

# PANELLIST BIOS

Short bios on the panelists for the World Day of Social Justice – 10 February 2009



International  
Labour Office



**Mary Robinson**, the first woman President of Ireland (1990-1997) and more recently the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-2002), is the President of Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative. As an academic, legislator and barrister, she has always sought to use law as an instrument for social change.

The recipient of numerous honors and awards throughout the world, Mary Robinson is a Member of the Elders, Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders, and Vice President of the Club of Madrid. She is Chair of the GAVI Alliance, Honorary President of Oxfam International, President of the International Commission of Jurists, and serves on several boards including the UN Global Compact and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation.

She was educated at the University of Dublin (Trinity College), King's Inns Dublin and Harvard Law School.

For more information, please consult <http://www.realizingrights.org/>

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**Renana Jhabvala** first joined SEWA as an organiser the organisation was just five years old. She started assisting women workers who were stitching quilts in the Muslim area of Ahmedabad, and formed the first Co-operative in SEWA.

In 1981, she was elected the Secretary of SEWA under Elaben Bhatt and organised bidi workers, tobacco and agriculture workers, garment workers and many others. Ms. Jhabvala started the first co-operative in SEWA and subsequently helped to develop co-operatives for SEWA.

She was active in starting SEWA Bharat and supervised SEWA in Madhya Pradesh. In 1995, she became the National co-ordinator for SEWA and launched the Delhi office, as well as handling much of the International work, particularly for the Women in Informal Employment Globalising and Organising (WIEGO) network. She has worked closely with ILO for the Homeworkers Convention in 1996 and the Informal Workers Resolution in 2002.

In 2000, Ms. Jhabvala became the Chairperson of SEWA Bank and is currently the President of SEWA Bharat .

For more information, please consult <http://www.sewa.org/>

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**Lucas Benitez** is co-founder of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. A farmworker from Guerrero, Mexico, he came to the U.S. on his own when he was 16 to help support his five brothers and sisters. By organizing with his fellow migrant farmworkers, Lucas helped secure the first wage increase for tomato pickers in 20 years and exposed and stopped several slavery rings.

The CIW is a community-based, worker-run organization whose members are mostly immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala and Haiti who work in the agricultural fields of Florida and along the East Coast of the US. The CIW fights for fair wages

and humane working conditions for farmworkers who make sub-poverty wages, receive no benefits, and are excluded from protections enjoyed by most other workers in the US.

Since 1992, the CIW has helped to uncover, investigate, and bring to justice numerous modern-day slavery operations resulting in freedom for over 1,000 workers. Since 2001, the CIW's Campaign for Fair Food has focused on making the multi-billion dollar fast food industry take responsibility for the wages and working conditions of the farmworkers at the bottom of their supply chain. In 2005, after a 4-year boycott, Taco Bell and their parent company Yum Brands, the world's largest restaurant chain, entered into an historic agreement with the CIW. The agreement included the first-ever direct payment from the corporate buyer to the harvesters in the suppliers' operations, and supply chain transparency, making possible a verifiable zero-tolerance policy for slavery.

In 2007 the CIW brought the fast-food giant McDonald's to the table and reached a landmark agreement marking the next step in the long struggle to eliminate sweatshop conditions and modern-day slavery in the US agricultural industry. In 2008 Burger King ,Whole Foods, and Subway joined Yum and McDonald's in working with the CIW to improve wages and working conditions for the farmworkers who pick their tomatoes. The CIW was the recipient of the 2003 Robert F Kennedy Memorial Human Rights Award and most recently the 2007 Anti-Slavery Award from Anti-Slavery International.

For more information, please consult <http://www.ciw-online.org/>

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