STEELWORKERS HUMANITY FUND UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2023

BUILDING SOLIDARITY BETWEEN **THE MEXICAN AND CANADIAN** LABOUR MOVEMENTS AND BEYOND

Mexican unionists meet Local 9700 members at ABI Bécancour.

For many decades in Mexico, it was virtually impossible to form a genuine union due to collusion between employers, the government and company-controlled unions. Workers petitioning to unionize confronted huge legal obstacles and the threat of violence. Since 2019, labour reforms under Mexico's progressive national government have created new protections, as have provisions in the Canada-US-Mexico Agreement, enabling workers to file complaints against companies in Mexico that export to the USA or Canada.

This context has created an opening for organizing. Through house visits, workshops, public forums, radio broadcasts and podcasts, labour activists in Mexico have been working hard to raise awareness of the new reform and how to use it. For two years now, USW allies including the Border Workers' Committee (CFO), the Authentic Labour Front (FAT), the Mine, Metal and Steel Workers Union (Los Mineros) and the Network of Union Women (RMS) have been supported in their efforts by the Steelworkers Humanity Fund and the Canadian Labour Congress, PSAC Social Justice Fund, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Centre International de Solidarité Ouvrière (CISO) – with funding from Employment and Social Development Canada.

As part of its objectives, the Mexico Labour Solidarity Project aims to build solidarity between unions in Canada and Mexico. In this context, in March 2023, a delegation of Canadian unionists including USW National Director Marty Warren travelled to the industrial city of Torreón and to the Mexican capital. Shortly after, in April and May 2023, Mexican unionists attended the USW National Policy Conference, before meeting unionists in Ottawa and around Montreal, where they were hosted by Local 9700 on a tour of the ABI Bécancour aluminum plant. Across the many meetings during these delegations, bonds of solidarity were strengthened, and new plans were made for cross-border projects.

Canadian Women of Steel activists with female workers from Peru, Bolivia, and Mexico during the 2023 SHF Women Delegation to Mexico.

Earlier this month, as part of the SHF Women's International Solidarity Program, a delegation of women workers in traditionally predominantly male sectors including mining and manufacturing traveled to Mexico for a week.

Activists from District 3, 5 and 6 met with women workers from Bolivia and Peru, who in projects with the SHF confront gender-based violence and advocate for workplace health and safety, as well as Mexican labour activists doing similar work.

Under globalization, multinational corporations and trade agreements have often placed workers around the world in a race to the bottom to attract or retain jobs. As unionists, we are building international solidarity to raise standards and conditions for all. More exciting work lies ahead for the second half of the Mexico Labour Solidarity Project.

Labour organizers show the gap between workers' wages and the cost of everyday goods (in pesos) in northern Mexico.

To learn more about the Steelworkers Humanity Fund

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