



Unifor  
**Social  
Justice  
Fund**

**2024**

# **ANNUAL REPORT**



# ABOUT

The Unifor Social Justice Fund (SJF) is a fund that is negotiated at the collective bargaining table by Unifor Locals, from employers. Funds are used to support community groups, charitable organizations, trade unions and workers' organizations – both in Canada and around the world – to strengthen democracy, improve labour and human rights, promote equitable development, and contribute to poverty reduction and social justice.

The Fund is a registered charity managed by a Board of Directors comprised of Unifor and community leaders and is guided by principles of social unionism and working-class and international solidarity.



# SOCIAL JUSTICE FUND BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## CHAIR

Lana Payne

## SECRETARY-TREASURER

Len Poirier

## DIRECTOR

Navjeet Sidhu

## MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Sophie Albert

Shinade Alder

Ken Anderson

Hon. Dr. Jean Augustine

Daniel Cloutier

Samia Hashi

Gavin McGarrigle

Jennifer Murray



# WELCOME MESSAGE



With 2024 at a close, we reflect upon the many life-changing – and life-saving – projects the Unifor Social Justice Fund (SJF) has helped to support in so many corners of the world. From the mountains of Nepal and the agricultural farmlands of Quebec to the sugar plantations of Cameroon and the shores of Greece, SJF's reach and impact on people, workers and communities is truly inspiring.

This year, the SJF has paid particular attention to supporting projects centered on worker's rights and labour solidarity. Whether it is supporting migrant workers in Canada or food service workers in Cambodia, to combatting forced labour in China and improving health and safety for maquila workers in the manufacturing centres of Honduras, we are helping to build worker power through education, leadership development and training – especially for women, who are so often subjected to abuse, violence, harassment and exploitation.

Education was also a key area of support during the year, particularly as it relates to identifying and overcoming the systemic economic and social barriers impacting access to education of girls in many parts of the world. The SJF has partnered with both Canadian and international organizations doing critical work supporting children and youth in countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Grenada, to reach their educational goals and break the cycle of economic insecurity that affects so many families and communities.

Finally, we were pleased to have been able to restart our project delegation visits this year, after a long hiatus brought on by the pandemic. These visits are invaluable not only as an exercise in transparency and accountability, but as a critical way that we can connect Unifor members, leadership and staff to the partners we work with and the projects that we help support. Hearing and sharing stories and experiences on issues directly from those living them every day is a powerful way we build connections and strengthen our unity across borders.

Thank you to all our Unifor members who continue to bargain the SJF in their contracts in recognition that we all have a part to play in building a more just and equitable world.

In solidarity,  
Lana Payne  
National President, Unifor

# SJF 2024 BY THE NUMBERS

Total International Projects:

**32**

Total Canadian Projects:

**10**

Total number of countries:

**30+**

Total organizations supported:

**315**

Total funds allocated: Approximately **\$898,000** in donations and emergency humanitarian relief and over **\$1.47 million** in national and international project funding.

# SJF PROJECT SNAPSHOTS LATIN AMERICA

## GUATEMALA

Asociación guatemalteca unidos por nuestros derechos (AGUND) /  
Guatemalan Association United for Our Rights



AGUND is a grassroots organization formed in 2010, advocating for the rights of Guatemalan migrant workers, particularly those participating in seasonal agricultural programs in other countries, including Canada.

The labour mobility program initiated by the Guatemalan government in 2003 saw a significant increase in participation over the years with a greater number of workers working outside the country. However, this growth has been accompanied by various challenges, including a lack of oversight over recruitment agencies and insufficient information provided to workers regarding their rights and obligations abroad and supportive resources. AGUND aims to address these systemic issues by providing comprehensive information to workers, advocating for

improved regulations governing these programs, and collaborating with government and other allied organizations.

The project will empower and develop community worker leaders and enhance technical expertise amongst AGUND members. It will create initiatives to mitigate migration challenges and increase awareness of human and labour rights through various mediums, including social media, radio broadcasts, advocacy workshops and training programs, to curb the risk of migrant worker abuse and exploitation.

**Did you know:** In 2023, Guatemala was the third highest source country for temporary migrant workers working in Canada's agricultural sector.



# HONDURAS

CoDevelopment Canada



Codevelopment Canada (CoDev) is a Canadian nonprofit, international solidarity organization working for social justice in the Americas to improve the lives of women, workers, and communities.

