



WOLA

Washington Office
on Latin America

**2011
Annual Report**



Promoting human rights,
democracy, and social justice.





Dear Friends,

The year 2011 at WOLA was a year of many successes.

We had some highly visible achievements, like focusing new attention on human rights abuses against Afro-descendant and women leaders in rural Colombia. We also had quieter successes, like enabling Central American anti-violence researchers to present their work directly to international funders. Much of our work continued to be behind the scenes—informing policymakers, convening new partners on the ground, and knowing when to be where with what information. We make connections that make a difference.

We have made impressive new strides in outreach.

- We launched our new website and expanded our use of social media to help us reach new audiences. We circulated short, timely analyses sharing WOLA's expertise on developing news. Throughout the year, you could find such things as our Tumblr blogs on the Peruvian elections, running commentaries on the changes in Cuba, and weekly podcasts with visitors from Latin America.
- We launched a new Brazil program, connecting with new partners on issues like violence prevention and police reform. We are exploring the possibilities for dialogue and collaboration among Brazilians, Central Americans, and others across the hemisphere. It is clear that one of WOLA's greatest strengths is our capacity to identify and bring together different voices from different parts of the region to talk about common problems.

Throughout this report, you will find compelling stories of WOLA's outstanding work this year. We are proud of the difference we and our partners are making every day. And we are grateful to each of you for your support, which makes this work possible. We look forward to working with you in the coming year to promote human rights, democracy, and social justice throughout the region.

Sincerely,
Steve Bennett,
Chair, Board of Directors

Joy Olson,
Executive Director

ABOUT WOLA

Our Mission

WOLA promotes human rights, democracy, and social justice by working with partners in Latin America and the Caribbean to shape policies in the United States and abroad.

Our Vision

WOLA envisions a future where human rights and social justice are the foundation for public policy in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the U.S. relationship with the region; where change happens when people on the ground connect with people who make policy; and where people work together across borders to respect human rights and democratic values.

What We Do

- WOLA connects with partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, analyzing regional events, trends, and challenges and acting quickly to ensure that a broad range of voices are heard.
- WOLA impacts policy in the United States and abroad by developing key contacts with government officials and multilateral organizations.
- WOLA shapes public debate and raises new issues through outreach to traditional and new media; sponsorship of public events with scholars, officials, and grassroots activists; and original research, analysis, and commentary by a staff with decades of cumulative experience in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- WOLA serves as a key resource for civil society organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, working with colleagues in the region on coalition-building, networking, research, advocacy, and participation in policy debates.



THE WAR WE ARE LIVING

PBS features WOLA's work with Afro-Colombian Women

Colombia has more displaced people than any country in the world. Years of civil war, anti-drug campaigns that use planes to spray food crops, and illegal land grabs by mining operations and big growers have uprooted whole communities and seen their leaders murdered, disappeared, or forced into exile.

WOLA does more than document these cases of human rights abuse. We accompany people in local communities as they struggle to maintain or reclaim their land and seek a better future.

In a mountainous region of Colombia's Pacific southwest, two extraordinary Afro-Colombian women are defying death threats to defend their community's land and livelihood. *The War We are Living*, part of the acclaimed PBS documentary series *Women, War & Peace*, tells the story of Clemencia Carabali and Francia Marquez and their battle against illegal mining interests.

The final scenes underscore the importance of WOLA's work as the documentary follows Clemencia Carabali from rural La Toma to Washington, D.C. for meetings with policymakers. WOLA's Senior Associate Gimena Sanchez accompanies Clemencia on her visits. She describes how U.S. and international pressure increases the political costs to those who are carrying out a campaign of terror against Clemencia and her community, helping keep them safe.

The episode, which first aired on PBS in November 2011, can be viewed now on WOLA's website: www.wola.org.

The Youth of Medellín

In August 2011, Congressman James McGovern traveled with WOLA to some of the most dangerous urban areas of Colombia. In remarks in the U.S. House of Representatives, Congressman McGovern described a visit to a local youth violence-prevention group, saying "These youth put themselves at risk for advocating alternatives to violence and envisioning a future far different from the reality that surrounds them.... They deserve our respect and support—not just with funding, but by increasing their visibility and legitimacy." WOLA does just that.

ENGAGING WITH A CHANGING CUBA

The Cuban government announced significant economic reforms in early 2011. The stated goal is to shift as many as 1.5 million workers into the private sector. The reforms have been accompanied by a dialogue with the Catholic Church and the government of Spain that led to the release of almost all of Cuba's prisoners of conscience. The reform process raises many questions: Will reforms continue and deepen? What will this mean for the daily lives of the people of Cuba? Will economic reforms lead to greater political freedom? What will reform mean for future U.S.-Cuba relations?

