase workers' understanding of national labour legislation related to workers' health and safety, collective bargaining and gender rights. With the support of the SHF, THANI also published resources to expand knowledge of the working and economic conditions of women in different industries.

Bolivia has a long and proud history of mining organizing in which women play a big part. The SHF supports the National Women's and Mining Network and the Bolivia's Women's Coordination Association, to highlight gender inequality in mining communities, promote the prevention of violence and strengthen the participation and leadership of women. Last year, this project worked with 320 mainly Aymara and Quechua Indigenous women representing different mining cooperatives and who are impacted by mining activities. ■

Women around the world are building an inclusive labour movement that puts gender workplace issues front and centre. To sustain these efforts, the SHF is committed to supporting the rights of women by building international alliances and strengthen solidarity efforts that help to dismantle systemic barriers that continue to impact women.

In Honduras, we partnered with the Independent Monitoring Team (EMIH), a women's organization that is working alongside nine unions to help address occupational health and safety issues, workplace inspections and improve participation of workers in health and safety committees. In 2021, like many other organizations still reeling from the impact of COVID, EMIH adapted its approach to deliver sessions aimed at improving the occupational health of 20,000 workers and promoting the importance of ergonomics, especially among women employed in the garment industry.



◀ EMIH's team presenting a certificate of completion to training participants in Honduras.
Photo: EMIH

▶ Women in Bolivia engaged in mining participating in a leadership program.
Photo: CN-RNMM



Supporting initiatives to tackle the root causes of poverty

Poverty knows no boundaries and its devastating effects are felt by people across countries, race and genders. The fact that a "rich" country like Canada faces such high levels of economic disparity is profoundly shocking and must be addressed. At the same time, poverty must not be normalized in countries that have suffered from colonialism, war and other human-made or natural disasters. With this in mind, the SHF partners with organizations that work to change the structures of inequality, both here and abroad.

In Canada, we have been supporting Canada Without Poverty, a national network advocating for poverty reduction strategies grounded in the lived experiences of low-income people. In 2021, CWP submitted a report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee to highlight concerns on poverty and inequality during the pandemic. Two key issues of concern that emerged from the report will be investigated by the Committee; vaccine distribution and the disproportionate impact of COVID within racialized communities. Community Food Centres Canada, another

national organization supported by the SHF, is dedicated to addressing poverty and food insecurity across the country. Last year, its partnership with two local Indigenous CFCs contributed to nurturing culturally relevant spaces to address these challenges in their respective communities.

In Liberia, West Africa, the SHF provides ongoing support to a resilient and hopeful approach to poverty reduction. Our partner organization Camp for Peace is working primarily with young adults who have been affected by the lasting effects of civil war, ongoing national crises and economic hardships. Last year, 22 young men and women completed a program focussed on rehabilitation, skills training and comprehensive support of its participants. This program increases their self-confidence about the future as they move toward employment and entrepreneurship. Camp for Peace also successfully launched a new women's empowerment program with a multipurpose work facility. 65 participants continue to be actively involved in the project. ■



▶ A community elder preparing the catch of the day at the Turnor Lake and Birch Narrows CFC (Sk).

Photo : Turnor Lake and Birch Narrows CFC

◀ Program participants at Camp for Peace in Liberia.

Photo : Camp for Peace



Emergency Relief

In response to disasters of human and natural causes, many of them increasing in their frequency due to climate change, the Steelworkers Humanity Fund has answered many calls for emergency relief in 2021. But one of them stood out for its intensity.

Following record-breaking heat over the summer, more than 300 wildfires were reported in the BC interior, triggering the mass evacuation of residents of surrounding communities. In towns such as Lytton, many have lost their homes to the flames, triggering a critical need for support and recovery efforts. Later in the year, while the impacts of the fires were still felt in many communities, massive floods washed out major highways and left many communities cut off from the rest of the province, resulting in the evacuations of thousands of residents.

In partnership with United Way British Columbia, the SHF contributed \$100,000 to provide immediate and longer-term support to victims of those natural disasters, providing grants to support those who are displaced or have lost housing, belongings and/or employment, suffered physical or mental health trauma, among others. ■

► A community-driven effort saw volunteers working to fill sandbags and hand deliver them to those in need during the floods.