The Honduran economy exhibits a considerable dependency on the maquila – or assembly-for-export – industry jobs, which are marred by unsafe labour conditions and low wages. Women from rural areas and poor urban women form the basis of the labour force of many of the maquilas operating in so-called ‘free trade zones’. The legislative framework and prevailing occupational health and safety practices are woefully inadequate for

protecting workers’ health, safety, and dignity. In partnership with the Honduran Women’s Collective (CODEMUH), this project aims to end violence against maquila women by addressing unsafe working conditions and protecting their rights. This will be done through advocating for stronger and modernized Occupational Health and Safety legislation at the national level, and conducting outreach to workers through TV, radio and social media campaigns to raise worker awareness and pressure policymakers and political leaders.

**Did you know:** The Honduras national labour code has not been updated since legislated back in 1959, leaving workers vulnerable to workplace violations and occupational health and safety risks.





# PERU

## Sacred Valley Health



Sacred Valley Health (SVH) began as a mobile clinic in 2010, led by medical professionals, to respond to the need for better access to healthcare in rural areas. SVH'S mission is to improve health in underserved communities of Peru's Sacred Valley through education, access, and empowerment of local women as Community Health Workers. This project will address critical gaps in reproductive health education for Quechua-speaking Indigenous women in rural Peru. These women face numerous barriers, including geographic isolation, cultural discrimination and limited access to healthcare information, leading to high rates of poverty, preventable illnesses and limited reproductive health knowledge. The program will look to train local women as Community Health

Workers, empowering them to disseminate reproductive health information within their communities through house visits, health fairs and educational events.

**Did you know:** According to the National Institute for Statistics and Information in Peru, women who speak an indigenous language (e.g. Quechua) are 16% more likely to have a chronic illness than women who speak Spanish.





# CANADA

## QUÉBEC

Réseau d'aide aux travailleuses et travailleurs migrants temporaires du Québec (RATTMAQ)/ Support Network for Temporary Migrant Workers of Québec

RATTMAQ is an advocacy organization that provides immigration, health, education and French language support services to migrant agricultural workers in Quebec and those in the food processing sector.

This project aims to enhance these workers' awareness of their rights, facilitate their cultural adaptation and improve their access to essential support services. A key focus is strengthening RATTMAQ's presence and impact in the Saguenay Lac-Saint-Jean region through collaboration with Unifor, and other key stakeholders. The project will involve educating workers about their rights, trade unions, addressing social challenges like racism, improving French language skills and ensuring access to justice and support services. Ultimately, RATTMAQ seeks to empower migrant farm workers and foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for them in Québec.

**Did you know:** In 2023, the province of Québec brought over 23,000 temporary migrant workers to work in the provincial agriculture sector. This is an increase of nearly 63% compared to 2018.



## CNIB (Canadian National Institute for the Blind)

Established in 1918, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) works to empower individuals who are blind or partially sighted to fully participate in their communities through various support programs and advocacy. Recognizing the prevalent discrimination faced by people with sight loss in daily life, CNIB initiated the 'Know Your Rights' project, developing accessible legal information resources. Building upon this, CNIB is establishing a national Legal Support Program to address unmet legal needs and foster systemic change. This program will offer a legal referral service, litigation and test-case funding for individuals with vision-related disabilities facing discrimination, and in some cases, direct legal action against discriminatory organizations. CNIB aims to enhance access to justice and create a more inclusive society for Canadians with vision loss.

**Did you know:** Between 2017 to 2022, the number of Canadians with vision disabilities saw one of its largest increases (after mental health and pain-related disabilities) and contributed to the rise in the national disability rate.

## Indigenous Friends Association



The Indigenous Friends Association (IFA) is an Indigenous-led tech nonprofit offering a free five-week online program, called IndigiTAL, that uniquely blends art, technology, and Indigenous knowledge to empower Indigenous youth across Canada – often from underrepresented and remote communities. The program aims to bridge educational and employment gaps by fostering digital literacy and artistic skills while emphasizing healing and cultural pride. Through tailored curriculums, participants create digital art, develop websites and engage in discussions on Indigenous topics, culminating in community projects and professional portfolios. IndigiTAL strives to create a supportive environment that promotes personal growth, skill development and a strong connection to Indigenous identity, preparing youth to confidently navigate the digital world.

**Did you know:** According to Statistics Canada, First Nations youth were less likely to have completed or attend a postsecondary program compared to non-Indigenous youth (37% versus 72%). Among First Nations youth, those living off reserve were nearly twice as likely to have participated in postsecondary education (44%) as those living on reserve (23%).

