

Unifor Social Justice Fund

2023

Annual Report



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ABOUT

The Unifor Social Justice Fund (SJF) is funded by employer contributions negotiated by Unifor Locals during collective bargaining. Money from the fund is used to support community groups, charitable organizations, trade unions and workers organizations – both in Canada and around the world – to strengthen democracy, improve labour and human rights, promote equitable development, and contribute to poverty reduction and social justice.

The Fund is a registered charity managed by a Board of Directors comprised of Unifor and community leaders and is guided by principles of social unionism and working-class and international solidarity.



For more information visit unifor.org/sjf

WELCOME MESSAGE



In 2023, as Unifor celebrated its ten-year anniversary as a labour union, we also celebrated ten years of the Social Justice Fund (SJF). Over the past decade, the SJF continued to build upon the work and legacy of the CAW Social Justice Fund and the CEP Humanity Fund, supporting nearly 300 projects and hundreds of organizations across Canada and around the world.

From protecting and promoting human and workers' rights, access to education, health care and clean water, humanitarian aid, gender equity and more – the fund has truly made a positive impact. However, the world continues to grapple with a number of overlapping social, political and economic threats. From devastating Canadian wildfires, global conflicts

in Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan, rising global inequality, forced displacement and human rights abuses against vulnerable communities, we are living in what feels to be a perpetual state of crisis.

But that is exactly why the SJF exists. To help support the many groups and organizations working tirelessly every day to ensure our humanity in the face of adversity remains intact – especially when things are at their bleakest.

Helping people in crisis to survive one day longer in the most difficult of conditions, creating security and hope for the future – not out of charity, but because that is the spirit in which the labour movement was founded and what unions do every day. Solving problems collectively, in unity and solidarity.

We know more needs to be done to tackle the root causes of many of these critical issues. Through the SJF we will continue supporting projects across Canada and around the world to do just that – giving people and communities the resources and tools they need to fight for a better world. Because a better world is possible.

We know this because we hear and read inspiring stories being shared with us from our partners on the ground all the time. Powerful and inspiring stories of resiliency and social change, giving us the drive and momentum to continue growing our fund so that we can make an even greater impact.

Through the SJF, we will continue to promote Unifor's reputation of not just being a labour union fighting for workers' rights, but a union that fights for human rights, equity and social and economic justice for all, at home and abroad.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lana Payne".

In Solidarity,
Lana Payne
Unifor National President & SJF Chair

SJF 2023 BY THE NUMBERS

National & International Project Funding

\$1.7 Million

Donation & Emergency Humanitarian Relief Funding

\$859,000

Organizations Supported

237

This includes donations made to 66 food banks and 74 women's shelters across Canada, during our December holiday donation drive.

International Projects

20

Number Of Countries

15+

Canadian Projects

12



SJF PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

LATIN AMERICA

CUBA

CARE Canada: Improving Health Care In Cuba



In partnership with CARE Canada, this two-year project targets health care challenges experienced in four low-income communities in the Cuban municipality of Jovellanos – La Isabel, La Carlota, Carols Rojas, and Horacio Rodriguez. With a combined population of around 25,000, these areas grapple with pronounced health disparities and limited access to quality medical care. Even though Jovellanos houses a network of 53 healthcare clinics, preliminary consultations with these clinics

have revealed urgent shortages of medical supplies, highlighting a glaring need for intervention.

Project resources will be focused on three key areas: Enhancing sexual and reproductive health services, particularly contraception; provision of medical equipment to local health clinics to ensure health care providers have the necessary tools to deliver high-quality care to the community, and provision of first aid supplies for local communities to contribute to better community resilience and preparedness.

Did you know: Cuba's health care system has been facing significant challenges, including reduced ability to replenish health care supplies and medicines, as well as outdated medical equipment and technology. This has negatively impacted population health outcomes. For instance, infant mortality rates increased to 7.5 per 1,000 live births in 2022, from 4.9 in 2020. Under-five mortality increased to 9.5 per 1,000 live births in 2022, from 6.2 in 2020.



