



BWI
Building and Wood
Workers' International
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IN ACTION

BWI In Action
Bulletin

July/August 2020



Social Distancing - Yes! People Distancing - Never!

As a result of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19, BWI offices in Latin America and the Caribbean shut down from mid-March until the end of July. By doing so, BWI joined national efforts to curb the spread of the virus throughout society, while also helping protect the health of its staff members and their families. Similar measures were implemented at headquarters in Geneva and at BWI offices around the world.

Under the leadership of BWI Secretary General Ambet Yuson and the President of the Regional Committee Saúl Méndez, together with the members of the Regional Presidium, all activities planned for Latin America and the Caribbean have been under review via consultation with our international partners, such as Union to Union from Sweden, FES from Germany, FNV from The Netherlands, and many others.

In-person activities were replaced with study programs, virtual training courses and mapping, and union development activities on a number of topics, including women, migrants, youth, digital communication and activism, the environment and climate change, as well as issues related to health and safety in the specific context of COVID-19.

International union solidarity has grown stronger, and funds have been allocated to provide protection and direct assistance for workers in our sectors and their families, especially regarding immigrants. Dozens of companies and governments have been called on to guarantee rights and jobs. Hundreds of unions received information and subsidies in order to strengthen their positions in negotiations with both employers and with the governments of their countries, states and municipalities.

This special issue of the BWI IN ACTION bulletin is a demonstration of the strength of our global union and shows the importance of being organized worldwide, with a special focus on people: workers and their families.



**Social distancing, yes!
Worker distancing, never!**

Nilton Freitas,
BWI Regional Representative



**BWI'S COVID-19 FUND:
HUMANITARIAN AID FOR ITS
AFFILIATED TRADE UNIONS**

2020 PLAN OF ACTION: Implementing the 2018-2022 Regional Strategic Plan

The activities planned and implemented at local levels are all aligned with the global strategy approved by the World Congress and at the BWI Regional Conference, which are the highest levels of political policy-making across our global union.



JANUARY

- **January 21: Meeting of the CTSPE Board of Directors** - Quito/Ecuador. Reports were given on the political persecution of trade union leaders and social movements; a decision was made to promote an international solidarity campaign. There was a special focus on the need to protect our members.
- **January 20- 23: Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)**. Members of the BWI Global Working Group on Migration attended the event, alongside governments and social movements from around the world.
- **January 23-24: XXI Congress of FEDESOMECE**. With more than 50 union leaders in attendance, the organization's new Board of Directors was elected, and the Strategic Plan was approved. Atacames/Ecuador.
- **January 27-29: XXIX FETRACONSPAR 2020 Planning Seminar**, Itapoá / Brazil. 29 affiliated organizations attended the event, as well as SINTRACOM Curitiba and FETRACOMA from Chile. Itapoá/Brazil.
- **January 29-31:** A visit was made to the building site of Klabin's new pulp and paper megaproject plant with **leaders from SINTRAPAV-PR**. Paraná/Brazil.



FEBRERO

- **February 4-5: Meeting of the Hemispheric Development and Integration Working Group (GTDIH)**, held by TUCA in partnership with FES-ACTRAV, Montevideo/Uruguay.
- **February 5: Meeting with SOIMA management**. Montevideo / Uruguay.
- **February 6-7: The TUCA Executive Council meeting**. Montevideo/Uruguay.
- **February 6: Meeting with an ACTRAV-ILO representative** to discuss BWI's priorities for the region, such as campaigns against femicide, the promotion of occupational health and safety in the workplace, as well as issues related to value chains. Montevideo/Uruguay.
- **February 11-12:** The second **Social Dialogue Meeting with Votorantim Cimentos**. Social and labor issues were discussed with local management. São Paulo/Brazil.
- **February 13-14:** Participation in the **SUNCA Congress and visit to PIT-CNT**. Montevideo/Uruguay.
- **February 23-25: Mission to Guatemala** for the opening of the Professional Training Center for SINCS-G Construction and Agriculture workers. Coatepeque/Guatemala.
- **February 25- 27: Mission to Cuba** and participation in the **SNCT Women's Seminar** - Havana/Cuba.
- **February 26-28: Mission to Mexico** to continue forming alliances and to start implementing the BWI Work Plan in the country.



MARCH

• **March 1-3: Political mission** of solidarity and support for affiliated organizations. Santo Domingo/Dominican Republic.