# EUROPE

## GREECE

### Equal Legal Aid

Equal Legal Aid (ELA) is a nonprofit organization providing crucial pro-bono legal services to asylum seekers and refugees in Northern Greece, where a significant shortage of legal assistance hinders fair access to asylum procedures. This project aims to bolster ELA's capacity to offer comprehensive legal support throughout all stages of the asylum process. ELA's team of lawyers, interpreters and volunteers offers community outreach, individual legal aid and court representation to vulnerable individuals who have faced persecution and trauma. The project has a dual focus: empowering individual asylum seekers to understand and participate in their procedures and addressing systemic issues through strategic litigation and advocacy at the European level. Ultimately, this initiative seeks to advance the rights of asylum seekers and promote a fairer asylum system in Europe.



**Did you know:** In 2024, there were over 73,000 applications made by refugees for asylum in Greece.

### Anti-Slavery International

Anti-Slavery International (ASI), the world's oldest human rights organization focused on eradicating forced labour, has launched a project to address the issue of systemic Uyghur forced labour in China. This project aims to achieve international recognition that Uyghur forced labour constitutes racial and ethnic discrimination and potentially an atrocity crime under international law. A key goal of the project is to strengthen business and legislative accountability in the European Union and United Kingdom, ensuring that Uyghur forced labour is considered in relevant human rights legislation and corporate due diligence. ASI will intensify international political pressure on China through UN and ILO mechanisms and advocate for investigations and compliance with international labour standards. By raising awareness, engaging with international bodies, and advocating for legal reforms, the project seeks to end the system of Uyghur forced labour and hold those complicit accountable.

**Did you know:** Human rights organizations estimate that around one million Uyghur and other Muslim ethnic and religious minorities have been detained and placed into 're-education' camps subjected to violence and forced labour by government officials in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Uyghur Region).



# AFRICA

## CAMEROON

ACORN International/OnEstEnsemble

OnEstEnsemble is supporting seasonal sugar plantation workers and local residents in central Cameroon's Sanaga Valley to advocate for their rights against the Société Sucrière du Cameroun (SOSUCAM) – the largest sugar company in the country. Seasonal workers, who make up most of the workforce but lack representation, face issues like lack of medical coverage and inadequate access to safety equipment. Local residents are also organizing against the company's environmental impact, including water pollution, land grabbing and deforestation. This project will empower both groups through labour rights organizing and community mobilization, providing them with training, legal advice and organizational support. The goal is to foster social dialogue with SOSUCAM management, address workers' grievances and protect the ecological interests and health of the surrounding communities.

**Did you know:** In 2020, Cameroon's industrial agricultural sector accounted for over a 25% of workplace related accidents.



# SOMALIA

## Somali Hope Foundation



The Somali Hope Foundation (SHF), based in Ottawa, operates the Somali Hope Academy in rural Somalia, providing free, quality education to over 900 students, many of whom are orphans, displaced, or from marginalized backgrounds. Recognizing that limited access to education is a major driver of poverty in Somalia, where most schools are private and unaffordable for many, SHF aims to break down these barriers, particularly for girls. The SJF has assisted in supporting with the enrollment cost for students for the 2024-25 academic year. This initiative will directly benefit the sponsored children by providing them with a year of crucial education and will also positively impact their

families and the wider community. Priority for these scholarships is given to low-income students, girls, orphans, internally displaced children and marginalized youth.

**Did you know:** Approximately 3 million out of 5 million school-age children and youth are not attending school in Somalia.

# ERITREA

## VITA FOR CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES

Vita, an Irish development organization with a long history in Africa, is implementing the Waterpoint Maintenance and Training Programme in Eritrea to ensure lasting access to clean water in rural communities. Building on their previous water point repair efforts, this project focuses on empowering local populations through comprehensive training in water infrastructure maintenance and establishing Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) committees with strong female participation. By collaborating closely with local governments and community groups, the program will embed essential skills and foster community ownership of water resources. The initiative will target 70 villages and approximately 21,000 residents, ensuring regular monitoring of water points and water quality to testing. Ultimately, the project seeks to improve public health, promote gender equality by freeing up women's time, enhance environmental sustainability and build resilient communities with consistent access to clean water.



**Did you know:** The government of Eritrea recently announced that, through ongoing investments in water infrastructure projects, 85% of the country's population now has access to clean drinking water – an increase from just 13% in 1991.



