

CUPE / Canadian Union
of Public Employees

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY REPORT 2013-2014



OUR GLOBAL VILLAGE

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Paul Macik.



Charles Fleming.

Worker to worker solidarity is a founding principal in the labour movement that has brought workers together from all corners of the globe. It is the maxim we follow in our global justice work.

In Canada, CUPE members share cause for concern with workers around the world. Our every day life is shaped not only by decisions our employers make, but also by global policies that aim to reduce the rights of workers and their unions to the lowest common denominator.

Globally, workers share the experience of growing economic inequality, attacks on trade union rights, escalating repression, and in some countries risks to personal safety including death. During these challenging times our solidarity is our strength. Our solidarity with the global labour movement and our support for the struggles waged by our sisters and brothers internationally continues to be a priority for CUPE.

The power of collective action from Turkey to Brazil, South Africa to Spain inspires and stokes the flame of hope. People are rising up to demand justice and democracy. They want full access to water, education, health care and the right to join a union. Citizen participation as monitors in the Honduran elections help to ensure the process is fair and free from violence. In other cases, community participation builds on people's strength in opposing corruption and foreign interference in the electoral systems.

This past year, we mourned the loss of former South African President Nelson Mandela. Through his leadership and activism in the African National Congress, even from a prison cell, Mandela inspired many South Africans and became the face of the global movement to end apartheid. International solidarity was critical to that movement. Workers and their unions around the world took courageous positions against apartheid despite pressure from employers and governments, including the government of Canada.

CUPE continues to stand in solidarity with the most oppressed peoples globally. The role of the Canadian government internationally has changed dramatically under the Conservative government of Stephen Harper. Canadian foreign policy has garnered mistrust from our allies. Canada's changing military, diplomatic and economic role has brought a new kind of urgency to the global justice work we do. Whether it is raising awareness about health and safety for garment workers or sharing experiences and strategies with our sister union in the UK, we act locally and think globally.

In this annual report, you will read about worker-to-worker projects that bring together unions and social movement organizations in the Philippines, Burma, Nicaragua, Colombia, Honduras and Cuba. The report also looks at the current state of international trade deals and Canadian foreign policy decisions.

We thank CUPE locals and divisions who continue to contribute to the Global Justice Fund and encourage others to do so.



CONVENTION 2013 QUEBEC CITY

**FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE
BUILDING INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY**



**AT THE HEART OF CUPE'S
INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM
IS THE SOLIDARITY AND
COMMITMENT WE EXPRESS
TO OUR SISTERS AND
BROTHERS GLOBALLY.**

Global justice partners from around the world participated in our 26th National Convention in Quebec City in 2013. CUPE invited international guests from the labour movement in the UK, Philippines, South Africa, and Honduras. Public Services International also joined CUPE members for presentations and discussions about the conditions of workers and social movements around the world. Delegates tackled the question of how best we can support each other in our respective struggles.

The attack on union rights is currently the number one priority for public sector unions in every part of the world. That was the message from Rosa Pavanelli, General Secretary of Public Services International (PSI). Pavanelli told delegates the recent financial crisis created by bankers and speculators led to attacks on public services and the union movement. She praised CUPE for taking stands on a broad range of issues not limited to the employment conditions of members. Those stands, Pavanelli argued, create bonds and community with the public that will help in CUPE's efforts to battle attacks on public services.

It is clear as we emerge from the recent global economic crisis, economic inequality is growing and the rich continue to get richer. Workers in Canada face increasing repression and significant attacks on trade union rights. Our

guests spoke about the urgent need for solidarity. Their message was clear: we are all facing the downward spiral of our rights. The cause is also clear: government policies favouring corporate profits rather than supporting workers' demands for fair compensation and respecting the work they do.

Trade union repression is rampant in the Philippines where activists and organizers are being detained and killed for standing up for their rights. Privatization and lack of access to affordable services are denying South Africans' access to water and electricity in the most impoverished communities. In Honduras, women workers are facing outrageous exploitation in factories producing clothing for some of the richest multi-national corporations in the world. Governments in the UK are imposing austerity measures in the same way the federal, provincial and municipal governments are imposing them in Canada.

International solidarity is key to developing successful strategies in defending workers' rights. To ensure that CUPE's work continues delegates adopted our strategic directions paper and passed Resolution 181. The resolution calls for a strategic meeting to be held in 2014 to consider CUPE's international solidarity work and how to stabilize and grow the global justice fund moving forward.



INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

UN Commission on the Status of Women

Women called for universal free education and access to the basic guarantees of social protection at the 58th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women from March 10 to 21, 2014. Representatives from trade unions around the world gathered in New York City to lobby governments at the UN Commission. They identified that decent work for women and living wages are essential to improve the lives of millions of women globally.

Women expressed grave concerns with the reductions to budgets supporting public services in response to the global economic crisis. These cuts increase poverty and have a disproportionately negative impact on women and girls.

For more information, see <http://unioncsw.world-psi.org>

Public Services International

CUPE National President Paul Moist and National Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury joined Public Services International (PSI) North American affiliates in Washington, D.C. in January to discuss their struggles to defend labour rights, international solidarity, and strategies to fight back.

Legislative attacks as well as the impact of free trade and privatization on public sector workers were at the forefront of the discussion.

CUPE is eager to continue working with PSI as it increases its focus on solidarity campaigns, increased visibility to the public and lawmakers, joint actions and information exchanges.

