

WOLA:
ADVOCACY FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS
IN THE **AMERICAS**

ANNUAL REPORT 2013

**CHANGE
HAPPENS
WHEN PEOPLE
COME TOGETHER
AND MAKE IT
HAPPEN.**



Recently reunited Afro-Colombian Mother
and Child, Darién Province, Panama

Photo by Gimena Sánchez, WOLA



WASHINGTON OFFICE ON LATIN AMERICA

ANNUAL
REPORT
2013

DEAR FRIENDS,

The year 2013 brought critical moments in many of the issues that WOLA has been working on for decades. Because of our strong partnerships in Latin America and our expert analysis and advocacy, WOLA is at the forefront making a difference when it matters most.

When lawmakers debated drug law reform in Uruguay, WOLA connected them with policymakers in the United States and elsewhere who are working for responsible regulation. As the peace process moved forward in Colombia, WOLA's staff became the go-to experts on what was happening behind the scenes and the impact it would have on human rights. As the immigration debate evolves in the United States, WOLA's Border Security project is drawing attention to the abuses of U.S. deportation practices.

We have invested for 40 years in research, education, and advocacy. These are just a few of the returns. As it enters its fifth decade, WOLA is an innovative and nimble organization, built on deep expertise, meaningful collaborations, and outcome-based solutions.

We are pleased to report that support for WOLA is growing. Our board is deeply engaged in our work. For the spring board meeting, we travelled to Mexico to meet some of our partners and to see our staff in action. Our annual gala was the most successful ever. Our work is reaching a broader constituency—in the media, online, and through people-to-people connections.

WOLA's strength is bringing people together who care about human rights in the Americas. We are glad you have stood with us in the past and invite you to continue working with us into the future.

Steven Bennett
Chair, Board of Directors

Joy Olson
Executive Director



**WOLA IS AN INDEPENDENT RESEARCH
AND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION
WORKING TO ADVANCE HUMAN
RIGHTS IN THE AMERICAS.**

We believe that advancing human rights means recognizing human dignity, ending violence, and creating more just societies. WOLA brings people together to solve concrete problems. Working in collaboration with counterparts throughout the Americas—advocacy organizations, academics, moral figures, artists, and government officials—we develop and implement strategies that make a difference.

WOLA Senior Fellow Jo-Marie Burt
at the trial of former Guatemalan
President General Efraín Ríos
Montt for genocide and crimes
against humanity.



REFORM. STRENGTHEN. SUPPORT.

WHAT WE DO

IMPROVE U.S.-LATIN AMERICA RELATIONS

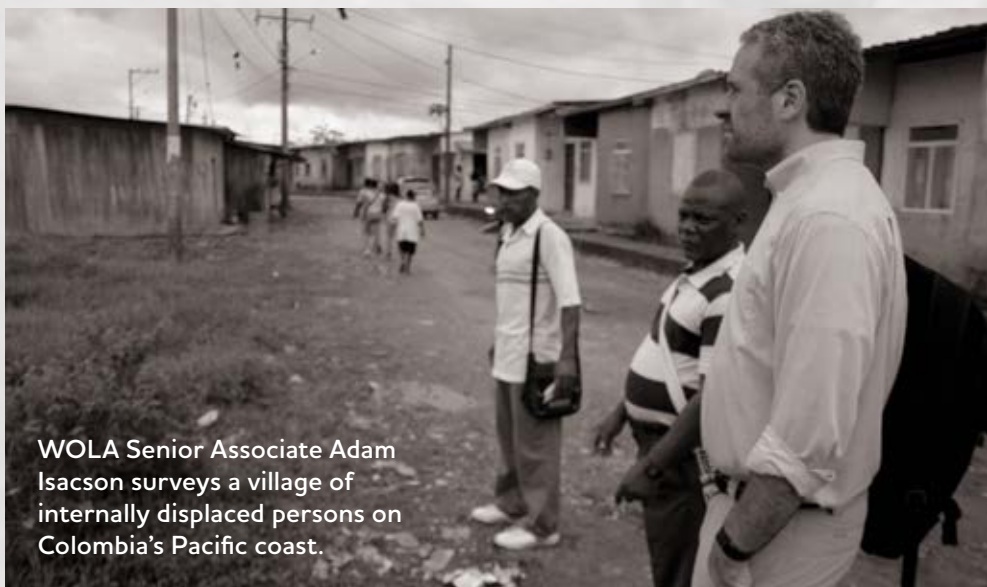
WOLA fosters understanding between the United States and Latin American countries and works to ensure that the relationships between countries advance human rights.

END VIOLENCE AND STRENGTHEN RULE OF LAW IN THE AMERICAS

Many Latin American countries are suffering some of the highest levels of violence in the world due to organized crime, weak institutions, and corruption. WOLA advocates for institutional reforms and strategic changes to the justice system, the police, and the military.

