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## Advancing labor rights through U.S. trade, programs, and partnerships



Bringing workers' voices to the table during trade negotiations, policy development, and diplomatic engagement.

Working collaboratively with governments, unions, civil society, and the private sector, we level the playing field for U.S. workers and businesses and promote decent work and labor rights for all workers.



Investing in the capacity of governments, employers, and unions to advance worker voice, labor rights, and decent work.

ILAB's Office of Trade and Labor Affairs (OTLA) advances labor rights around the world with all available tools – including leveraging labor commitments with U.S. trading partners, promoting strong labor safeguards in multilateral development bank financing, supporting technical assistance projects to strengthen worker rights, and leading U.S. cooperation with other governments.

### PROMOTING WORKER-CENTERED TRADE

Worker-centered trade creates a race to the top, reducing inequality and promoting shared prosperity by supporting workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Through these rights and action, worker organizations help reduce inequality, advance racial and gender equity, promote good jobs, and secure healthier and safer workplaces.



Advancing worker rights in global supply chains in partnership with governments and businesses.

OTLA represents the U.S. Department of Labor in trade negotiations, developing, monitoring, and enforcing country-specific labor obligations for our trading partners. Using labor provisions in U.S. trade agreements and trade preference programs, we ensure our partners uphold internationally recognized labor rights, including the enabling right for workers to self-advocate and collectively seek improvements in their wages and working conditions.

The strongest and most comprehensive trade agreement labor provisions are found in the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA); it includes a prohibition on the importation of goods made with forced labor, obligations to address gender discrimination in the workplace, migrant worker protections, and a provision to prevent violence against workers. With its many implementation tools to safeguard labor rights—among them extensive technical assistance, a web-based hotline to report allegations of labor rights violations, and a framework for the invocation of the innovative rapid response mechanism to remediate violations of workers’ rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining at specific facilities—USMCA is a model for future trade agreements.

We also administer and enforce the worker rights criteria of U.S. trade preference programs for eligible beneficiaries, which include nearly every country in the world. We monitor countries’ compliance with these criteria and engage governments directly to address concerns when they fall short of their labor commitments. A major focus area is ensuring traditionally marginalized groups enjoy equitable access to these labor rights. These shared standards lead to a more predictable business environment and fairer competition, and more equitable, less exploitative supply chains.

## ADVANCING LABOR RIGHTS WITH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Since 1995, OTLA has provided technical assistance to more than 70 countries, enabling our trading partners to promote inclusive economic growth and uphold internationally recognized labor rights. Our projects strengthen the capacity of governments to enforce labor laws; enable workers to freely organize and advance their collective interests; and galvanize companies to address labor issues in their workplaces and supply chains. In Georgia, for example, we engaged workers, employers, and the government to strengthen awareness of, compliance with, and enforcement of updated labor laws. Through our support to the International Labor Organization’s Better Work program, we are improving work conditions and compliance in the apparel sector; in Jordan, for example, workers at Better Work factories reported fewer complaints, work-related injuries, and disputes. And in South America, we are engaging workers to strengthen democratic and independent workers’ organizations in agriculture, mining, the gig economy, and other sectors.

## LEADING CHANGE THROUGH POLICY AND PARTNERSHIP

OTLA ensures internationally recognized labor rights are reflected in a range of U.S. policies, strategies, and frameworks, from migration to women’s economic empowerment to responsible business conduct. Through our relationships with government agencies, worker organizations, civil society, and employers at home and abroad, we promote respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining, increase equity for marginalized workers, including migrant workers, women, and LGBTQI+ individuals, and address labor issues in important sectors such as garments, fishing, electronics, and critical minerals. We advocate for workers around the world to have a voice in policies that affect them, such as the transition to clean energy.

## PROMOTING LABOR STANDARDS IN MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCING

Lending by multilateral development banks and development finance institutions is subject to environmental and social standards, which include labor safeguards. OTLA ensures labor concerns are taken into consideration in the review and implementation of such loan proposals and policymaking, advocating for project worker protections related to terms and conditions of employment, occupational safety and health, freedom of association and collective bargaining, equal opportunity, and nondiscrimination.

### Explore Our Resources



Responsible Business  
Conduct and Labor  
Rights InfoHub



Worker Voice: What it  
is, what it is not, and  
why it matters



MigrantWorker.gov



Labor Rights and the  
United States-Mexico-  
Canada Agreement



Monitoring, Evaluation,  
Research and Learning