World Outgames

The World Outgames Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Human Rights Conference in Antwerp, Belgium was a great opportunity to listen to amazing keynote speakers such as LGBT Cameroonian rights lawyer Alice N'Kom.

A delegation of activists including Annaliese Hunt CUPE 7000, Audrey Gauthier CUPE 4041 and Sajid Sheikh CUPE 4092, with staffing support from Michael Butler (Executive Assistant to the National Secretary-Treasurer), participated in the conference in summer 2013.

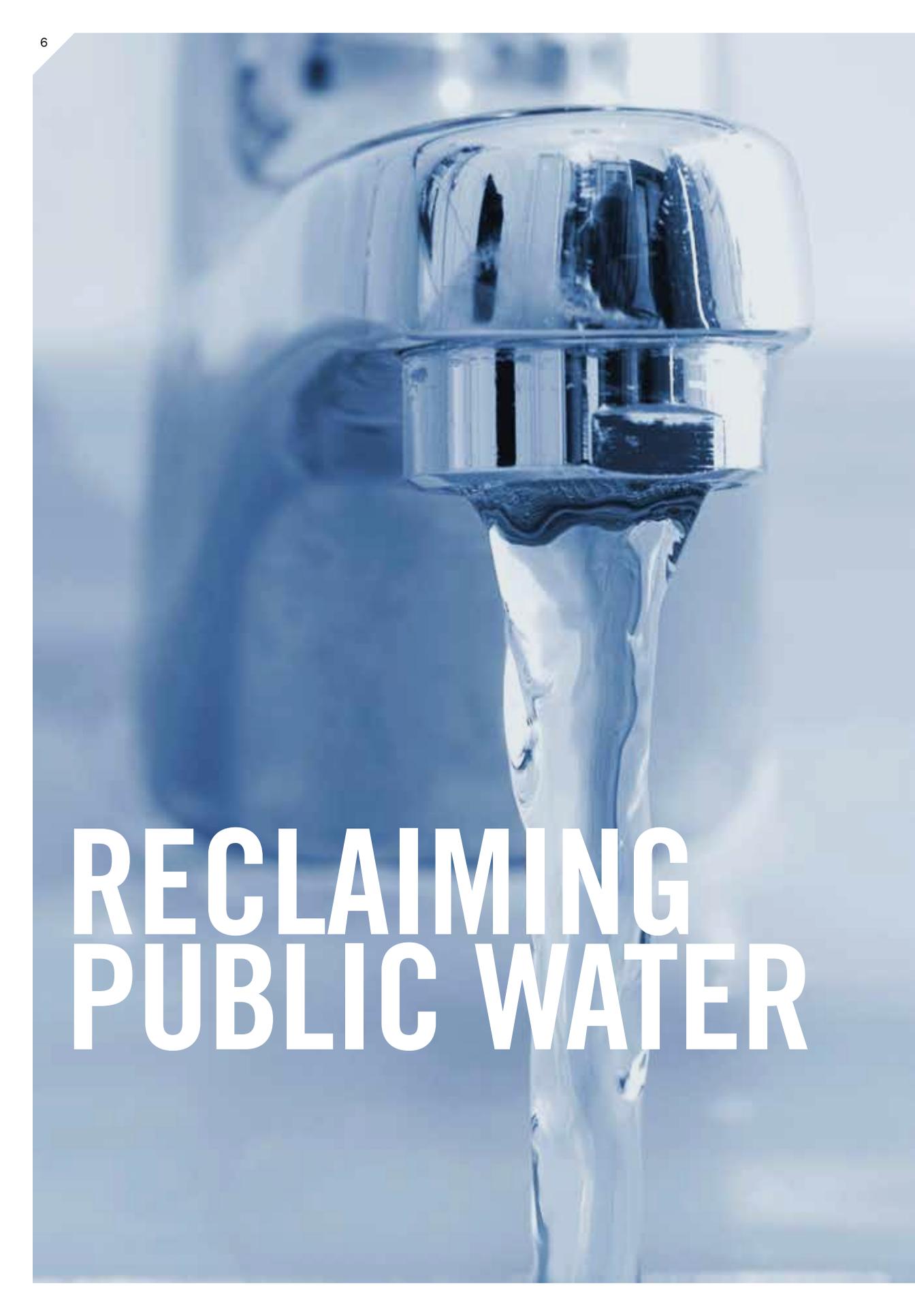
The delegation gave a lunch-hour presentation on transphobic harassment and discrimination in employment and health care services in Canada.

Delegates participated in discussions with other grassroots activists and networked with sisters and brothers from around the world. Over 70 countries were represented at the conference, from Asia to South America, South Africa to the northern countries.

Activists talked about their personal fights, stories and sometimes, successes. The conference was organized around plenary sessions and workshops with topics ranging from health for the LGBT community to unions and LGBT rights.

American Federation of State and Municipal Employees

CUPE continues to work with the American Federation of State and Municipal Employees (AFSME) to exchange ideas and strategies to protect and expand the public pension system in Canada and the United States. AFSME participated in CUPE's National Bargaining Conference in 2013 to share broad fight back strategies to combat attempts to curtail our right to organize and belong to a trade union by too many political leaders and the corporate elite. Our solidarity is our strength.

A close-up, blue-tinted photograph of a water faucet. The faucet is made of polished metal and has a single drop of water falling from its spout. The background is blurred, showing other faucets in a public restroom or kitchen. The overall mood is clean and focused on the water itself.