WOLA is monitoring the impact of change in Cuba. We published numerous commentaries based on staff travel to Cuba and staff expertise. In 2011, we organized several delegations with labor, security, drug interdiction, and environmental experts to explore the possibilities for greater dialogue.



Opening Travel to Cuba

In a victory for WOLA and the coalition of groups who favor greater engagement, the Obama administration eased travel restrictions to make it easier for U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba for educational and people-to-people exchanges.

WOLA successfully fought back against congressional legislation that attempted to cut off visits from Cuban-Americans to family members on the island.

THE MOVEMENT FOR PEACE IN MEXICO



Photo by Eneas de Troya

Juan Francisco Sicilia was killed on March 28th, 2011 outside Cuernavaca, Mexico. Although his was just one of thousands of lives lost to violence in Mexico in the past few years, his death was the catalyst for a new movement for peace. His father, poet Javier Sicilia, became a figurehead for a social movement bringing together individuals all over Mexico in a call for peace, justice, and dignity. Thousands joined the movement in their marches through Mexico, and the public watched as the government held unprecedented televised dialogues with the movement's leaders.

No one has an easy solution to end the violence, but the *Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad* is showing that people want to take action to create change. The movement is giving those individuals a platform and a voice.

In the fall, with a coalition of partners, WOLA hosted the peace movement leaders in Washington, D.C. giving policymakers their first real opportunity to put names and faces to the more than 50,000 dead and thousands of disappeared in Mexico. This is what WOLA is all about: connecting people on the ground with people who make policy, working together across borders to respect human rights and democratic values.

Border Security and Migration

In 2011, WOLA launched a new project examining the massive security buildup along the U.S.-Mexico border and its impact on migrants. *An Uneasy Coexistence*, a report on our staff members' visit to El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, found violence in Mexico is not spilling over into the United States and that migration is decreasing while drug trafficking persists. The security buildup is forcing migrants coming to the United States through evermore dangerous routes. This multi-year project will continue to look at the security and humanitarian situation on both sides of the border.

Honoring Excellence...

Every year WOLA honors organizations or individuals who have inspired us with their work to promote human rights, democracy, and social justice in Latin America. Our awardees are organizations or individuals who exemplify a commitment to WOLA's vision of the future, where human rights and social justice are the foundations for public policy. WOLA's awardees work in unique ways, using diverse methods and with different populations, but with the common cause of promoting human rights in the region.

WOLA's Human Rights Award 2011

Our September 13, 2011 Human Rights Awards Ceremony and Benefit Gala highlighted the theme "Migration and Development: Stories that Make a Difference." Awards were presented to: actor Gael García Bernal for the short film, *Los Invisibles*, and his work calling attention to the plight of migrants in transit from Central America to the United States; the Ambulante Film Festival of Mexico for using documentaries to promote social change; and the Education Corporation for Costa Rican Development (CEDECO) for promoting a successful, climate smart model for small-scale farmers.



...IN HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY



WOLA-Duke Book Award for 2011

The Justice Cascade

In 2011, WOLA honored Dr. Kathryn Sikkink for her book *The Justice Cascade*. Not long after WOLA's founding, Dr. Sikkink worked closely with Argentine and Uruguayan human rights defenders as a WOLA intern and staff member. She said that in the 1970s “no one imagined that someday it would be possible to judge those responsible for human rights violations.” Three decades later, Sikkink is a leading international relations scholar, and her new book looks at how the idea of accountability for human rights violators went from being an impossibility to a virtual inevitability.

TACKLING URBAN VIOLENCE

In many of the region's poorest neighborhoods where informal settlements grew during periods of rapid urbanization, violent crime is compounded by social exclusion, lack of access to basic resources, and heavy-handed responses by the government. WOLA's experts evaluated different government approaches to address urban violence in Latin America. Our findings in *Tackling Urban Violence* stressed that citizens whose daily lives are most affected by violence must be involved in creating solutions for their communities. WOLA took a critical look at the following cases:

In Ciudad Juárez, the government turned to social investment when police and military intervention failed to reduce alarming levels of violence.

In Santa Tecla, a multi-year effort led by the city's mayor has developed community councils and local violence prevention programs that have significantly reduced crime.

In Medellín, during a lull in violence from competing criminal gangs, municipal authorities increased policing and invested in marginalized hillside communities.