HAITI

Partners in Health Canada: Life-Saving Malnutrition Treatment for Children in Haiti



Despite international efforts, severe acute malnutrition in Haiti remains a significant threat to children under five, leading to high rates of child mortality. Zamni Lasante, the largest non-governmental health services provider in the country, tackles malnutrition through interventions, including producing 'Nourimanba', a peanut-based therapeutic food, at a plant in central Haiti, using peanuts grown by local Haitian farmers. This model of treatment of using fortified food as medicine, is a practical, global standard of care for malnutrition, saving millions of lives globally each year.

This three-year project will assist Partners in Health Canada to support local Nourimanba production that will aid in combating child malnutrition. Using an average treatment course of between three and eight months, this program

will result in lifesaving treatment for approximately 100 to 260 children per year.

Did you know: Approximately 1 of every 10 children in Haiti will die before reaching five years of age – a trend largely driven by hunger and malnutrition. Even when acute malnutrition is not fatal, it is a major source of suffering and results in a host of child developmental issues.

ECUADOR

Artistri Sud: Back to our Roots Catalyzing Women's Food Sovereignty



The project, in collaboration with Montreal-based organization Artistri Sud, aims to empower Mestizo, Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian women farmers from rural communities in Ecuador, to increase their financial autonomy and generate fair and sustainable income from their regenerative farming efforts.

Key project outcomes will include: supporting Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian women farmers to improve their economic situation by recognizing their rights to land and fostering their involvement in decision-making for local economic development; providing farmers with the business skills needed to sell their products to national and international markets by offering courses in micro-entrepreneurship; fostering sustainability of their leadership program, and encouraging mutual support and collaboration among farmers through a year-long coaching program, and supporting them in exploring collaborative social

entrepreneurship options such as the formation of a co-operative.

Did you know: The poverty rate for Indigenous women in Ecuador stood at 78% in 2022.

SJF PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

EUROPE

MEDITERRANEAN

Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders: Search and rescue in the Central Mediterranean



Every year, thousands of people fleeing war, persecution and poverty at home attempt the treacherous journey across the Mediterranean to Europe. And every year, countless lives are lost on these journeys. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has been active in search and rescue activities in the central Mediterranean since 2015, working on eight different search and rescue vessels, at times in partnership with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Over the last eight years, MSF medical teams have provided vital assistance to more than 85,000 people, including children, in distress at sea. In addition to supporting

MSF's search and rescue and emergency medical care for asylum seekers, the SJF will also support advocacy activities targeted at European countries to assume search and rescue responsibilities and influence local migration policies and practices, including combatting the criminalization and discriminatory administrative practices used by government officials against NGOs engaged in supporting migrants.

Did you know: The annual number of migrant deaths and disappearances in all the Mediterranean jumped from 2,048 in 2021 to 2,411 in 2022, and to 3,041 by the end of 2023. It is considered one of the deadliest routes for migrants in the world.



SJF PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

AFRICA

ETHIOPIA

SOS Children's Villages: Keranyo Family & Community Strengthening Program



SOS Children's Villages is a global non-governmental organization that focuses on providing care and support to orphaned and abandoned children. Their program in Keranyo, launched in 2021 in an impoverished sub-city of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, is known to be a destination for vulnerable migrant families. Working in collaboration with the SJF, the project aims to improve the overall well-being of vulnerable children, while empowering marginalized single mothers and caregivers so that they can sustainably meet their needs through a combination of skills development and business training programs. The project will focus on three action areas: increasing the use of comprehensive early child care and development services, making them more accessible to vulnerable children; improving parental care by empowering women with education, job skills development and business training; and improving the safety of women and children by strengthening the capacity of community-based organizations to prevent and respond to rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence. Over the three years of this project, an estimated 500 vulnerable children raised by single women will benefit from the Keranyo daycare centre and receive education and 600 women will participate in positive parenting and life skills development classes, learning about women and children's rights and how-to best care for their family.

Did you know: In Ethiopia, only 3% of children are registered at birth. The lack of official documentation means that children and families can be denied their rights to healthcare, education and social assistance.