RECLAIMING PUBLIC WATER

INTERNATIONALLY, CUPE IS REGARDED AS A UNION COMMITTED TO TAKING ON THE ISSUES OF WATER PRIVATIZATION AND SUPPORTING PUBLIC WATER CAMPAIGNS.

Barcelona

What public and community democratic control means for water was the hot topic of discussion at a water meeting in Barcelona, Spain in November 2013. The question was particularly relevant in relation to drinking water, sanitation, upstream or watershed issues as well as industrial and agricultural water use.

Under the banner of the Reclaiming Public Water Network, 50 participants from civil society, trade union activists, academics, and water operators from 29 countries, met to strategize about strengthening the global network for democratic public water provision.

Mary Catherine McCarthy, CUPE's anti-privatization coordinator, attended the meeting for CUPE. Canadian allies Meera Karunanathan, the Council of Canadians Blue Communities campaigner, and David McDonald from the Municipal Services Project at Queens University also attended.

Internationally, CUPE is regarded as a union committed to taking on the issues of water privatization and supporting public water campaigns. Keep water public campaigns are popping up in many countries as part of the resistance to austerity programs that include privatizing public services.

Water advocates highlighted campaigns to return water into public hands. These examples include success in Berlin and an initiative in Jakarta to have the government end the contract with the private operators. To date 86 communities worldwide have successfully re-municipalized their water services.

The conference also explored public-public partnerships (PuPs) as a form of new public water management. PuPs are in the public interest and offer an alternative to public-private partnerships (P3s) or corporate involvement.

Many who attended the Future of Public Water Strategy Session also attended the Global Water Operators Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA) congress that followed. This conference focussed on the advancement of non-profit partnership agreements between water utilities primarily in Europe and developing countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas. These partnerships may strengthen water operator capacity through sharing expertise and mentoring programs to improve water and sanitation services.



▲ INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, HONDURAS

PARTNER PROJECTS

WOMEN WORKERS MAKE GAINS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Shouts of joy and celebration rang out at the annual forum held by CUPE partner, MEC (the Maria Elena Cuadra Movement of Employed and Unemployed Women) in Managua, Nicaragua in March. One thousand women, including small delegations from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras and hundreds of Nicaraguan maquila (sweatshop) workers were present to officially adopt the Labour Rights Agenda for Women Maquila Workers. The Agenda was two years in the making and involved more than 4,000 Central American maquila workers debating and discussing their priorities and strategies.

The result is a concise and remarkable document that outlines the six priority themes for the maquila workers. Those six include the right to occupational health and safety, the right to sexual and reproductive health and the right to not be subjected to physical violence, sexual harassment or bullying at work. The recommendations were read aloud at the forum, and the women enthusiastically approved the report. Government and labour leaders were invited to officially receive their copy of the Women's Agenda and to commit to helping fulfill the recommendations. It was a day to recognize achievements, gain political support for the Agenda and celebrate the empowerment of women workers in Central America.

A delegation of Canadian union members organized by CoDevelopment Canada (CoDev) was fortunate to attend the MEC Forum. The delegation included CUPE representatives Susan Blair, CUPE BC General Vice-President; Dianne Frittenburg, CUPE 1933 President and CUPE Nova Scotia Secretary-Treasurer, and Joëlle Ravary, Interim President St. Laurent Region CUPE 1500 and member of the CUPE National Women's Committee. The event marked 20 years of working together in solidarity for CUPE and MEC.

In 1994, when a handful of Nicaraguan women workers and activists decided it was time to organize women in the maquila sector, they were ostracized, threatened and physically assaulted. They approached CoDev who recognized the urgent need to support these women to work in the free trade zones where labour violations were rife. CUPE BC agreed to work with CoDev and formed a partnership with MEC that continues today. CUPE National has been part of this partnership with CUPE BC since 1999.

The Canadian delegation also travelled to Honduras to meet with CUPE partner, the Honduran Women's Collective (CODEMUH) whose main focus is on occupational health and safety rights for maquila workers.



FERDIE GAITE OF COURAGE AT
THE CUPE NATIONAL CONVENTION,
QUEBEC CITY



Philippines

COURAGE

The Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (COURAGE) is the largest labour confederation in the Philippines with over 200,000 members. They are currently campaigning to expose corruption and oppose privatization. COURAGE continues to push for real public services and for the release of several political prisoners.

In 2013, CUPE led a worker-to-worker solidarity mission to investigate human rights violations in the Philippines. The delegation included representatives from the Public Services Alliance of Canada and the Ontario Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines. The delegation worked closely with the leadership of COURAGE, CUPE's Filipino partner. The delegation visited with public sector workers to investigate the rising attacks on unionized government employees, organizers and rights defenders.

The fact-finding mission was initiated by COURAGE following the politically motivated killing of six of its leaders over the past five years. According to the respected human rights organization Karapatan, there have been 169 victims of extra-judicial killings, 19 cases of enforced disappearances and 570 cases of illegal arrest under the current Aquino government. This includes two COURAGE national organizers, Randy Vegas and Raul Camposano, who have been detained since Dec. 3, 2012.

Counter insurgency programs designed to justify extra judicial killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detention of activists throughout the country have increased. This oppressive military program is designed to suppress legitimate resistance, including the right to organize trade unions and exert workers' right to collectively organize.

