From Sweatshop to Human Development

Hi, good afternoon, my name is Maritza Umanzor, I work with the organizing unit of the women's movement Malida Ayamontez, and I’ve worked with them for twelve years. but before that I worked for fifteen years as a domestic worker, as a household worker.

my organization places it's emphasis on work with women both youth and adult women. And we also prioritize the sectors that are most vulnerable, most exploited and socially excluded, and those who are living in poverty. And we place our focus on empowering women to make a change.

one of our principal strengths as an organization is our presence in the territories, or the regions, of the country. We also have an organizational scheme and a socio-political analysis. and we believe in the autonomy of organizing. and we focus on training and educating women to improve their self esteem.

Good afternoon, my name is Vilma Vanegas, i’s a volunteer promoter with my organization Maria Elena Cuadra working in unemployed women's movement. I’ve worked with them for eleven years. I’m also a free trade zone worker, i have been for twenty years. And I work with MEC as a volunteer.

I would like to thank Horizons for their solidarity, because that solidarity and support has allowed us to push for demands with our government. I really believe in relationships like the ones we have with Horizons - of solidarity and that have ethics at their foundation. And I would like to push for an economy that's more humane - a human based economy and for improved values.

My name is Marta Zaldaña and I'm a union member, and I’m currently the general secretary of the Federation of Independent Associations and Unions of El Salvador. the work that we do at my organization is we work with both men and women workers who work in the public sector, the municipal sector, the maquila or sweatshop sector, and specifically women in the rural areas. Actually my organization is made up of 90% women, and we really believe in the leadership of women. our principal goal as an organization is to organize both men and women into unions.

Good afternoon, my name is Maritza Umanzor and the reason why the principle of solidarity is so important in the life of people is because it strengthens the potential that we have to change our situation. Equally, I’d like to say that it's important to have solidarity between women and between nations, because this allows us to grow as women. we are able to learn about the public policies of different countries and we can empower ourselves and grow.

I'm Marta Zaldañafrom El Salvador and for me and for the union movement and the labour movement; solidarity has been the principle foundation of our work and in our search for the recognition of our demands. in our search also for a more just society, this brotherhood and sisterhood is important in all struggles - struggles of resistance - and struggles against any challenges and attacks that come our way. and it's only based on those values that we can move ahead.

Maritza Umanzor, my message for the people is that we organize ourselves. that we place our hope on this strength of solidarity. that we think of those that are farthest from us. that we need this solidarity, that we need this so that our countries and our peoples can grow and develop and that they can come out of poverty. and so here right now what we're experiencing is that the Canadian public is listening to us, and i would like them to listen to this message.

Marta Zaldaña, and my message is to strengthen this process of organization. it doesn't matter what space you're organizing in - whether you're youth, whether you're men, women - whether you're organizing in schools, in churches, in your work place, organizing is fundamental because only the people can save the people.

Vilma Vanegas and I'd like to say thank you. we've been received very warmly. and we've seen lots of progress here and we see the situation that's here. but i believe that we need to unite as peoples, because alone we're invisible but united we're invincible.