SOUTH AFRICA

Plenty Canada: South Africa Daycare Sustainable Development Project



Plenty Canada is an Indigenous, not-for-profit organization, based in Lanark, Ontario. Their work is driven by their commitment to Indigenous cultural revitalization and the building of cultural capacity within communities, both in Canada and around the world. Plenty Canada partners with Xitsundzuxo Kgotso Nyango in South Africa to support the Tsundzukani Bright Eyes Daycare Centre, which faces challenges regarding stable and reliable access to electricity and water supply, hindering its full potential and leading to water shortages during the dry season. In partnership with the SJF, the organization will address these issues with the installation of a 5KW solar power system, including the installation of a submersible water pump, a refrigerator and a couple of cooking related kitchen appliances, basic lights and plugs for every classroom, along with a borehole for reliable water supply. These

improvements will help support the structural development of the daycare, providing a safe and nurturing environment for children in rural communities, fostering education and community engagement.

Did you know:

Approximately 19% of the rural population of South Africa lacks access to a reliable water supply and 33% do not have basic sanitation services. Over 26% of all schools (urban or rural), and 45% of clinics, have no water access.



SJF PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

ASIA

INDIA

One Prosper International: Supporting the Education of Girls in the Thar Desert Region of India



The Thar Desert is one of the poorest regions in India. Malnutrition and female illiteracy are the key challenges facing the people of the Thar Desert, as well as access to clean water due to rapidly diminishing ground water. As a result, girls are frequently required to accompany their mothers to fetch water, often 5 to 7 hours a day, impeding their ability to attend school. The SJF has teamed up with One Prosper International to work to change lives of girls in the region through a holistic solution named “Parivartan”, which means “transformation” in Hindi. Project activities include the construction of rainwater

harvesting tanks, agricultural support and the provision of seeds and training in organic farming practices to increase food access, and providing up to 200 girls from low-income families with bicycles, school supplies and school tuition coverage for one year.



Did you know: Across India, male literacy rates stood at nearly 85% for men and 70% for women (2017). The largest gap was in the region of Rajasthan, where literacy rates for women stood at only 57%, compared to 80% for men.

NEPAL

World Accord: Socioeconomic Transformation Program for Marginalized Women in Nepal



This project aims to empower women from traditionally excluded groups – socially, economically and politically – to live a dignified life in society. To achieve these objectives, the project aims to: strengthen capacity of women’s affinity groups; self-help community development programs to promote growth, and awareness and education programs for women to reclaim their rights.

Activities will include: conducting technical trainings on micro-finance and micro-enterprises, specifically in the areas of organic farming, sustainable soil management, animal husbandry and irrigation management; regular group meetings with women’s affinity groups to identify community needs, plan solutions and explore resources; coordinate meetings between women’s groups and local

resource providers, government, and non-profits to develop strategies to overcome community issues; initiating a micro-loan program for women to start income generating activities, and education and awareness programs on topics like climate change, gender equality and women’s rights.

Did you know: Nepal is considered one of the poorest nations in the world. Using the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), the United Nations estimates that 64.7% of the country’s population is living in poverty. Approximately 44% of Nepalis are deprived of formal education, health care, and access to basic resources.



SJF PROJECT SNAPSHOTS CANADA

Christie Refugee Welcome Centre: Child Advocate Support for Unaccompanied Refugee Children



The Christie Refugee Centre, based in Toronto, is a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting refugees and asylum seekers in Canada, providing crucial support, including settlement services, housing assistance, legal aid and counseling. The Centre offers a specialized program aimed at supporting children making refugee claims in Canada, consisting of 'designated representatives' to act as a child advocate and designed to ensure that the child's best interests are represented in proceedings before the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.

This program, established in 2022, focuses on early involvement, enabling timely support, access to settlement services, and identification of child protection concerns. The SJF will be supporting the extension of this program's reach to enable a greater number of referrals from various additional partners, with the aim to prevent missed deadlines, ensure quality counsel, and minimize exploitation risks. The Centres recognized training program has been shared nationally, positioning Centre workers as experts in child refugee representation and aspiring to contribute to a more child-friendly refugee determination system.



Did you know: It is estimated that every year, nearly 3,000 unaccompanied children arrive in Canada seeking refugee status.

CANADA

Water First: Environmental Water Indigenous Internship Program



Water First is a Canadian non-profit organization focused on improving water quality in Indigenous communities. It's mission involves providing training and education in water treatment and environmental stewardship to address water challenges faced by Indigenous peoples. Many Indigenous communities have identified technical skills training as critical to building their capacity to address local water challenges.