The campaign to demand the release of COURAGE organizers Vegas and Camposano is part of a nationwide campaign calling for the release of hundreds more prisoners.

The delegation committed to raising awareness in Canada about the human rights violations public sector workers endure at the hands of the Philippines government.

Alliance of Concerned Teachers

CUPE's partner in the education sector the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) has recently won recognition as the sole and exclusive bargaining agent of 60,000 teachers in the National Capital Region of the Philippines. They are now preparing to negotiate their first collective agreement. They are actively campaigning against the imposition of P3s, private school voucher systems, and a desperate lack of resources. ACT continues to advocate on broad political issues including challenging the increasing US military presence in the Philippines and the government proposal to allow 100 per cent foreign ownership of property and land.



GLOBAL JUSTICE IN ACTION 2012-2013

USA

Project: AIDS free world Advocating for more urgent and effective global responses to HIV and AIDS – CUPE BC

Letter of complaint to FirstEnergy Corporation regarding the lockout of members of the Utility Workers Union of America in Pennsylvania

Letter to Barack Obama, President of the USA, regarding appeal to exercise his power to release all “Cuban 5”

CUBA

Letter of solidarity on the occasion of the Central de Trabajadores XX Congress

Project: Strengthening solidarity between Cuban Public Sector Union (SNTAP) and CUPE BC

GUATEMALA

Letter to Ambassador George De La Roche regarding trade unionists murdered in Guatemala

Letter to Guatemalan President Otto Pérez Molina regarding 58 murdered trade unionists

HONDURAS

Project: CODEMUH Empowering women maquila workers in occupational health and safety and strengthening the Central American Women’s Network

NICARAGUA

Project: Capacity building and training in negotiation and conflict resolution for the Maria Elena Cuadra Movement of Employed and Unemployed Women

COLOMBIA

Project: CUPE NS, NL and Labrador and SINTRACUAVALLE community support against privatization of Water

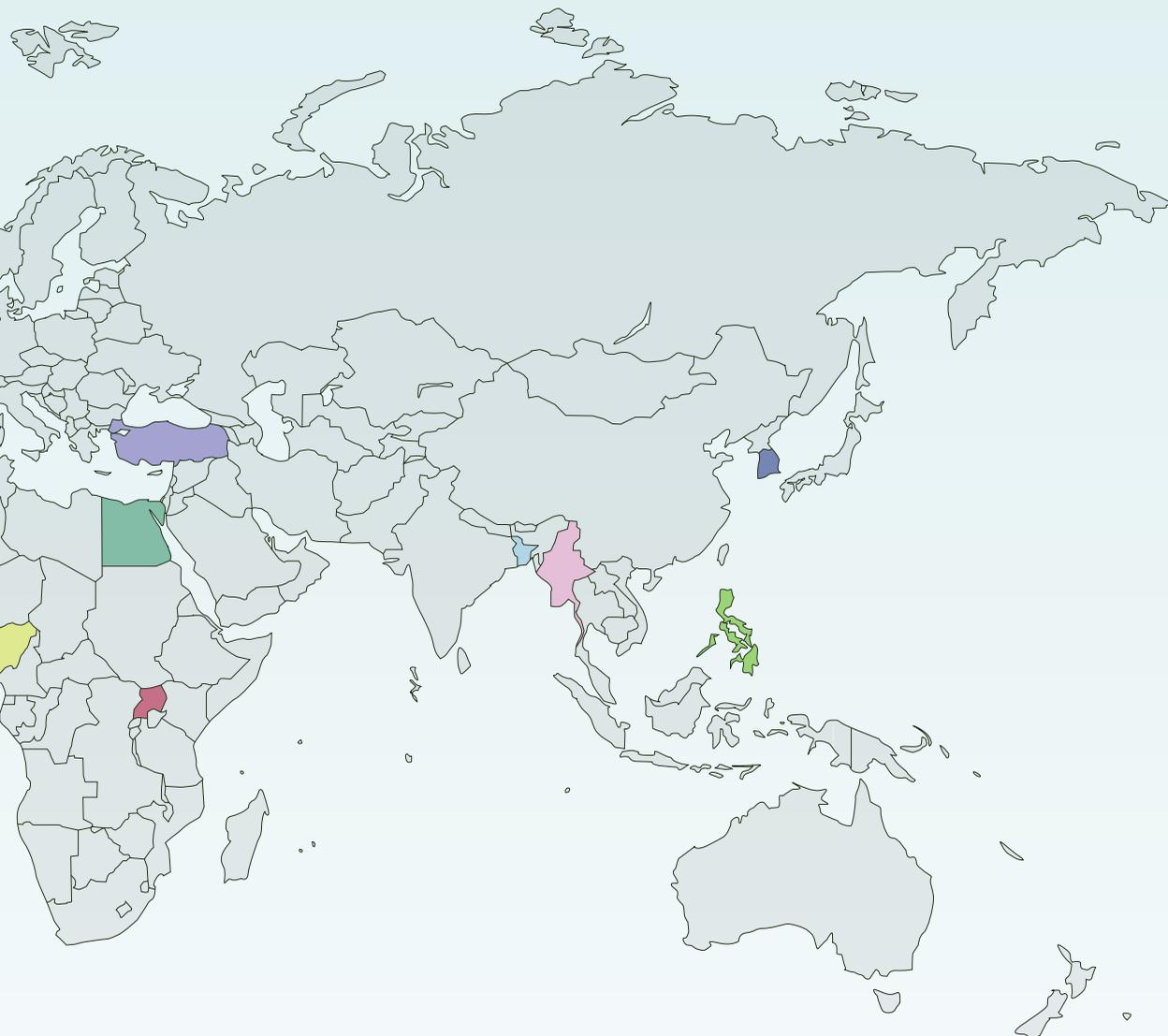
Project: NOMADESC defending human rights with trade unionists in Cali, Colombia.