• **March 3-5: Mission to the Caribbean Part I:** meetings with affiliated organizations, political authorities and companies in Curaçao and Suriname.

• **March 3- 4: 2020 Regional Strategic Seminar on Migration**, with the participation of affiliates from different countries. San Salvador/El Salvador.

• **March 6-7: Union Training Seminar** led by the C-47 affiliated organization and workers from the Woodwork and Forestry sector. Paramaribo/Suriname.

• **March 8: International Women's Day** - Global Campaign, with several activities held in several countries.

• **March 10: BWI Brazil Coordination Meeting.** Presentation of the Work Plan and discussions on determining the host country for the 5th BWI World Congress, scheduled for November 2021. São Paulo.



In mid-March, COVID-19 pandemic health-related restrictions were implemented in many countries, such as quarantine, total lockdown, the suspension of non-essential work activities, store, airport and international border closings, and restrictions on domestic travel.

BWI responded to this situation through extensive communications and consultations with its affiliated organizations in order to provide them with continued support in their negotiations with companies and governments.

BWI closed its offices and transferred all office work into at-home work, increased online activities, and promoted an increased exchange of information between affiliated organizations worldwide.

In the course of these two weeks, we spoke with 132 affiliates throughout the region, an enormous communication effort undertaken in order to address issues related to the overall current situation as well as an assessment of each affiliate's respective position.



APRIL

In view of the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, BWI has replaced its in person- activities with online interactions (with BWI's ZOOM platform). April was the time to analyze and make adjustments to political and union paths. The entire regional activity plan has been revised via consultation with our international partners: Union to Union, FES and FNV.

• **April 15: INTERGREMIAL** Colombia Coordination Meeting.

• **April 15: BWI International Youth Committee Preparation Meeting.**

• **April 16-28: Faber-Castell Union Network Meeting.**

• **April 22: Presidium Meeting of the Regional Committee** for Latin America and the Caribbean.

• **April 22: MRV Brazil Union Network Meeting.**

• **April 23: Meeting on Health & Safety in the Workplace** - the Brazil Group.

• **April 24: BWI Peru Coordination Meeting.**

• **April 24: Mobilization Meeting for April 28, addressing COVID-19 infections of young people** in Latin America and the Caribbean.

• **April 28: Cimentos Argos Union Network Meeting.**

• **April 30: LafargeHolcim Cement Union Network Meeting.**





• **APRIL 28** - International Workers' Memorial Day / **“One Death! One Stoppage!”** Campaign

Due to the worldwide outbreak of Covid-19 and the restrictive measures implemented in several countries, BWI chose a special slogan for the April 28th, 2020 Campaign: “Protect workers! We say NO to COVID-19”, and reinforcing the preventive measures recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) worldwide for social distancing, hand washing and the use of protective masks.

31 affiliated organizations from Latin America and the Caribbean attended the April 28th Campaign. Participants included 23 unions from the construction sector, 8 from the construction materials sector and 2 from the woodwork sector. Of these participants, 33% were from the Andean Area, 53% from Central America, 38% from the Caribbean, 31% from the Southern Cone and 13% from the Brazil' country group.

In addition to activities related to health & safety in the workplace, different unions in the region also promoted other solidarity actions. They volunteered and delivered food supplies and personal care products, helping approximately 10,000 families of workers from the construction sector who were left with no income due to the closure of building sites in the Dominican Republic, Panama, Guatemala, Brazil and Argentina.

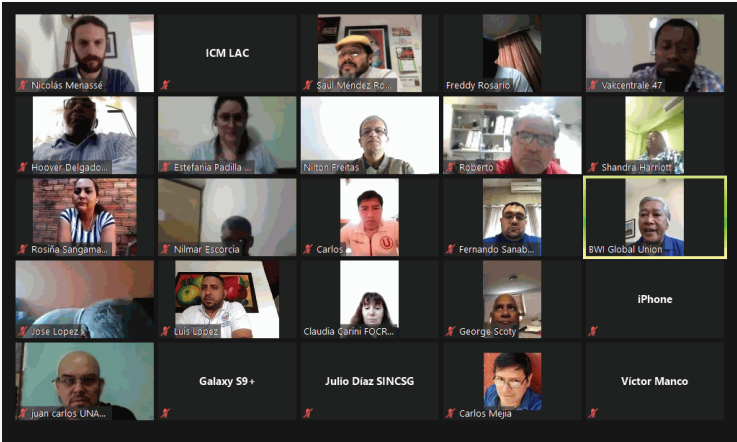


MAY



May was the month for reviewing all projects and programs, taking into consideration the new ways of life at the regional, national and global levels. In an innovative move, global statutory meetings were held on-line, and a large number of affiliates took part and engaged in intense discussions about the new challenges.

