

redefine their union movement, focusing on consolidating and supporting local level unions and regional and industrial federations, while de-emphasizing the cumbersome, politicized national confederation structures that workers are increasingly reluctant to follow. ACILS will support industrial unions' efforts to resist the imposition of undemocratic workplace organizations, and to defend unions' basic rights to organize and represent workers. In this important election year, ACILS will continue to support the MSL and [REDACTED] to unite union leaders of traditionally hostile political tendencies to defend core labor rights via a nonpartisan, rights-based platform, ensuring their effectiveness in representing worker's issues of employment, working conditions, and worker rights in the public and political debate. Emphasis will be placed on the metals and mining sector (known as "basic industries"), the communications sector, the agro-industrial sector (presently undergoing nationalization), the petroleum sector, the press sector, the industrial sector, and the public sector.

Colombia

In the past year, Colombia has made important progress with regards to labor rights and the exercise of democratic trade unionism. In April 2011, the President of Colombia signed a Labor Action Plan with the President of the United States that outlines key modifications to labor policy and labor administration, including the creation of a dedicated Ministry of Labor. While many of the items in the plan are in initial stages, full implementation could result in improved rights framework and labor stabilization for hundreds of thousands of workers. Among the most promising improvements are the new limits placed on the use of fraudulent subcontracting arrangements, which have left most of Colombia's working people outside of the provisions of the labor code, and new legal protections that more severely penalize violations of freedom of association. The Labor Action Plan includes many reforms that the Colombian labor movement has advocated for years, including some proposals that have been developed and advocated by the labor movement through previous American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS) NED-funded programs. While this new labor agenda marks a significant shift in Colombia's labor rights policy, there remain serious challenges to its full implementation and success. Threats and violence against trade unionists continue to affect the exercise of core trade union functions and fundamental rights. Over the last two decades, in many geographic areas of the country, and in various industrial sectors, violence and intimidation have been used to weaken union resistance to the imposition of increasingly flexible hiring systems, de-linking workers from the labor code and associated legal protections for workers. As a result, presently, of the 19 million working people in Colombia, only about two million can join a union, and of those only half can be covered by collective bargaining agreements. The rest are working in varying levels of informality, including those employed in the public sector and robust, highly profitable industrial and agro-industrial sectors. The creation of decent work opportunities for large groups of Colombian workers, and expansion of legal protections and guarantees of the exercise of basic rights, could have significant impact on the quality of democracy and civic participation in Colombia. The legal and policy modifications present clear opportunities for the advancement of human and labor rights, but only if they are effectively implemented and translate into real improvements for workers at the workplace level. In Colombia in 2012, ACILS proposes to focus its program to specifically prepare trade unionists to understand and effectively capitalize on the new opportunities presented by these administrative and legal changes. Building on previous ACILS work toward policy change and union membership strengthening, ACILS will train union leaders and legal representatives on new legal prescriptions, will build capacity to analyze improvements and challenges to fundamental rights, and will assist in developing legal strategies and test cases to press for real implementation of the regulatory and policy changes. Activities will be targeted to union leaders at the national level as well as affiliated unions in economic sectors where changes in the regulatory environment could set important precedents to positively impact labor relations across the country.