BRAZIL

Letter of solidarity to São Paulo State Health Workers of Brazil

TURKEY

Letter to Turkish Prime Minister regarding trials against trade unionists and attacks on the Confederation of Public Sector Workers’ Unions (KESK)



NIGERIA

Letter to Jason Kenny, Minister of Immigration, regarding Nigerian Students Victoria Ordu and Ikuama Amadi who were facing deportation from Canada

EGYPT

Letter to John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs, regarding two detained Canadians, Tarek Loubani, MD and John Greyson, filmmaker

UGANDA

Letter of concern to Prime Minister Stephen Harper regarding Uganda anti-homosexuality bill

BANGLADESH

Letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper regarding the Rana Plaza building collapse in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Trade Union/Parliamentary solidarity delegation to mark the 1st Anniversary of the Rana Plaza building collapse

MYANMAR (BURMA)

Project: Building the capacity of human rights defenders from Burma, Phase V

SOUTH KOREA

Letter to the South Korean President regarding the urgent need to respect workers' rights

Message of solidarity to The Korean Public & Social Services and Transportation Workers' Union, Education workers Solidarity Division (KPTU-EdSol)

PHILIPPINES

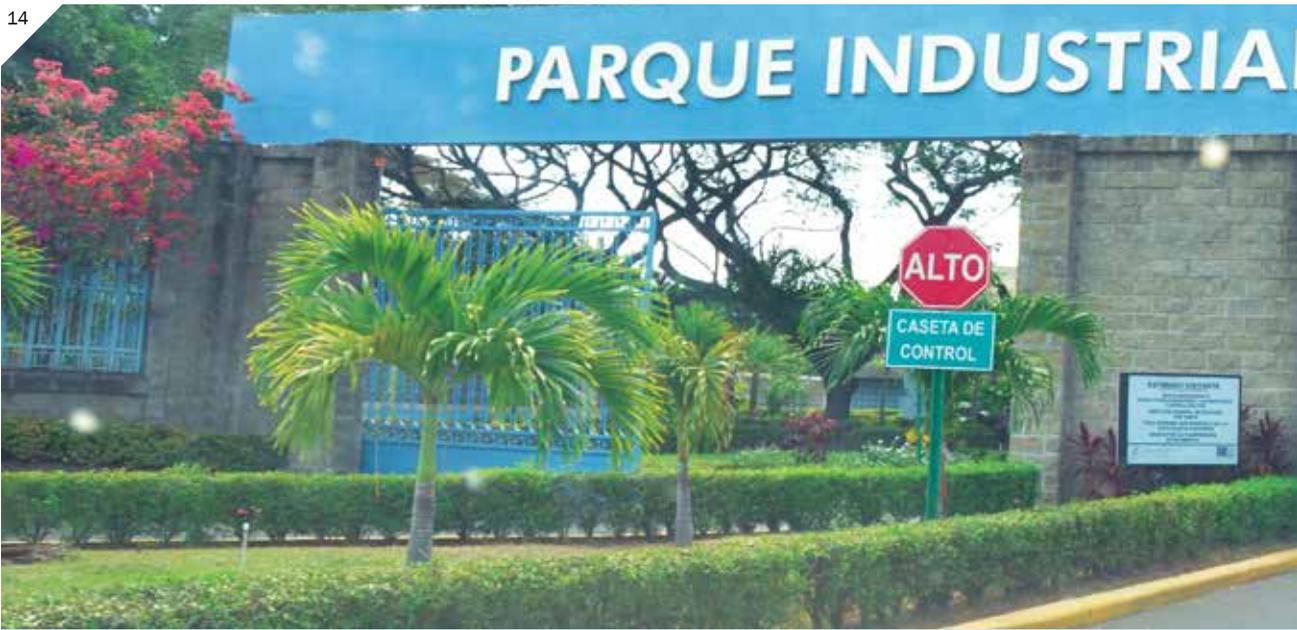
Project: Defending human rights in the Philippines: A continuing Worker to Worker Solidarity Project – Phase VI
COURAGE International Fact Finding Mission

Message of solidarity to the Water System Employees' Response Congress

Donation for relief and rehabilitation efforts after Typhoon Haiyan

Letter to Secretary Leila Delima, Department of Justice in the Philippines regarding the release of detained COURAGE organizers

PARQUE INDUSTRIAL



Myanmar (Burma)

Following the democratic reforms of 2010, Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) has allowed many activists and advocacy organizations to enter the country more easily.

CUPE, in partnership with CUSO International and VSO, has been working to support the democracy movement on the Thai-Myanmar border for several years. With the increased freedom of travel, more activities are taking place inside Myanmar and many organizations have already moved their offices into the country. Others maintain their presence outside the country, in Thailand.

While the situation in Myanmar is generally improving in the economic centre Yangon (formerly known as Rangoon), some of these positive changes have not yet reached the ethnic areas, including Kachin State and Arakan State. These areas continue to witness military and ethnic conflict and human rights violations.