Additionally, the program has identified greater employment opportunities for youth as a need. This three-year project will see the launch of the new Environmental Internship program, which will provide 15-month paid internships to Indigenous youth and young adults to develop technical and employment skills and achieve certifications to work in water and fish resource management within or near their own communities. Interns will learn through a combination of in-person workshops, online learning and experience on the land, all in their home communities.

Did you know: In Canada, 14% of Indigenous communities are affected by a boil water advisory.



CANADA

Geneva Centre for Autism Barrier-Free Service Project

Based in Toronto, the Geneva Centre for Autism (GCA) leads in the development and delivery of clinical intervention programs and services for children, youth and adults with autism. Over 3,000 families across the Greater Toronto Area are served by the GCA each year. The SJF is supporting the organization's Barrier-Free Service Project, a new initiative aimed at eliminating barriers to autism services for vulnerable families. The project will focus primarily on supporting the cost of transportation for low-income families and translation/interpretation services for newcomer families. The goal is to find a solution for every family to have access to critical autism programs and services, regardless of barriers such as language and socio-economic status.

Did you know: Approximately 1-2% of Canadians are on the autism spectrum, and 1 in 66 Canadian children and youth (5 to 17 years) are diagnosed with autism.



Emergency Humanitarian Aid

Every year, the SJF allocates emergency funds to respond to urgent humanitarian crises – from natural disasters, conflict, epidemics, famines and more.



Turkey/Syria Earthquake

In February of 2023, the SJF made a donation of \$75,000 to the Canadian Humanitarian Coalition, to provide emergency relief and assist those affected by the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck the two countries. An estimated 55,000 people lost their lives while millions more lost their homes and were forcibly displaced.

War in Gaza

In late 2023, the SJF made a donation of \$50,000 to the Humanitarian Coalition and just over \$14,000 to Health Partners International Canada to help provide emergency humanitarian aid and essential medical supplies to Palestinians impacted by Israel's war with Hamas. In the first two months of the war alone, nearly 20,000 Palestinians were killed – a disproportionate number of them being women and children – and a further 56,000 were reported injured.



Canadian Wildfires

In 2023, the SJF made a series of donations to the Canadian Red Cross totalling \$100,000, to help support with emergency relief efforts brought on by the wildfires that affected nearly every region of the country and which resulted in over 200,000 Canadians being placed under evacuation order.



Ten Years of International Solidarity



Over the past ten years, the Unifor Social Justice Fund has:

- Supported over 215 international projects in over 60 countries
- Worked in collaboration with over 55 international organizational project partners
- Supported over 75 Canadian projects
- Made donations to over 450 organizations across Canada
- Contributed over \$28 million to support national and international efforts ranging from emergency aid and humanitarian relief, gender equity, human and workers' rights, access to clean water, community development, education, health care, and more.

During Unifor's Ontario Regional Council meeting in Ottawa in December 2023, the SJF hosted an evening reception to mark the 10 year anniversary of the Social Justice Fund. The evening saw Unifor members, staff and leadership joined by over a dozen international, national and local non-profit organizations and charities that the SJF has partnered with over the years to celebrate our mutual work in supporting life changing and life saving projects and working towards building a better world.

The evening included an announcement of special 10th anniversary SJF grants that were established to support a series of legacy projects - projects that would make a longstanding impact in regions and communities in Canada and around the world. Six organizations were selected as recipients for this special one-time \$100,000 grant, for a grand total of \$600,000.

The recipients included:

Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders

In support of their Academy for Healthcare Program, a special education and training program aimed at strengthening the skills of frontline healthcare workers in various parts of the world to better prepare them in responding to needs in key areas including nursing and midwifery, outpatient care, medical humanitarian action and infectious diseases. This is in addition to supporting their People on the Move initiative, working to support refugees and internally displaced persons through health needs rapid assessments, public health programs and provision of essential medical supplies.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

In support of UNHCR's new Emergency Action Fund, to enhance their emergency preparedness abilities in responding to global emergencies and provide ongoing assistance and humanitarian aid to regions once global attention during a crisis subsides. As well, the SJF will be supporting their Aiming Higher program - a program providing scholarships to refugee students allowing them to further their education by attending post-secondary school and focuses on providing holistic supports for students in areas such as housing, language classes, tuition and more.