Photo: United Way BC



Small contributions — Big impact

Thank you to all our supporters! If you feel inspired by the Steelworkers Humanity Fund's work and are not a contributor yet, please approach your USW local union leadership, or contact us in order to receive model language to introduce in your collective agreement. Through a small hourly contribution, we can keep our international and Canadian solidarity work strong.

Our email: humanityfund@usw.ca

◀ Distributing seeds to farmers in the aftermath of hurricanes Eta and Iota in Honduras.

Photo: ERIC-SJ

► Steelworker donation to the Renfrew & District Food Bank.

Photo: Cathy Morris





Tribute to Laura Ramirez, a pillar of the Steelworkers Humanity Fund

In May 2022, Laura Ramirez, who started with the Steelworkers Humanity Fund in 1988, retired after 34 years with the Fund and the Union. Laura was instrumental in setting up the foundations of the organization, building and maintaining relationships with partners and unions across Latin America. Her many contributions included building a women's rights program, championing health and safety efforts internationally, and most recently, developing a large workers' rights program in Mexico.

To mark Laura's legacy, we are sharing testimonies from partners across Canada and Latin America, looking back on her many contributions over the years. Following is a short selection – many more can be found on our website: <http://usw.to/457>.

Thank you, Laura, you will be missed!

From all of us at the SHF and in the union – thank you Laura for your tremendous contribution to building international solidarity. Generous with your time, you have been a builder of bridges. Moving effortlessly between three languages, different cultures and contexts, you excel at connecting Steelworker members with partners throughout Latin America – interpreting and explaining our partners' struggles to us, and in turn making partners understand our realities. Your expertise in project administration has been very much appreciated and will be hard to replace. Your commitment to women's rights and your determination to find ways to raise the bar globally has set a strong foundation upon which the SHF will continue to build. Thank you!

**Marty Warren, SHF President
& Ken Neumann, SHF Past President**

Laura always represented the Steelworkers Humanity Fund with great professionalism and transparency. Attentive to the activities of the projects and willing to support when needed. Laura is one of those people who leave a mark wherever they go, it can be said that she made a path by walking it. Laura was a great ally. Pure gratitude to those who built empathy, sorority, and fellowship.

Rosalba Calva, Mexico

Laura strengthened the commitment of the Steelworkers Humanity Fund with the workers of Latin America, especially with unions. She made a significant contribution to working women, such as in the mining sector in Peru. She worked to ensure that union organizations incorporated women workers and treated them as equals, which was not an easy task due to the patriarchy present in the world of work.

Estela Ospina, Peru

Laura is committed to the struggles of Indigenous peoples, the struggles of workers and especially the struggles of women. She contributed much to our leadership training by sharing experiences and fostering exchanges. She coordinated visits with Canadian Women of Steel to learn about both of our realities and build on what we have in common as women.

Maria Estela Barco, Chiapas, Mexico



◀ Laura during a rally against cuts to education in Ontario, 2020.

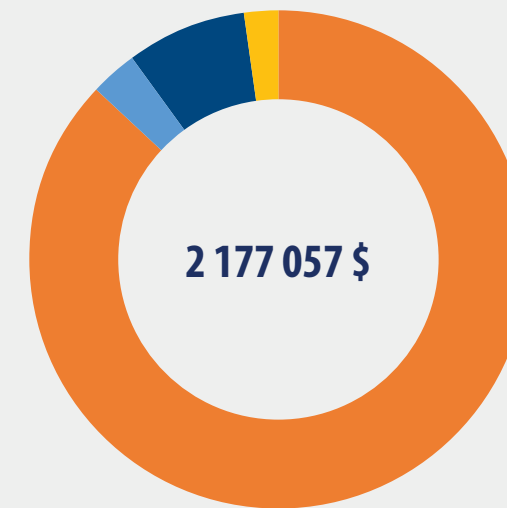
Photo: SHF

◀ Laura (3rd on the right) during a Women of Steel exchange in Guatemala, 2018.