# ASIA

## PHILIPPINES

### Association for the Rights of Children in Southeast Asia



Initiated by the Association for the Rights of Children in Southeast Asia (ARCSEA), this project aims to support children of Filipino migrant workers, who are often obligated to be left behind by their parents while they are abroad working to support their families. Many are often women who are employed as domestic workers or caregivers abroad, caring for other people's family members. This is a significant issue given the Philippines' status as a leading labour-sending nation. Recognizing the emotional distress, educational disruption, and vulnerability these children face due to family separation, the project will tailor specific interventions for children, their overseas parents and designated caregivers. The goal is to address these multifaceted challenges through research, workshops, relationship

coaching and accessible publications (such as children's story books). These interventions will aim to improve the emotional well-being and coping skills for children, develop stronger family relationships, enhance caregiver support and increase parental engagement.

**Did you know:** An estimated 2.16 million Filipinos worked overseas in 2023 between April and September alone. Nearly 55% of these workers were women.

## INDIA

### Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)



This project focuses on empowering informal workers in the Kerala region of India, particularly women in domestic and home-based work, who constitute a large and often unprotected segment of India's workforce. Building on the 50-year experience of SEWA in organizing informal workers, the project will address the lack of labour rights and social protections prevalent in India's informal economy. Strategies include raising awareness, advocating for policy changes at the state and local levels – namely in the areas of minimum wages, social security, and occupational safety – and building leadership

capacity among workers themselves. This will help ensure that the rights and protections of these vulnerable workers are recognized and upheld through sustained advocacy and empowerment.

**Did you know:** Roughly 61% of women workers in India were in the informal (non-agricultural) sector, in 2023-24.



# MIDDLE EAST

## GAZA

### International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)

In response to the devastating war in Gaza and the tragic loss of life of numerous journalists and media workers, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has partnered with the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate (PJS) to establish two mobile newsrooms in the region. These newsrooms will offer immediate support and essential resources to displaced journalists, who have endured the destruction of media infrastructure and are subject to severely dangerous and precarious working conditions. Equipped with workstations, internet access, and safety training, these mobile hubs will provide a secure environment for professional collaboration and development. The initiative aims to transition these mobile newsrooms into permanent structures, playing a crucial role in the revitalization of the independent media sector in Gaza post-war by offering training and support for journalists.

**Did you know:** As of April 2025, 176 journalists and media workers, overwhelmingly Palestinian, have been killed since the start of the recent Hamas-Israel war.



# PROJECT VISIT

## BANANA LINK (DOMINICAN REPUBLIC)

In 2024, a Unifor delegation made a visit to our project partners, Banana Link, in the Dominican Republic, to learn more about the project supported by the SJF, aimed at improving the conditions of Haitian migrant workers in the Dominican banana production sector.

Unifor delegates heard firsthand the difficult working conditions that Haitian migrant workers face daily, including issues related to the lack of full (or any) immigration status in the country, lack of rights, access to public services, such as health and education, and ongoing threats of detention and deportation by Dominican authorities.

A key part of the project included the development and expansion of a national agricultural workers' union (SINTRABAM), worker education and training and advocating for a migrant workers' immigration regularization program to protect workers at risk of deportation and improve quality of life through public service access.

During their visit, the Unifor delegation met with key project partners from Banana Link, including Executive Director Alistair Smith and Project Coordinator Holly Woodward-Davey, as well as Crusito Toribio, General Secretary of SINTRABAM; Gabriel del Rio, General Secretary of the the Confederación Autónoma Sindical Clasistas (CASC); Dominican Republic's Minister of Labour, Luis Miguel de Camps; and Pastor Americo of the Congregation of Pastors of the Haitian Church.

The visit included a large public assembly to participate in the launch of the national agricultural union and the swearing in of the new union's leadership, where Unifor's International Director addressed the assembly, expressing solidarity on behalf of Unifor and its members.

The visit included a knowledge exchange, where presentations on issues facing migrant workers in Canada and Unifor's solidarity work on migrant justice solidarity campaigns was provided to union representatives, as well as an overview of Unifor's education programs and Family Education Centre by the union's Director of Education.

The delegation's visit concluded with a tour of a banana plantation, providing valuable insights into the workers' daily challenges and the critical need for ongoing support and advocacy, both at the national and international level.



Unifor's SJF has been instrumental in enabling Banana Link and our Dominican union partners to defend the interests of Haitian migrant workers in the banana industry. In the last 6 months, the union visited around 100 farms and interviewed over 900 workers, mainly Haitian migrants, about wages and working conditions: this feeds an informed advocacy for workers rights and dignity in context of mass deportations and increasing anti-immigrant sentiment.

