



**Helping to build a better  
world for all working people**

*BCGEU's International  
Solidarity Committee*

June, 2009

# Why an international focus?

- because BCGEU members are part of a global community;
- concerns over human rights, social justice;
- for bread and butter reasons;
- because our jobs and services BCGEU members provide impacted by developments in other countries; and



BCGEU president Darryl Walker, Colombian union activist Fernanda Bolaños, and BCGEU VP Lorene Oikawa.

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# Why an international focus?

- ‘best practices’ to gain new ideas from the experiences of other unions/community and organizations;



BCGEU president Darryl Walker, Colombian activist Fernanda Bolaños, and BCGEU VP Lorene Oikawa.

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# How are we involved?

- the CLC speaks officially for Canadian labour internationally;
- all major Canadian unions have solidarity funds and committees;
- we build relationships through projects with unions and community;



Café Etico coffee growers Lesbia Sican Morales, left from Guatemala, and Doña Chon, right from Nicaragua meet with BCGEU's VP Colleen Jones and Nancy Gillis.



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# How are we involved?

- collaboration with Canadian-based groups and funding for their targeted projects in different parts of the world;
- emergency humanitarian assistance.



Café Etico coffee growers Lesbia Sican Morales, left from Guatemala, and Doña Chon, right from Nicaragua meet with BCGEU's VP Colleen Jones and Nancy Gillis.



# BCGEU IntSol Committee

- formed in 1999 by convention resolution;
- chaired by member of the Provincial Executive;
- other committee reps drawn from PE, rank and file;
- staff support assigned.



International Women's Day rally Managua  
Nicaragua, with BCGEU IWD poster at right.

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# Terms of reference

- boost awareness of international issues within the union and community;
- broaden contact and cooperation with women and men in other countries;
- involve interested members in international solidarity activities, exchange visits;



Burma Labour Solidarity Organization members and Thai workers attend a solidarity conference along the Thai/Burma border.



# Terms of reference

- work to improve education, social justice, trade union rights, human rights and living standards of people in other countries;
- develop proposals for the Provincial Executive for projects to fund from our solidarity fund;
- program administration.



Burma Labour Solidarity Organization members and Thai workers attend a solidarity conference along the Thai/Burma border.



# Our solidarity fund

- 10 cents per member per month designated by convention to fund projects and activities;
- about \$80,000 annually;
- named after retired treasurer Diane Wood, who was deeply committed to expanding the union's international links.



Stephen Lewis meets with grannies who care for the grandchildren orphaned by HIV/AIDS at a hospital in Lesotho. Anuroita Bains photo.



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# Our projects

## MEC

Maria Elena Cuadra

Movement for Employed  
and Unemployed Women,

Nicaragua <http://www.mec.org.ni/>

- helps organize/empower women to deal with discrimination in the family, the workplace and society in general;



Nicaraguan women attending MEC congress in Managua. MEC has worked diligently to improve women's incomes and rights on the job and in the community.

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# Our Projects

## MEC

**Maria Elena Cuadra  
Movement for Employed  
and Unemployed Women,  
Nicaragua** <http://www.mec.org.ni/>

- has had significant success winning legal protections for women workers in Nicaragua's maquila factories—modern day sweatshops owned by multinationals.



Nicaraguan women attending MEC congress in Managua. MEC has worked diligently to improve women's incomes and rights on the job and in the community.

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# Our Projects

## Honduran Women's Collective (CODEMUH)

- campaigned successfully to amend that country's labour code to strengthen health and safety protections for women workers in *maquilas*;



Against tremendous odds, the Honduran Women's Collective has made headway providing health and safety training for women to make their work safer in foreign owned maquila factories.

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# Our Projects

## Honduran Women's Collective (CODEMUH)

- provides training programs on labour rights, domestic violence, and health and safety.



Against tremendous odds, the Honduran Women's Collective has made headway providing health and safety training for women to make their work safer in foreign owned maquila factories.

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# Our Projects

## APSIES

### El Salvador Rural Health Initiatives

- social services and health care aren't offered in rural areas in El Salvador;
- APSIES offers a variety of programs including health promotion, community development and prevention of domestic violence.



APSIES health promoters at a clinic in Lolotique, El Salvador.



# Our Projects

## **NOMADESC**

**Association for Investigation and Social Action, Colombia**

- provides human rights training for public sector trade union members and community activists in Colombia's second biggest city, Cali.



BCGEU was part of a tour to Colombia to find out more about NOMADESC and its work to protect basic human rights in a country where state-sponsored violence makes community activism a dangerous pursuit.

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# Our Projects

- **Partners in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia**

[www.partnersinthehorn.org/](http://www.partnersinthehorn.org/)

- Canadian-based NGO that focuses on infrastructure improvement, health and welfare and women's anti-poverty projects in Ethiopia;
- much of its work is in rural areas.



Partners in the Horn of Africa works in Ethiopia building infrastructure projects like new bridges to deal with rainy season flooding and make communities more secure.



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# Our Projects

## Stephen Lewis Foundation

[www.stephenlewisfoundation.org/](http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org/)

- supports community-based organizations that are turning the tide of HIV/AIDS in Africa;
- focus on funding programs that care for women who are ill, helps orphans and AIDS-affected children, and supports grandmothers who care for their orphan grandchildren.



Children gather at a mental health healing service near Johannesburg for AIDS/HIV orphans. Liz Marshall photo.

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# Our Projects

## Burma Labour Solidarity Organization

[www.burmasolidarity.org/](http://www.burmasolidarity.org/)

- the organization provides support for Burmese workers to protect their rights and living standards in a country ruled by a ruthless military dictatorship for more than 40 years;



Burmese migrant garment factory workers in Mae Sot Thailand, on the Burma border. They work a minimum of 11 hours a day for about \$3.

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# Our Projects

## Burma Labour Solidarity Organization

[www.burmasolidarity.org/](http://www.burmasolidarity.org/)

- BCGEU helps fund a workers' safe house for organizing and training initiatives.



Burmese migrant garment factory workers in Mae Sot Thailand, on the Burma border. They work a minimum of 11 hours a day for about \$3.

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# Our Projects

## Acorn International Waste Pickers Organizing Project, Dehli, India

[www.acorninternational.org/](http://www.acorninternational.org/)

- Acorn is working to help thousands of waste pickers and informal garbage recyclers in India's capital organize to improve wages and conditions.



There are about 300,000 rag pickers in Dehli alone. While they play an important recycling role, they face regular harassment from Indian officials.



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# Our Partner CoDev

## CoDevelopment Canada

[www.codev.org](http://www.codev.org)

- we're part of CoDev, a Vancouver-based NGO that partners unions and community groups in the North and the South;



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# Our Partner CoDev

## CoDevelopment Canada

[www.codev.org](http://www.codev.org)

- it's the backbone for a range of projects that expand workers' rights, strengthen community organizing, build solidarity for public education, and expand our understanding of international issues.



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# Café Etico

[www.etico.ca](http://www.etico.ca)

- part of CoDev, Café Etico sells premium organic fair trade coffee, tea and other products in B.C.;
- Café Etico is Canada's only unionized coffee distributor;



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# Café Ético

- it forms long lasting relationships with small scale coffee farmers and producer cooperatives in Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico and Nicaragua;
- for ordering information, contact David Noble, BCGEU 604 291-9611.



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