International donors have shifted their priorities and have reduced or cancelled funding for organizations on the Thai-Myanmar border under the mistaken impression these organizations are able to operate free from repression inside Myanmar.

CUPE's global justice project, *Building the capacity of human rights defenders from Burma*, is now being supported by the Burmese Women's Union (BWU) located in Thailand, following the decision of our partner VSO to relocate their office inside Myanmar. The BWU works in Thailand to promote the role of women in Myanmar and to increase the contribution of women in the struggle for democracy, human rights and establishment of a genuine democratic federal union. We are grateful for their support to ensure our project in 2013/2014 continues to support organizations working on issues of land rights, women's role in society and basic rights such as access to education and health care.

Cuba

NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION WORKERS

This is a time of change in Cuba, as the economy opens to private enterprise. This means that workers are allowed to be "self-employed" in certain sectors, according to a list of 178 "allowed" jobs. Many of these self-employed workers are members of the National Union of Public Administration Workers (SNTAP). Changes to the labour code are on the way, and all unions, including SNTAP, will have to train their workers and leaders on its interpretation. CUPE's continued support for training facilities and materials remain relevant and valuable in this changing environment.

CoDevelopment Canada is coordinating a shipment of office supplies and equipment to SNTAP for their local training classrooms. The project of shipping much-needed goods to SNTAP began in 2012. The project has gone through some difficulties over the years, because the Cuban economy and natural disasters made project purchases difficult. CoDev anticipates that the goods will reach Cuba in the next few months.

L LAS MERCEDES



MAQUILA ZONE IN HONDURAS ▲

Colombia

SINTRACUAVALLE

CUPE's global justice project, "Community Work to Defend Public Water" with SINTRACUAVALLE, the water workers union in the Colombian province of Valle de Cauca is supported by CUPE Nova Scotia and CUPE Newfoundland & Labrador and continues to gain strength and momentum. High

NEARLY 95 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE, MAKING THE PUBLIC WATER COMPANY A VITAL SERVICE TO ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

levels of violence due to an ongoing civil war affect the region and drug trafficking has led to high rates of unemployment and poverty. Nearly 95 per cent of the population live below the poverty line, making the public water company a vital service to all community members who would be unable to afford the service otherwise.

SINTRACUAVALLE has decided to focus on two main areas of work: educating their customer base to empower them to take up the anti-privatization struggle and, secondly, building alliances

with small community water systems, with workers at the regional environment agency, and with other community leaders. Over the past 12 years, SINTRACUAVALLE has been working to maintain ACUAVALLE as a public company, fighting off five serious privatization attempts. Their fight has meant death threats and harassment of their members.

NOMADESC

NOMADESC, with financial support from the CUPE Global Justice Fund and CUPE BC, works to continue to defend the rights of Colombian communities and trade unionists through education, advocacy and mobilization. Delegates to the 2014 CUPE Saskatchewan Convention added their support by passing the hat for donations to NOMADESC that were matched by CUPE Saskatchewan and CUPE National.

NOMADESC is an integral part of human rights work in the southwest region of the country. The organization works directly with indigenous, afro-Colombian and campesino communities as well as unions, women and youth.

NOMADESC focuses on advocacy and human rights education, and its human rights diploma program. This engages community leaders to introductory level human rights education, as well as intermediate and specialized programs for graduates. Graduates from this intensive program become human rights promoters in their communities. They also form part of a regional network that works together to build connections between communities that have been torn apart by the conflict

NOMADESC continues the important task of working directly with victims of the conflict to help them gain access to the justice system.



INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

SISTERS GREETING EACH OTHER AT STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN EVENT, HONDURAS

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT, HONDURAS



ELECTIONS MONITORING IN HONDURAS

In 2009, Manuel Zelaya, the democratically elected president of Honduras, was deposed by the military and political elites who seized power. The rupture of democratic governance set the country back decades and today, Honduras is one of the countries with the most inequality in the region.

In November 2013, CUPE participated in a Common Frontiers-led delegation that included labour organizations, community groups, academics and a former chief of the Ardoch Algonquin First Nations. The delegation travelled to Honduras as official electoral observers, visiting various parts of the country and meeting with communities and groups that have felt the negative impact of Canadian investment in the region.

As in the past, the election was plagued by state violence, human rights violations, intimidation and fraud. Most independent observers condemned the elections and several political parties rejected and contested the results. Despite

its flaws, the election was nonetheless historic because, for the first time the decades old two party monopoly of the National and Liberal parties was broken and progressive parties such as LIBRE participated.

The Canadian government refuses to hold the Honduran government accountable for violating basic human rights. Instead it has taken advantage of the deteriorating conditions in the country to expand Canadian investment. In the Maquiladora factories, corporations like Gildan Activewear continue to accumulate huge profits from weak labour laws and substandard labour practices, including firing injured workers who suffer from debilitating work-related injuries

Honduras now suffers from a proliferation of corruption, poverty, state violence and militarization. Human rights, labour rights and democracy have been suppressed in return for corporate investment and free trade agreements.



▲
RANA PLAZA BUILDING COLLAPSE
APRIL 24, 2013
DHAKA, BANGLADESH



KALPONA AKTER OF THE BCWS

GARMENT WORKERS TOUR WITH KALPONA AKTER

Kalpona Akter started working as a garment worker when she was 12. She was fired at age 16 for trying to organize a union in her factory. Akter co-founded the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity (BCWS) in 2001, where labour rights and leadership training is offered to garment workers.

