

Voices

STITCH 2007 YEAR END REPORT AMAZING RESULTS IN DIFFICULT TIMES

SNAPSHOTS FROM 2007

- **March:** STITCH trains Labor Educators on organizing Central American immigrants in the U.S.
- **April:** STITCH participates in the Florida Summers School for Union women. A leader from a banana union in Guatemala trains U.S. unionists.
- **May:** STITCH brings together 2 unions in Nicaragua for a training and to build bridges between them.
- **July:** STITCH holds a regional training in Central America, topics include putting women's needs into collective bargaining contracts.
- **November:** STITCH is interviewed on the radio about Wal-Mart's labor practices
- **December:** STITCH heads to Springdale, AR, home of Tysons' Foods for a training and dialogue with immigrant women

Building Central American Women's Unions and Leadership

As we head into the final weeks of 2007, we also mark the end of the first stage of STITCH's new training programs in Central America. The curriculum project, which has been ongoing for the past four years, will be finished in December. We are very excited about this new tool that will help women throughout Central America organize and strengthen their unions.

In 2007, STITCH staff with our partners from throughout the region completed chapters on Women's Leadership, as well as finishing the chapter on Women and New Visions of Unionism finalizing the curriculum's four modules which include three chapters each. In addition to completing the training curriculum, STITCH also continued to train women throughout the region. STITCH worked with a number of maquila (textile or clothing factories) unions in Nicaragua and provided women-specific trainings. In El Salvador, we developed three workshops with a local labor educational organization.

In addition, members of the labor advisory committee that have worked with STITCH over the past four years have taken the training from



STITCH training with role plays

STITCH and made a political decision to move even further by creating and signing a pact of alliance of women unionists to work together to change and redefine unionism in the region to have a greater focus on equality for women workers, both at work and in the union.

In 2008, STITCH will continue working with these women to build women's training schools throughout the region, modeled on the Women's Summer

Schools for Union Leadership, that are so successful in the US. STITCH will also continue to build regional connections by holding larger gatherings.

Political Solidarity Across Borders

Unfortunately, during 2007, we saw an increase in violence against unionists as well as the closing of one of Guatemala's only two maquila factories with collective bargaining agreements.

STITCH staff spent time with the workers during their strike, including bringing members of a delegation from the US. STITCH has also worked on the US side of the campaign, working closely with other solidarity groups, STITCH has spoken to the companies that source from these factories and worked to assist in strategy regarding international pressure.

Unfortunately, STITCH also was called to take action and call for action from our supporters in response to a assassination of a union leader.

Noe Rameriz, an elected official from SITRABI, a banana union in Izabel, Guatemala was murdered in September.

The union has directly stated that they feel this is response to their political and organizing work over the past 2 years. There have been other incidents where the union's leadership has been harassed by armed gunmen over the past year. STITCH called for action from the government of Guatemala and the United States, as well as traveling to the site of the murder within days of the attack.

This is the fourth murder in Guatemala of a unionist, in 2007 despite the many promises made by the government during the CAFTA debate.

U.S. Programs for Latina Women Workers

This year was a great year and great leap forward for STITCH's efforts to support workers in the United States. Despite an increasingly hostile environment for immigrant workers' rights, STITCH was able to move our new project forward and make a real impact in the United States.

We were proud to publish *"The Other Immigrants, Women Workers in the U.S. Labor Movement"*, one of the only recent

publications that put the spotlight on women's unique challenges as immigrants and workers in the United States. In addition to publishing this booklet, STITCH also held a panel discussion on this very important topic in Washington, DC at the headquarters of the In-



STITCH 2007 Spring Delegation

ternational Brotherhood of Teamsters. This panel discussion included participants from SEIU, the AFL-CIO and Jobs With Justice. Copies of this important book were distributed to key allies around the country to highlight women immigrants' struggles. (You can purchase the booklet from the STITCH website.)

STITCH also held a series of four focus groups around the country to further find out from immigrant women what resources they need to become stronger leaders and more involved in the union and larger economic justice movements. STITCH has

also begun working with some local partners, including South Florida Jobs With Justice to hold dialogues between union women of color to break down barriers between Latina and African American women, among others. In November, we will be

finishing this phase of our dialogues with Latina immigrant women. Our final dialogue will be in Springdale, Arkansas, the home of Tysons Poultry Factory. We will be working with Northwest Arkansas Worker Justice Alliance to dialogue about the struggles of immigrants inside the plant as well as in society. We will also be using a piece of the curriculum developed in Central America to discuss oppression and injustice. STITCH has also developed resources to assist unions in reaching out to immigrant women. In 2008, STITCH will continue to work on adapting our trainings from

Central America for use with immigrant women in the US as well as continuing to collect women's stories to educate all Americans about the struggles they face. Look for more updates and exciting new features on our website.

Building Bridges Across Borders

STITCH continued our popular delegation to Guatemala this year. The delegation included 12 women from unions, such as the AFL-CIO, United Auto Workers, and former American Federations of Teacher members. Unfortunately, due to the increase in violence in Guatemala, we had to postpone our fall delegation. STITCH is looking to make some exciting changes in our delegations in 2008 to ensure that they build better, longer lasting connections across borders.

STITCH also participated in the Southern School for Union Women in Cocoa Beach, FL in late April. We sponsored a worker from the Guatemalan banana industry. We presented in a number of workshops and were able to meet a number of great women. We also participated in the U.S. Social Forum this year, presenting our perspective on solidarity.