- **May 1:** International Labor Day.
- **May 13:** BWI International Youth Committee Meeting.
- **May 18:** BWI International Women's Committee Meeting.
- **May 27:** The "Hey! How are things?" session, with affiliates from Spanish and English -speaking countries.
- **May 29:** The 27th BWI World Committee Meeting.



JUNE

In the month of June, BWI adjusted its Working Plan for the second half of 2020, with a focus on continuing to promote the enhancement of skills for online union activism and unionism in the times of COVID-19. It also analyzed the number of online activities carried out in the first half of the year.

148 messages were posted about the region on the BWI website, and Facebook and Twitter accounts. The Latin American and Caribbean region recorded a 62% increase in the number of people reached by its publications (from 72,620 in December 2019 to 117,789 as of June 31, 2020).

In addition to this data, at least 55 coordination meetings were held in the first half of the year with BWI's Regional Networks, Working Groups, and Regional and Global Teams in order to ensure contact with its affiliates and to guarantee the correct implementation of the region's policy plans. During this period, at least seven online seminars were held, and this number is expected to increase in the second half of 2020, with online courses that will address issues such as health and safety in the workplace, gender, youth, decent working conditions, and more.

- **June 2:** The "How are you?" - BWI Online Conversations on COVID-19 and the World of Work Brazil session.
- **June 18:** BWI International Youth Committee Monitoring and Planning Meeting.



MAIN RESULTS OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN ACTION

WOMEN



New trade unions in the region

- ▶ 340 new female union members as of May 2020.

Organizing activities for WOMEN

- ▶ 1,000 women have been reached through gender-related publications.
- ▶ 984 new women took part in union training activities in the region, as of May 2020.
- ▶ 10 unions from five countries in Latin America and the Caribbean participated in the March 8th, 2020 Campaign.

Skills development for female union leaders and workers

- ▶ 13 unions have been holding permanent training programs for women (data as of May 2020).
- ▶ 7 new unionization campaigns for female workers.



YOUTH

Creation of YOUTH policies

- ▶ 5 new Work Plans with a focus on youth unionization have been created.

Organizing Activities for the YOUTH

- ▶ 491 young people took part in union training activities by May 2020.
- ▶ 13 unions have been holding permanent training programs for young people (data as of May 2020).
- ▶ 50 training seminars have been held for young people, as of May 2020.

YOUTH in the new union structures

- ▶ 30 young people have become part of Union Commissions in the Region (data of May 2020).



SOLIDARITY: BWI COVID-19 Funds providing support to unions in the region

Ten unions from Guatemala, Argentina, Chile, Haiti and Uruguay have been directly assisted with funds from the BWI Latin America COVID-19 Solidarity Fund. The Fund gathers financial contributions from affiliates that have been best able to overcome the crisis and is aimed to helping its most vulnerable organizations.

Part of these funds goes directly to the families of workers affected by COVID19 to help them with their basic needs for food and medical supplies, and another part goes to expenses for the operational and communication activities of organizations, since many of them are not receiving union dues because of shutdowns in the region's construction and timber industries.

Many organizations have distributed food and medical supplies, and others have chosen to enhance their communication skills and operations.

In the words of one of the union leaders who volunteered to distribute different goods, Roberto Burgos from the MASISA Mapal Plant Workers' Union from Chile, "These supplies were considered support from workers for workers."

Many families that have received aid expressed their thankfulness to the leaders. "God bless the life of every person who was motivated to do this," said a migrant forestry worker in Chile who was in lockdown with his family, all of whom were infected with COVID-19.



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FNV - The Netherlands Trade Union Confederation



Union to Union - Sweden



IGBAU - Civil Construction Workers Union from Germany

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BTI • Byggnads-ogh Träarbetar-Internationalen
IBB • Internationale des travailleurs du bâtiment et du bois
ICM • Internacional de Trabajadores de la Construcción y la Madera



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