SUPPORT HUMAN DIGNITY

WOLA believes that respect for human rights should be at the center of public policies. We shed light on stories that show the true cost of misguided policies and we humanize debates.



WOLA Senior Associate Adam Isacson surveys a village of internally displaced persons on Colombia's Pacific coast.



BUILD. PROTECT. INNOVATE.

HELP TO BUILD PEACE IN COLOMBIA

As Colombia and its main rebel group, the FARC, engage in serious peace talks, WOLA kept major players up to date on each of the points being discussed and brought the voices of displaced Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities to the fore. This year we testified before the U.S. Congress, briefed high-level officials, including the U.S. Ambassador, presented our analysis at a conference in Colombia called by the peace talks' negotiators, and helped score a major victory for displaced victims through the Inter-American Court on Human Rights.

PROTECT MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

As weak economies and violence in Central America force thousands to flee their homes, abuses against migrants traveling north have developed into a humanitarian crisis. WOLA raised national awareness about how deadly it has become to cross the U.S.-Mexico border and how certain U.S. deportation practices—like deporting people in the middle of the night—are putting migrants in unnecessary danger. Our communications campaign brought the issue to a national audience through stories in *The New York Times* and *NPR*. The U.S. Senate passed legislation to mitigate the problem.

MAKE DRUG POLICIES MORE HUMANE

Policies from the "War on Drugs" have caused horrific human rights abuses in the Americas, but haven't changed trafficking or consumption. WOLA pushed for laws that give state and national governments the freedom to try alternative, safer approaches to improving public health and security. This year we helped Uruguay make history by becoming the first country in the world to legalize and regulate the cannabis market.

WOLA called attention to violence in Central America and helped address it by promoting the rule of law and helping foreign aid agencies coordinate their support.

WOLA was the go-to source for high-quality, non-partisan information on events in Venezuela through the Venezuelan Politics and Human Rights blog.

WOLA exposed some troubling trends in U.S. security spending in Latin America, including an increase in Special Forces operations and a decrease in public accountability.

WOLA facilitated a major congressional report calling for better protections for Colombian workers two years after we made sure that the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement included a Labor Action Plan to ensure those rights.

WOLA helped labor and security experts in the United States and Cuba form connections to build cooperation between the two countries, after getting the U.S. government to ease travel restrictions two years ago.



Migrants in transit at the U.S.-Mexico border, Nogales, Mexico.
Photo by Kristel Muciño, WOLA.

HOW WE DO IT

RESEARCH. ADVOCACY. PARTNERSHIP.

Original research that brings powerful information to light.

High-level, cross-border advocacy to influence policymakers.

Innovative partnerships that let people affected by policies speak directly to decision-makers and provide on-the-ground expertise to our efforts.



WOLA Senior Associate John Walsh moderates a Congressional briefing on marijuana policy with Representative Steven Cohen.

OUR STORY



Former WOLA Director Heather Foote speaks at a Congressional briefing with the late Senator Ted Kennedy.

19-
70s

WOLA STANDS AGAINST DICTATORSHIPS IN SOUTH AMERICA

Begins organizing delegations to Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, and Uruguay to document human rights abuses, including torture and forced disappearances.

Helps to draft the landmark Harkin Amendment, prohibiting U.S. military aid to governments that abuse human rights.

80s

WOLA PLAYS KEY ROLE IN ENDING CONFLICTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Issues the first major report documenting human rights abuses by the Nicaraguan contras in the mid-1980s.

Provides essential support for the peace accords in El Salvador.

90s

WOLA SUPPORTS TRANSITIONS TO DEMOCRACY

Helps to expose the human rights abuses and corruption of Peru's Fujimori regime.

Plays a key role in Congressional and White House approval of large-scale emergency aid to Central America after Hurricane Mitch.

Leads advocacy efforts to end the food and medicine ban on Cuba.

20-
00s

WOLA TAKES ON NEW HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDAS

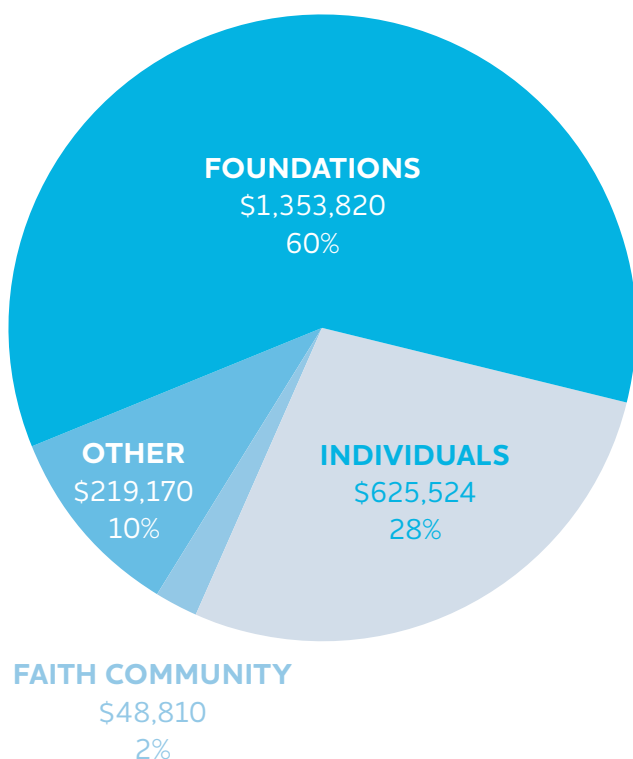
Helps create the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, an independent, UN-supported agency to investigate and prosecute organized crime—the first of its kind in the world.