Following the Rana Plaza building collapse where almost 1,200 garment workers were killed in Bangladesh, Akter was invited by CUPE, the Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN) and the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) to travel across Canada from Nov. 24 to Dec. 6, 2013. The tour exposed Canadian corporate involvement in exploiting the poor working conditions in Bangladesh and garner support for the garment workers.

The BCWS is one of Bangladesh's most prominent labour rights advocacy organizations. It was founded in 2001 by a group of former garment workers who sought to change the abusive working conditions faced by women workers. The centre is regarded as among the most effective grassroots labour organizations in Bangladesh by the international labour rights movement and by multinational apparel companies.

During her tour, Akter was able to raise awareness among union members and the general population about the situation of garment workers and increase pressure on Canadian companies linked to the Rana Plaza building collapse to compensate victims.

The BCWS has been providing support to the victims of the Rana Plaza disaster. They are lobbying brands and retailers to sign the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh. CUPE has committed to continue the work Akter began while in Canada.

FOREIGN POLICY AND TRADE

CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY WHY WE NEED TO ACT

Canadian environmental and human rights advocacy organizations are experiencing an unprecedented level of harassment from the federal Conservative government. Organizations raising the alarm over the impact of the tar sands on the environment or those exposing human rights violations around the world are now facing scrutiny on the basis of their charitable status. They find themselves knee-deep in paperwork in order to comply with targeted Canadian Revenue Agency audits.

At issue are the political activities of these organizations with charity status. Do their activities fall within the “10% rule”? This rule dictates that charitable status can be revoked if organizations are spending more than 10 per cent of their funding to engage in political advocacy. Targeting the activities of our human rights and environmental

advocates is a tactic used by the federal Conservative government to silence opposition.

Canadian foreign policy has historically promoted human rights, peacekeeping, and humanitarian aid to support poorer nations, particularly in Africa. Today, Canadian diplomatic, trade and investment policies are being used to support the economic interests of the corporate sector. Whether it's control over oil resources in the Middle East or corporate profits for the mining sector in Central and South America, Canada's foreign policy has become single-minded in assisting corporate interests.

The 2013 federal budget announced that the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) would be merged within the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), explicitly tying corporate interests to development aid.

The federal conservative government has drawn criticism and condemnation from all corners of the planet for their refusal to address climate change. The government is aggressively lobbying

the European Union and the US to support the tar sands and dirty oil in an effort to secure international markets.

Canadian foreign policies have dire consequences for workers in other countries. It is in this context that non-governmental organizations feel targeted when they work to mitigate and expose the impact of these policies on communities around the world.

Trade and Investment

International trade and investment agreements, commonly referred to as Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), are proliferating globally. FTAs are agreements promoted by corporate business leaders to governments. They stand to profit where privatization and deregulation are imposed. FTAs undermine the public sector and strengthen corporate power to the detriment of the world's most vulnerable people.

In January 2014, activists from Canada, the US and Mexico gathered in Mexico City to expose the true impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on communities and workers.



▲
MEETING IN HONDURAS
REGARDING TRADE DEALS AND
THE MAQUILLA ZONES

They concluded that since the signing of NAFTA there has been a rise in inequality and impoverishment of the population, increased unemployment and environmental degradation.

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is being negotiated as a “next-generation” free trade deal that goes beyond NAFTA in shielding corporate activity from government controls. CUPE

THESE AGREEMENTS REMOVE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF OUR ECONOMY AND OUR SOCIETY BY WRITING LAWS THAT LIMIT OUR POLICY OPTIONS.

continues to strongly oppose CETA on the grounds that it impacts how local governments purchase goods and services, disrupts local economic development policies, increases the cost of pharmaceuticals, and will be subject to new trade disciplines and Investor State Dispute Settlement challenges, among others.

CETA is just the tip of the iceberg however, when it comes to

Canada’s support and promotion of free trade. Canada continues to be party to the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), a multi-lateral free trade agreement that is considered one of the most non-transparent and secretive trade negotiations in Canadian history. The agreement includes 12 nations: US, Japan, Australia, Peru, Malaysia, Vietnam, New Zealand, Chile, Singapore, Canada, Mexico, and Brunei Darussalam.

The goal of these agreements is to have corporate rule of state services and to deny access to those that cannot pay for them. These agreements remove democratic control of our economy and our society by writing laws that limit our policy options.

At the beginning of 2012, about 20 World Trade Organization members (including Canada) calling themselves “The Really Good Friends of

Services” (RGF) launched secret unofficial talks towards drafting a treaty that would further liberalize trade and investment in services. The new treaty is now referred to as the Trade In Service Agreement (TISA). TISA is an agreement that seeks to undermine public services through supporting privatization and deregulation. It also wants to adopt disciplines on how services sectors can be governed effectively, restricting governments’ and parliament’s rights to regulate. TISA represents a clear and present danger to the public sector in Canada.

The proposed agreement is the direct result of systematic advocacy by transnational corporations in banking, energy, insurance, telecommunications, transportation, and water sectors. CUPE continues to challenge the free trade agenda along side the Public Service International, Council of Canadians, Trade Justice Network, and Common Frontiers.