In Rio de Janeiro, the government tried a new approach. It sent a new community police force into favelas long dominated by criminal gangs, and it also began to bring in city services.

Urging International Funders to Focus on Integral Approaches to Insecurity

In June 2011, WOLA and the IDB released a preliminary study of 375 internationally-funded citizen security programs in Central America. The study helped WOLA make the case to donors and regional governments that international support needs to be better designed and coordinated, in support of well-thought out and shared strategies.

DRUG POLICY DIALOGUES

2007: Montevideo, Uruguay - 2007: Mexico City, Mexico - 2008: Quito, Ecuador - 2008: Cochabamba, Bolivia - 2009: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Promoting Realistic Alternatives Among Policymakers

The decades old “war on drugs” is failing. It hasn’t decreased consumption and it hasn’t curtailed the drug trade. Instead, current drug laws have overloaded prisons with small-time users and small-scale dealers, while organized crime thrives.

The highly charged debate over drug policy is carried out in a climate of very real fear. Too often, it is hard to separate rhetoric from reality and determine what policies will make a difference.

That’s why WOLA and our partners at the Transnational Institute (TNI) have hosted a series of informal off-the-record drug policy dialogues for government officials and others involved in making and monitoring drug policy throughout Latin America.

The discussion held in February 2011 in Uruguay was the 7th such gathering since 2007. Twenty-five people from eight countries in Latin America, Europe, and the United States took part in this session. They shared experiences and frank assessments of what will work and what is possible in different countries.

As a result of these dialogues, new networks of policymakers are emerging with the potential to move forward toward more effective policies.

2011: Montevideo, Uruguay - 2009: Buenos Aires, Argentina - 2009: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Drugs and Prisons—A Newly-Formed Collective for Reform

In December 2010, WOLA and TNI released *Systems Overload: Drug Laws and Prisons in Latin America*, a major study that exposed the overcrowding of prisons due to harsh and unjust drug laws. Growing out of that project, in 2011, we helped form a new network of researchers and organizations in seven Latin American countries—the *Colectivo de Estudios Derecho y Drogas*—to continue the pressure for sentencing reform.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

WOLA Statement of Activities for the year ending December 31, 2011:

Revenue

Grants and contracts \$1,858,823
Contributions \$384,542
Other Income \$20,460

Total \$2,263,825

Expenses

Program Services \$1,573,868
Management and General
\$124,028
Fundraising \$312,167
Total Expenses \$2,010,063
Change in Net Assets \$253,762

**Net Assets at Beginning of
Year \$2,175,204**

**Net Assets at End of Year
\$2,537,359**

WOLA Balance Sheet for the year ending December 31, 2011:

Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents
\$1,043,180
Investments \$678,910
Receivables \$825,262
Prepaid Expenses \$53,428
Other Assets \$216,777

Total Assets \$2,817,557

Net Assets

Unrestricted \$2,046,782
Temporarily Restricted \$490,577

Total Net Assets \$2,537,359

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable \$54,699
Deferred Rent \$16,990

Deferred Revenue \$4500

Long-Term Liabilities

Deferred Rent \$204,009

Total Liabilities \$280,198

Total Liabilities

and Net Assets \$2,817,557



WHO IS WOLA?

OUR STAFF

Joy Olson,
Executive Director

Geoff Thale,
Program Director

Krystal Wubben,
Finance and Operations Director

Lori Piccolo,
Development Director

Kristel Muciño,
Communications Director

Adriana Beltrán,
Senior Associate for Citizen Security

Vicki Gass,
Senior Associate for Rights and
Development

Adam Isacson,
Senior Associate for Regional Security
Policy

Maureen Meyer,
Senior Associate for Mexico and
Central America

Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli,
Senior Associate for the Andes

John Walsh,
Senior Associate for Drug Policy and
the Andes

Luke Horner
Development Associate

Kristina DeMain,
Development Manager

Colin Smith,
Assistant to the Director

Ashley Morse,
Program Officer

Joseph Bateman,
Program Assistant

Clay Boggs,
Program Assistant

Anthony Dest,
Program Assistant

Kelly McCarty,
Communications/Development
Assistant

Lucila Santos
Fellow

Senior Fellows

Elizabeth Leeds

Jo-Marie Burt

Kathy Gille

Jorge Sapoznikow

George Withers

Coletta Youngers

In 2011, WOLA was joined by 21 interns through the **Sally Yudelman Internship Program**, which gives college students hands-on experience in human rights advocacy and the foreign policymaking process.



WHO IS WOLA?

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Executive Director, WOLA

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Friends of Latin America

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