Tears to Hope Society

In the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation, this project will support the Tears to Hope Society's work around Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) through four key initiatives: designing community education toolkits, organizing MMIWG Family Healing Retreats, hosting special youth camps, and coordinating the Tears to Hope Relay, all aimed at promoting healing, prevention, and education, particularly focusing on Indigenous youth and families of MMIWG.

Romero House

Supporting the work of Romero House, a Toronto community-based refugee settlement and support organization, this initiative will assist in providing newly arrived refugees in the city with much needed transitional housing and immigration and settlement supports so that they can build their lives in Canada.

Oxfam Canada

In support for Oxfam's new Advocacy in Action – a project which brings together several distinct initiatives under one unifying goal: to change social, political and economic conditions that trap vulnerable people in poverty. This project will include supporting workers and improving rights for garment workers in Bangladesh; supporting gender equity initiatives in collaboration with 40 women's organizations across Canada and enhancing advocacy efforts at the federal government level, and supporting national and international groups with small grants to build their capacity in doing direct advocacy work with policy-makers and building up local campaigns and workplace actions.

CODE

In support of CODE's efforts to improve literacy skills for primary-aged students in Liberia and Sierra Leone, by aiding in the development of 12 new locally authored and illustrated reading anthologies filled with short stories, poems, and non-fiction pieces to engage and inspire young students who have limited access to quality books. Each anthology will be accompanied by a teachers' guide and workshops. A total of 67,000 books and anthologies will be distributed to 108 primary schools to support the literacy and learning of nearly 30,000 girls and boys in the two countries.

DONATIONS

Every year, the Social Justice Fund makes donations to support hundreds of local, provincial, national and international organizations, supporting a range of important social causes, issues and events. Here are just some of what the SJF supported in 2023:

Women & Gender Equity

- Women's Legal Education & Action Fund (LEAF)
- Sistering
- 100 Accomplished Black Canadian Women

LGBTQ+ Rights

- EGALE Canada
- ÉGIDES-Alliance internationale francophone pour l'égalité et les diversités
- Rainbow Railroad

Women's Shelters

- Foundation La Rue Des Femmes
- Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter
- Victoria Women's Transition House
- Ikwe Widdjiitiwin
- Monarch Place
- Nova House
- Willow House
- Antigonish Women's Resource Centre
- Bethesda House
- Haven House
- Nelson House of Ottawa-Carleton
- Women's House Serving Bruce and Grey
- Domestic Abuse Services Oxford
- Regina Transition House
- Maison d'accueil et d'hébergement La Chambree
- Anderson House



Disabilities

- Independent Living Centre Kingston
- Orbis Canada
- Association Sourires Adaptés

Children & Youth Services

- Motivation Jeunesse 16/18 Inc.
- Big Brother Big Sisters of Victoria Capital Region
- Bullying Canada

Food Security

- Hamilton Food Share
- Surrey Food Bank Society
- Edmonton Gleaners Association (Edmonton's Food Bank)
- Regina and District Food Bank
- Harvest Manitoba (Winnipeg Harvest)
- Sudbury Food Bank
- Seva Food Bank
- Simcoe Hall Settlement House
- Moisson Montreal
- Moisson Quebec
- Woodstock First Nation Health Centre
- Labrador Friendship Centre
- Upper Room Hospitality Ministry
- Niqinik Nuatsivik-Nunavut Food Bank
- Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank

Indigenous Solidarity

- Ka Ni Kanichihk



Labour & Human Rights

- Centre International de Solidarite Ouvriere
- Independent Jewish Voices

Social & Community Services

- CACTUS Montreal
- Malvern Family Resource Centre
- Jane Alliance Neighbourhood Services

Arts, Culture, Communications

- ArtHeart Community Art Centre
- RadioLabour

Immigrant and Refugee Services

- Immigrant Women Services Ottawa
- Calgary Immigrant Women's Association
- Halifax Refugee Clinic
- Journey Home Community





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