- Holly Woodward Davey  
Project Coordinator, Banana Link







# 2024 HOLIDAY FOOD BANK AND WOMEN'S SHELTERS DONATIONS

Each year, during the holiday season, the Unifor Social Justice Fund makes donations to food banks and women's shelters across Canada. In 2024, 74 food banks and 74 women's shelters were supported with cheques presented by Unifor members, Locals, union leadership and staff.

In total, **\$300,000** was donated to Canadian food banks and **\$150,000** to Canadian women's shelters. We would also like to acknowledge the additional generous contributions from Unifor's Ontario Regional Council and BC Regional Council towards our holiday giving drive.



# DONATIONS

Every year, the Social Justice Fund makes donations to support hundreds of local, provincial, national and international organizations, supporting a range of important social causes and issues. Here are just some of the organizations SJF supported in 2024:

## WOMEN'S PROGRAMS & GENDER EQUITY

---



- 100 Accomplished Black Canadian Women
- Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment
- Fred Victor's Women's Bakery
- The ShoeBox Project for Women
- Women's Health Clinic

## LGBTQ + RIGHTS

---



- EGale Canada
- Global Action for Trans Equality
- Observatorio Venezolano de Violencias LGBTQ+
- Qmunity
- Rainbow Railroad

## HOUSING, SHELTER AND ANTI-POVERTY

---



- Surrey Urban Mission
- Yonge Street Mission



# DONATIONS

## EQUITY AND ANTI-RACISM

---



- Black Education Fund
- Black Youth Helpline
- Urban Alliance on Race Relations

## WOMEN'S SHELTERS

---



- Anderson House
- Antigonish Women's Resource Centre
- Awo Taan Healing Lodge
- Barry House
- Bryony House
- Cornerstone Housing for Women
- Crossroads/YWCA Peterborough
- Hestia House
- Hope 24/7
- La Dauphinelle
- La Maison des Femmes de Quebec
- Monarch Place
- Sofia House
- Victoria Women's Transition House
- Willow Place

## DISABILITIES

---



- Association Sourires Adaptés
- Handi-Apte
- Independent Living Centre Kingston



# DONATIONS

## CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES

---



- Big Brother Big Sisters of Guelph
- Big Brother Big Sisters of Victoria
- Children's Foundation of Muskokoa
- Motivation Jeunesse 16/18 Inc.
- Scientists in Schools
- Youth Employment Services

## INDIGENOUS SOLIDARITY

---

- Feather Carriers
- Creating Hope for Society Alberta



## IMMIGRANT, MIGRANT AND REFUGEE SERVICES

---



- Al Otro Lado
- Immigrant Women's Services Ottawa
- Last Hope Refugee Association
- Migrante Canada

# DONATIONS

## FOOD SECURITY

---



- Edmonton's Food Bank
- Essex Area Food Bank
- Feed Nova Scotia
- Food Bank of Waterloo Region

- Greener Village Food Bank
- Hamilton Food Share
- Harvest Hands Canada
- Harvest Manitoba
- Labrador Friendship Center
- Moisson Laurentides
- Moisson Montreal
- Mustard Seed Food Bank
- North York Harvest Food Bank
- Richmond Food Bank Society
- Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre
- Sudbury Food Bank
- Upper Room Hospitality Ministry
- Whitehorse Food Bank

## LABOUR AND HUMAN RIGHTS

---



- BC Civil Liberties Association
- Centre International de Solidarité Ouvrière
- Friends of Chinatown Toronto
- Gambia Press Union
- LabourStart Canada
- Proyecto de Derechos Economicos, Sociales y Culturales
- Solidarity of Asian Trade Union Foundation
- Worker Solidarity Network

# DONATIONS

## SOCIAL & COMMUNITY SERVICES

---



- Family Services of Greater Vancouver
- Malvern Family Resource Centre
- United Way British Columbia
- United Way Niagara
- YMCA of Northern Alberta

## ARTS, CULTURE, MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS

---



- Art Heart
- Common Threads Community Chorus
- Mackenzie Community Arts Council
- RadioLabour
- Theatre of the Beat
- Tyee Independent Media Society



# GET IN TOUCH



**@UniforHRInternational**



**@UniforHR\_Intn**



**sjf@unifor.org**



Unifor  
**Social  
Justice  
Fund**

Unifor  
**Fonds  
de justice  
sociale**

**Charitable registration #: 135323756RR0001**