Photo: SHF

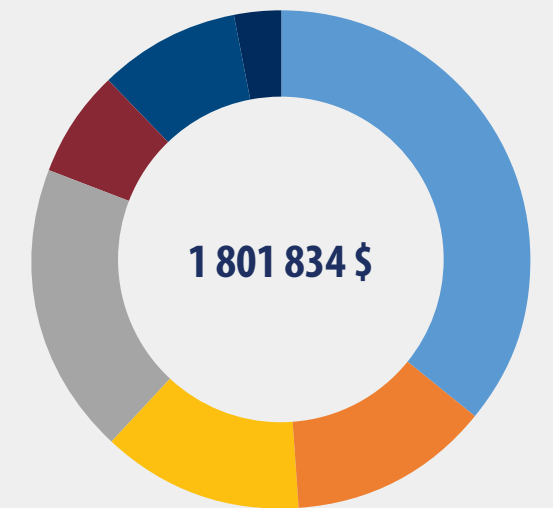
Our finances 2021

Where our money comes from



- Steelworkers Members Contributions
- Local unions contributions (not through CBA)
- Corporate accountability program
- ESDC Grant

Where our money goes



- Canadian and international projects
- Food banks and other charitable organizations
- Emergency relief
- Project support and development
- Administration
- Corporate accountability program
- ESDC Program



Your contributions at work around the world in 2021

Vos contributions au travail dans le monde en 2021

Legend / Légende

- Building women's equality
Renforcer l'égalité des femmes
- Sustainable development and environment
Développement durable et environnement
- Upholding labour rights
Faire respecter les droits des travailleuses et travailleurs
- Promoting human rights
Promouvoir les droits humains
- Emergency relief
Secours d'urgence
- Fighting poverty in Canada
Lutte contre la pauvreté au Canada

Our Partners Nos partenaires

- AAJIC – Bench Marks Foundation, Mozambique /
Fondation Bench Marks, Mozambique
- BCWS – Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity /
Centre de solidarité ouvrière du Bangladesh
- Canada Without Poverty, Canada /
Canada sans pauvreté, Canada
- Camp for Peace, Liberia / Camp pour la paix, Libéria
- CNCA – Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability /
RCRCE – Réseau canadien pour la reddition de compte des entreprises
- CCDA – Comité campesino del Altiplano, Guatemala
- Common Frontiers, Canada
- Community Food Centres Canada /
Centres communautaires d'alimentation du Canada
- CDHAL – Comité pour les droits humains en Amérique latine,
Canada
- *Comité fronterizo de obreras*, Mexico /
Comité fronterizo de obreras, Mexique
- *Corporación Araza*, Colombia / *Corporación Araza*, Colombie
- *Corporación Trabajadores por la Tierra*, Colombia /
Corporación Trabajadores por la Tierra, Colombie
- DESMI – Social and Economic Development for Indigenous
Mexicans, Chiapas / Développement économique et social des
Autochtones mexicains, Chiapas
- EMIH – *Equipo de Monitoreo Independiente de Honduras*,
Honduras

Emergency relief for natural disasters / Secours d'urgence pour les désastres naturels

- \$ 100,000 / 100 000 \$**
Forest fires and flooding, B.C. /
Feux de forêt et inondations, C.-B.
- \$ 5,000 / 5 000 \$**
Emergency COVID-19 relief, India /
Secours d'urgence pour la COVID-19, Inde
- \$ 45,000 / 45 000 \$**
COVID-19 relief to garment workers, Bangladesh /
Secours d'urgence pour la COVID-19 pour
les travailleuses du vêtement, Bangladesh
- \$ 10,000 / 10 000 \$**
COVID-19 relief, Colombia /
Secours d'urgence pour la COVID-19, Colombia
- \$ 3,000 / 3 000 \$**
Support to temporary migrant
agricultural workers, Quebec /
Appui aux travailleurs temporaires
migrants agricoles, Québec
- \$ 25,000 / 25 000 \$**
Earthquake and tropical storm, Haiti /
Tremblement de terre et tempête tropicale, Haïti



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