MOVING FORWARD

The resilience of workers around the world inspires hope. Shoulder to shoulder we stand united in our quest for good strong public services and respect for the work we do. We understand that public services are the great equalizer. Give a community clean public drinking water and you will have gone a long way to ensure the health of that community.

The value of a worker to his or her family is immeasurable, but for governments rife with corruption the value of a worker to his or her family is irrelevant. CUPE and its international partners will not let human rights violations go unnoticed. We will continue to sound the alarm on corporate aggression and human rights violations, as an injury to one is an injury to all.

Whether it is the courage to organize on issues of occupational health and safety in the maquila (free trade) zones in Honduras or the brave actions of our sisters and brothers in the Philippines to end corruption, CUPE's solidarity work with our partners is life altering. As we defend public water against privatization here in Canada, we are learning about successful strategies from our partners in Colombia and internationally, thereby helping to stem the tide of international privatization of water.

When CUPE members organize to welcome Bangladeshi garment workers to speak at community gatherings, we let Canadian companies know that we do not accept the exploitation of garment workers as a part of doing business, no matter where production is.

We live in a global village where the defence of public services against privatization is key to maintaining a strong quality of life. Our work with Public Services International helps inform our discussions and strategies. Together we work to promote public services and defend the rights of millions of workers around the world.

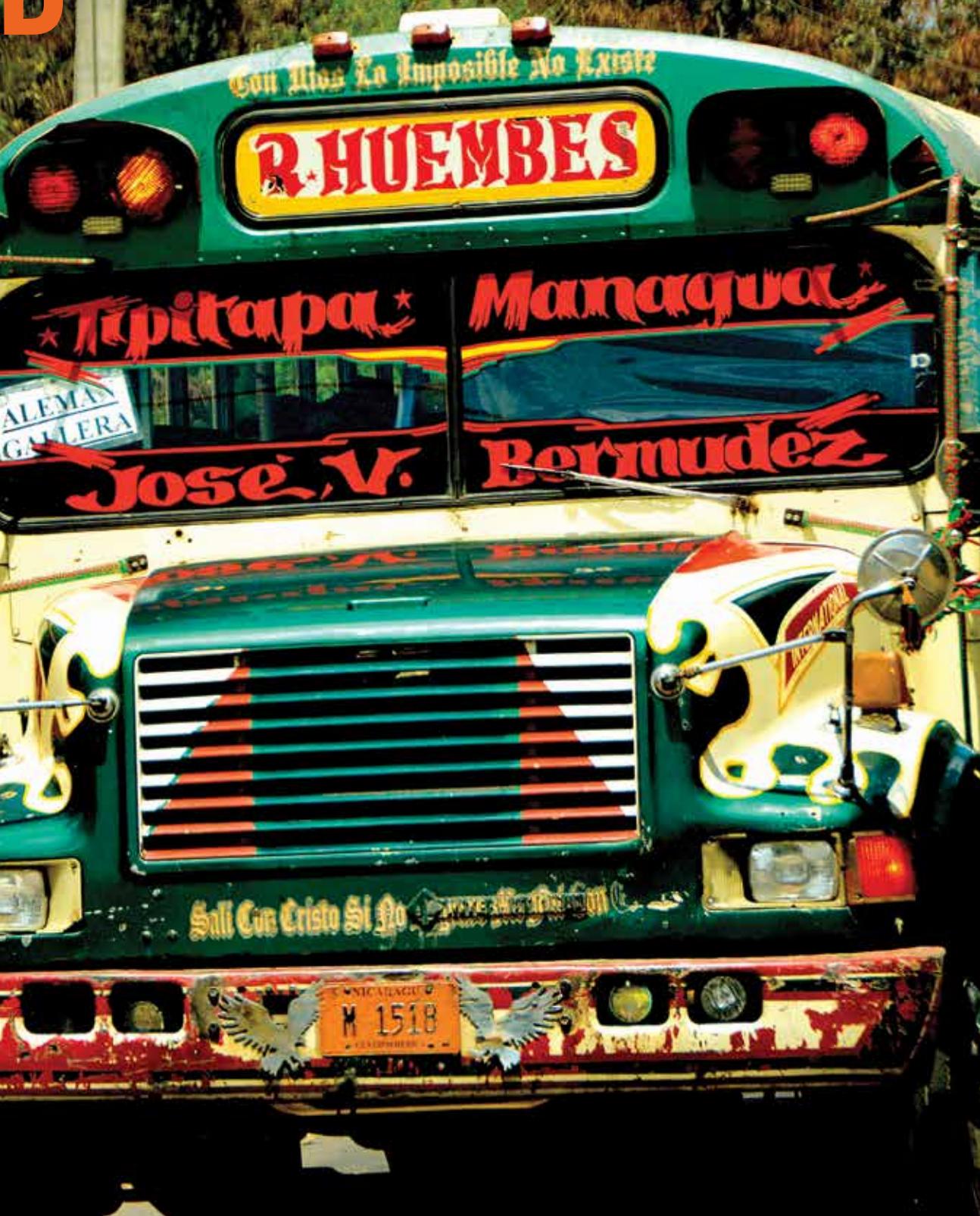
There is strength in our solidarity and strategy in our shared experience.

It may feel like the road ahead is an impossible one to walk when so much is happening right here in our own backyards. As Nelson Mandela said: It always seems impossible until it's done.

Learn more about CUPE's global justice work at cupe.ca/globaljustice



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▲ PERFORMER AT WOMEN'S DAY EVENT IN HONDURAS