Succeeds in shifting U.S. aid for Colombia, Mexico, and Central America away from military assistance and toward economic and social development programs.

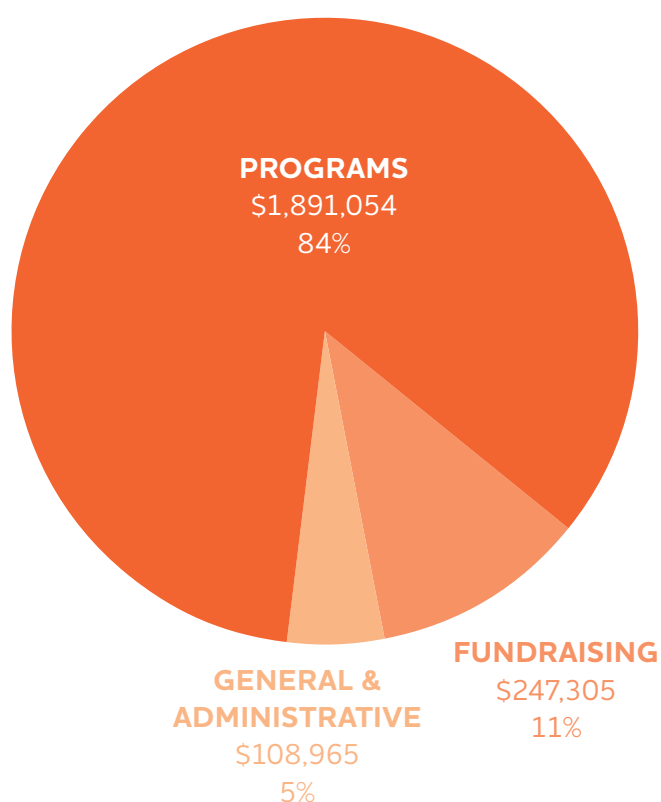
SMART. STRATEGIC. STRONG.

2013 BUDGET
\$2,247,324

INCOME



EXPENSES



“WOLA HELPS US TO KEEP CONNECTED TO LATIN AMERICA AND THE ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVISTS THAT ARE BUILDING FAIRER AND MORE PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES AND SOCIETIES THERE.”

DONORS CHERYL MORDEN & REUBEN SNIPPER

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Catholic Bishops—Migration
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WOLA HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS CEREMONY & BENEFIT GALA

Every year, WOLA honors organizations or individuals who have worked tirelessly to promote human rights and social justice in the Americas. The 2013 event was attended by over 320 guests, which included Members of Congress, senior administration officials, and leaders from the nonprofit, business, and labor sectors.



WOLA Senior Fellows Jo-Marie Burt (left) and Coletta Youngers (right) talk with 2012 WOLA Human Rights Award Honoree Helen Mack (center).

**“THE AMAZING
THING ABOUT
THIS AWARD
HAPPENS THE
DAY AFTER,
WHEN YOU
WAKE UP AND
THEN YOU
HAVE WOLA
ON YOUR SIDE.
YOU REALIZE
YOU ARE NOT
ALONE.”**

DIEGO LUNA
WOLA BOARD MEMBER,
MEXICAN ACTOR AND DIRECTOR
WASHINGTON LIFE MAGAZINE

Top Photo: 2013 Human Rights Awards Honorees with Diego Luna and WOLA Executive Director Joy Olson. (From left to right: Ambassador Milton Romani-Gerner, Marcela Turati, and Senator Tom Harkin.)



**Diego Luna at the 2013 WOLA
Human Rights Awards Ceremony
and Benefit Gala.**

ONE OF WASHINGTONIAN MAGAZINE'S “50 GREAT PLACES TO WORK.”



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THE SALLY YUDELMAN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Shaping the next generation of human rights advocates

WOLA's Sally Yudelman Internship Program is named after Ms. Yudelman for her enduring commitment to shape the next generation of human rights advocates. In 2013, her legacy lived on, with the Sally Yudelman Internship Program welcoming 21 qualified, passionate, and diverse students. The program continues to offer one of the most thorough, engaging, and formative human rights experiences in Washington.

