



## Year End Report 2006

---

### **Building on Past Success and Creating New Programs!**

STITCH had an exciting year in 2006! We added new partners in Central America and traveled throughout the region. In the U.S. we held our first ever joint delegation and launched a new project focusing on immigrant women. STITCH is expanding and growing...and 2006 is only the beginning.

### **Central American Programs**

In 2006, STITCH strengthened the capacity of our allies and our relationship with local and regional networks in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador. STITCH met with the leaders of all our partner unions to advocate on behalf of women's participation and increased training within the unions and in doing so help strengthen these unions internally. In addition, STITCH provided training for their members on inclusive methods and gave them all better skills to educate the adult women in their unions. This training series was vital in creating a network of union organizers and others that will be able to utilize STITCH training materials to fight for fair wages, safe conditions and better global labor standards.

STITCH also provided direct training for women of the maquila (sweatshop) unions and banana unions from Guatemala and Honduras. STITCH has a long history with the Guatemalan maquila unions SITRACIMA and SITRACHOI – our initial organizing efforts began with supporting their unionizing efforts. Continuing with our commitment to support existing unions, STITCH provided these unions with support and training on women's leadership and gender to ensure they are able to maintain their hard fought contract—especially because they are the only maquila unions in Guatemala.

In Honduras, our work sessions will help strengthen the regional labor movement. STITCH assisted COSIBAH (Coordination of Honduran Banana Unions) to create a regional workshop for each banana union that is part of the Latin American Banana Union Federation—which could impact 45,000 workers. This workshop will build the capacity of union trainers, especially in their ability to reach workers without a formal education.

STITCH is moving towards completion of the Women, Labor and Leadership the Curriculum Project in 2007. This year, the STITCH team focused on writing the chapters for the Women's Leadership section. STITCH conducted a participatory workshop on the topic of oppression and leadership for the STITCH partners. We facilitated a process that allowed unionist to look at the ways they have experienced oppression, how we may reproduce the same forms of oppression in our own leadership and alternatives of how to be different types of leaders in the future.

At the end of the year, STITCH met with our partners to review the additional trainings in the Women's Leadership Module and to ensure that these chapters will be relevant to the women we serve in Central America.

### **Programs Connecting Central American and the United States**

In 2006, STITCH brought inspiring leaders from Central America to the United States. These women trained U.S. labor leaders on successful organizing, as well as talking about their lives in their home countries. Gloria Guzman, from San Pedro Sula, Honduras, participated in the Summer School for Union Women in Chicago, IL. U.S. local union leaders are hoping to put

some of Gloria's suggestions into practice in their outreach! STITCH also sponsored Ana Maria Barahona's participation in a worker tour, designed to highlight the impact Wal-Mart is having on workers around the world who produce for their stores. STITCH worked with Ana (a maquila organizer from Nicaragua) and other women from Asia and Africa on the leg of the tour in Texas. The group visited Union halls, high schools, churches, and Universities (and garnered a lot of media attention!)



Student and Farmworker Activists visit a banana finca.

STITCH also sponsored two delegations to Guatemala this year. The first delegation included eight women from throughout the United States, most of whom were current or former members of labor unions. In the fall of 2006, STITCH developed a new type of delegation - jointly hosted with Student Action with Farmworkers. This delegation was developed to go into depth on the topic of agricultural workers and to lead to more strategic exchanges between organizers and workers in the fields in Guatemala and the United States. The participants in the delegation included children of farmworkers, students involved in organizing in the fields and agricultural factories in the U.S. The group will use the skills and information they learned on the delegation to be more effective organizers here in the States.

### **United States Programs**

In 2006, STITCH started a new program focusing on Immigrant women in the United States. Though the project will not be formally launched until 2007, STITCH began to gather information and build partnerships for the The Other Immigrants--Women Workers in the U.S. Labor Movement. In the

past, STITCH has produced a series of booklets to highlight women's stories and their solutions to problems facing them in Central America. This year, STITCH is **focused** on women workers in the United States, specifically, Latina immigrants. The goal of this project is to highlight the stories of these women and focus on why they decided to emigrate from Central America. They will also discuss how they have become involved in the struggle for workers' rights. STITCH will also talk to these women about their opinions of how labor organizations, particularly unions, in the United States can more effectively reach out to Latina immigrants and how the larger labor movement can take on issues that are important to them.

STITCH has interviewed two women in Miami with the support of the local SEIU chapter and Miami Jobs with Justice. And in collaboration with the Garment Workers Center in Los Angeles two women in the textile industry will be featured in the publication. STITCH will include women workers who are currently working in agriculture and represent a rural experience in the United States. STITCH's newest publication will be released in early 2007.

In addition to the publication, STITCH will launch a program in 2007 to hold meetings around the United States with labor groups and community organizations to further focus on immigrant women's needs and techniques labor unions and organizations can use to meet them. STITCH is excited about our expanded role in the United States and using lessons learned from our work in Central America to empower women in the United States.

### **YEAR END SALE!**

STITCH is offering a special price on our existing booklets that tell the story of women workers in Central America. Pushing Back: Women Workers Respond to Trade (a bilingual publication) and Behind the Labels (the classic publication on women in the garment industry) are available until January 30 for only \$5. Email [stitch@stitchonline.org](mailto:stitch@stitchonline.org) for details and an order form.