



Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Office of International Labor Affairs

Supporting Worker Rights Global Labor Programs at a Glance

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) funds a range of innovative projects to advance labor rights and empower workers throughout the world. These projects complement the Bureau's initiatives to advance labor diplomacy and engage with governments and civil society on labor issues. DRL's labor-related programs focus on building the capacity of independent worker organizations, increasing labor compliance in global supply chains, improving livelihoods for vulnerable populations, and promoting social dialogue to support democratic practices and inclusion of civil society in the political process.

Labor Programs at a Glance

DRL's early programming began with an earmark from Congress, funded between 2000-2005 for the Partnership to Eliminate Sweatshops Program (PESP), and focused on supporting the development of approaches to combat sweatshop labor in overseas factories that produce for the U.S. market. As part of PESP, DRL managed approximately 43 projects throughout the world to improve working conditions and ensure a safe and healthy workplace environment for workers. The vast majority of DRL's current labor programs are funded through the Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) – DRL's flagship program for advancing human rights and democracy worldwide. DRL also oversees a number of projects in Central America funded with Economic Support Funds for trade-related capacity building related to the CAFTA-DR trade agreement.

DRL also partners with foreign governments to advance collaborative and new approaches to technical assistance, and to support initiatives and programs that promote South-South cooperation. For example, the U.S. and Brazil recently partnered to jointly combat exploitative child labor practices in Haiti. This initiative will not only address a pressing labor concern in Haiti but will also further strengthen the relationships between the governments of Brazil, Haiti and the U.S.

Current Global Labor Programs

As of May 2011, DRL funds over 20 labor-related programs in over 17 countries worldwide. Some current projects focus on:

- Protecting children and youth from exploitative child labor practices during the recovery and reconstruction phase in Haiti;
- Improving labor conditions and understanding of internationally recognized worker rights in Burma;
- Fostering labor law compliance in Vietnam's garment and footwear sectors;
- Increasing protection of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia by building important linkages between human rights and business communities;
- Promoting democracy by supporting independent, democratic trade unions in Egypt;
- Providing former child soldiers in Burundi with basic health and legal services, and vocational training, as well as assisting with their reintegration process;
- Promoting labor law compliance in the shrimp industry in Bangladesh;
- Building organizational and managerial capacity of Pakistani trade unions and worker organizations to address collective bargaining, dues collection, and recruitment strategies;
- Strengthening and institutionalizing tripartite social dialogue and internationally recognized worker rights in Colombia; and
- Promoting labor compliance and social dialogue, improving labor protections for migrant workers, and raising awareness on internationally recognized worker rights in the Central America region.

Contact For more information about the work of the State Department's Office of International Labor Affairs, please contact labor@state.gov.