

INTERNATIONAL NEWS



CUPE 1004 members are building partnerships for global justice

By Kyla Epstein - CoDevelopment Canada

WHAT DOES CODEV DO?

It might seem like an odd fit. A small B.C.-based NGO that works for social change and global education in the Americas whose staff are also CUPE 1004 members. Any disconnect fades quickly when you know more about CoDevelopment Canada (CoDev) and find out that we were founded in 1985 by a group of activists, many of whom were Union activists, who wanted to go beyond a standard charitable model of supporting communities in Latin America and infuse the work with a solidarity approach. At CoDev we speak often about solidarity - we know that it means going beyond charity, seeking equality and building mutual support. Solidarity with our Latin American partners is a commitment to working together for social change, justice and quality in Latin America and here in Canada. Solidarity is what we were founded on. It is our *raison d'être*. We also know that our sisters and brothers in CUPE 1004 have long supported this way of working towards a more just society.

HOW DID WE BECOME CUPE 1004 MEMBERS?

In 1997 when CoDev's two staff members, Jim Rader and Karen Smith, were looking to unionize, Brother Ken Davidson was the President of CUPE 1004. Ken was familiar with CoDev work through his roles on CUPE BC's International Solidarity Committee and with CUPE National's Global Justice Committee. As an act of solidarity, CUPE 1004 generously offered to take on our (very) small bargaining unit. Since that first Collective Agreement to now, both sides come to the negotiating table with a set of mutual values and a shared interest in the strength of the collective operation of CoDev. We're heading into our sixth Collective Agreement and our staff are proud to be members of Local 1004.

CoDev builds partnerships between like-minded organizations in Canada and Latin America to encourage learning, social change, and community empowerment. These partnerships educate Canadians about Latin America and allow them to directly support the region. Such connections build solidarity, mutual understanding and ultimately improve prospects for a fairer world.

THERE'S ALSO COFFEE!

That's right; in 1997 CoDev founded our social enterprise, Café Etico. Café Etico is an organic, fairly-traded coffee company that supplies delicious roasts to customers across the Lower Mainland including the Local 1004 and CUPE BC offices! Most recently Café Etico has launched an exciting multi-year project that helps farmers and their co-operatives improve their coffee quality and their ability to process and market their agricultural production. Working with the cooperatives Flor de Pancasan and Flor de Dalia in Nicaragua, the project will benefit over 140 coffee-farming families. Café Etico Coordinator, Kirsten Daub, has been active in 1004 as a Trustee and has been a delegate to the VDLC.

WHAT ARE THESE 1004 MEMBERS UP TO?

Through our partners in Latin America we support some incredible social change work. In our Labour Rights Program CoDev supports solidarity between Canadian Trade Unions and local groups working for social justice in sweatshops. CoDev's partners educate and empower workers in their struggle to protect their Labour rights. Most of the people working in the sweatshops are women and our partners in this program area are at



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the front lines of the struggle to for women's rights. Earlier this year our partner, MEC (Maria Elena Cuadra Movement of Employed and Unemployed Women) and the wider women's movement in Nicaragua achieved a significant victory when the Nicaraguan government voted to bring in a Law Against Violence Against Women.

CoDev's Education Rights partners improve public education by increasing gender equity, both in the classroom and in education Unions' developing participatory classroom teaching practices; and promoting public input into policy creation. In Honduras, our partners are on the front lines of defending the attacks on public education that have increased following the coup in 2009. In Colombia, CoDev works with the Colombian Teachers' Federation (FECODE) in Cordoba - the most dangerous place in the world to be a teacher.

Human Rights is not just a program area for CoDev but is the underlying goal for all of our work. We believe this comes from supporting grassroots community groups working to improve people's health and social well-being. Our partners enable local people to find their own solutions for improving their communities. All of our community-led development projects are initiated and designed by the communities themselves, enabling local people to find their own solutions for improving their communities. In 2003 we began work without Colombian partner in, NOMADESC (Association for Research and Social Action) whose work truly embodies a community-based empowerment approach. NOMADESC strengthens human rights through education and defense initiatives with Unions, indigenous and Afro-descendent communities in Colombia. Their work is vital for the communities and

organizations who face violence and displacement daily. Many of you will remember meeting NOMADESC Director, Berenice Celeyta on her two visits to Canada.

In addition to the work we do with our amazing Latin American partners, CoDev works with Canadians through our Public Engagement Program. We look to help Canadians increase their connections to global issues and the challenges of our partners in Latin America. Involving Canadians is a key component of CoDev's partnership model. CoDev works especially closely with its Canadian partners, sharing information from their Latin American partners and providing education on development and social justice.

HOW CUPE HAS SUPPORTED OUR WORK

Over the years we have been supported by CUPE in so many ways. CUPE BC became a Canadian Partner in 1992 and currently supports MEC (Nicaragua), NOMADESC (Colombia) and SNTP (Cuba). CUPE National - Global Justice Committee became a Canadian Partner in 2000 and supports those same partners as well as the Honduran Women's Collective and the Central American Women's Maquila Network. In addition, 15 CUPE Locals have supported CoDev by becoming organizational members. Becoming an organizational member allows members in a Local to learn about the impact of International Solidarity and receive news on CoDev's campaigns, events and actions. We are grateful for the support of CUPE and are proud to be members of Local 1004.

For more information about CoDev please visit our website! www.codev.org.