

FOCUS ON THE GLOBAL SOUTH



ANNUAL REPORT



2015



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2015 Highlights

- Marked the 20th anniversary of Focus on the Global South with a two-day International Conference on Peoples' Struggles and Alternatives - over 120 people attended, representing almost 80 organisations from 20 different countries
- Joined mass mobilisations in Paris and released our analysis on climate justice to show the importance of social movements in taking action on climate change
- Joined the mobilisations in Nairobi during the 10th WTO ministerial to relay civil society demands during international trade negotiations
- Played a central role in the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Right to Food visit to the Philippines and published a comprehensive report of her meeting with civil society organisations
- Coordinated the Peoples' APEC, which was hosted in the Philippines, and provided critique on the APEC agenda
- Co-organised the first ever Agrarian Reform Youth Congress in the Philippines, to cultivate a new generation of agrarian reform activists
- Organised a 10-day farmers' exchange in India, exposing Bangladeshi farmers and activists to agroecological practices
- Supported land rights activists and communities in Cambodia, helping to secure resolutions in several cases of land conflicts

Situational Context

Introduction

The march towards rapid economic growth by Asian states continued throughout 2015 with the development of large infrastructure projects, negotiations around regional and bilateral free-trade agreements and courting of private investment, often at the expense of the region's poor and marginalised populations, who continue to face dispossession of their homes and traditional livelihoods, poor labour conditions and environmental crises. This year also marked the introduction of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), which sees South East Asian nations move towards greater economic integration and freer movement of capital and labour. Progressive political and social change yet again failed to keep up with the progress made on economic development; human rights mechanisms continue to lag behind the global standard and governments are increasingly resorting to repressive laws to restrict freedom of speech and assembly.

The Philippine social-political landscape continued to privilege the country's economic and political elite despite it being the final year of the Aquino III administration, which had promised an agenda for political reform and good governance. The Aquino administration was racked by massive corruption scandals, mismanagement of public finances, unresolved extrajudicial killings, cases of increased assaults on and harassment of human defenders and social activists. All these spoke of the rottenness of the political system and the urgent need for more viable alternatives.

The Modi government in India forged ahead with massive infrastructure and energy projects, while stoking tensions between religious groups and minorities. Closer surveillance of civil society groups, including international and local NGOs, activists, and social movements came into force, as well as greater restrictions on receiving funds for activities from abroad, creating a challenging environment for actors opposing government policies and actions.

In the Mekong region, states still resorted to military, stilted legal systems, torture, and enforced disappearance to silence human rights defenders and activists. The Thai army made ample use of “attitude adjustment” to threaten activists and stifle opposing voices. In Laos, the government continued to succeed in instilling fear and self-censorship in the country, while in Cambodia, activists continued to be threatened, jailed and charged.

Yet these repressive conditions in the Asian region have not stopped social movements, activists, and other local actors from challenging state power, corporate power, and growing inequality, while also seeking to promote alternatives that would lead to political, economic, and social transformations. Focus has sustained, and even strengthened, its collaborative work with these organisations and movements, amplifying the call for justice.

In these national and regional contexts, Focus celebrated its 20th anniversary in August 2015 by holding a two-day international conference in Manila, bringing together colleagues, friends, allies, and social movements representatives to discuss the state of Asia and the world today

and how to overcome the present challenges we face. The conference created a space for collective debate about critical issues, renewed unities and solidarities, forged new partnerships, provided an opportunity to plan together for a better world, and celebrate 20 years of Focus’ activism for peace and justice.

The conference began with a [*keynote speech*](#) by our Board co-chair and co-founder, Walden Bello, on Focus’ work in the past 20 years. Panel discussions, world café-style dialogues, and presentations from allies and social movement leaders were integrated into the conference programme to bring about analysis, dialogue, debates, and sharing of experiences among participants from Asia and other global regions. Underpinning these activities within the conference was the goal to build a common understanding and synergy around people’s struggles and alternatives. The conference ended with aspiration, hope, and revitalised energy to work together to move the struggles forward and seek alternatives. *Read more on our conference website: focusweb.org/20years*



Walden Bello at our “Whose New Asia?” Conference. Photo credit: Raymond Panaligan

Message from Focus on its 20th Anniversary

This year, Focus on the Global South (Focus) celebrates 20 years of a dynamic, interesting, and rewarding life. Founded in 1995 at the height of the globalist project, Focus has witnessed many political, economic, and environmental crises and confronted them head on. Focus has joined hands with numerous organisations, movements, unions, thinkers, and activists to challenge economic and financial globalisation, neoliberalism, and dictatorial regimes. We have continued to oppose war, military occupation, and human rights violations, and to fight injustice and inequality at multiple levels. Our methodology from the onset has been to link paradigms with practice, and global, regional, national and local trends and actions.

Alongside resistance to injustice and inequity, Focus has always had a firm commitment to building alternative systems and frameworks to replace the structures of market capitalism and neoliberalism. These include deglobalisation, feminist economics, food sovereignty, agroecology, agrarian and aquatic reform, the commons, climate justice, and transitions to low-carbon economies and societies. A critical component of our vision is democratic accountability from states and inter-governmental bodies to the peoples of the world.

Over the past 20 years, Focus has also experienced significant changes as an organisation: we have expanded and contracted



Focus staff, August 2015. Photo credit: Joseph Purugganan

our size, opened, closed, and re-opened offices, and adapted ourselves to changing circumstances, while remaining true to our core beliefs. We have provided a home to numerous activists and researchers, and the Focus family now extends to many regions of the world.

In essence though, Focus is today as it was in 1995: a collective of activists committed to progressive change, healthy environments, justice, equality, dignity, peace, feminism, and pluralism. We are both proud and grateful to be able to celebrate our 20 years of life with the people, movements, and organisations that have founded, shaped, and supported us and kept us honest. This conference is an important space to celebrate milestones, foster dialogues about the future, renew unities, strength and solidarities, and forge new partnerships. We look forward to working together with present and future allies to build a better tomorrow.

Peoples' Alternatives for Asia: Defending Rights, Nature and Life

2015 marked the first year of our new three-year programme of work, *Peoples' Alternatives for Asia*. Within this programme, we have four main thematic areas: The Commons, Climate and Environmental Justice, Trade and Investment and a new area of work, Power and Democracy.

The Commons

Focus has been collaborating with social movements, NGOs, and other allies in Asia and globally to defend the rights of local communities to land, food and resources at national and international policy levels. We continued our advocacy-oriented and grassroots research on these issues, defending the agro-ecology practices of peasants and indigenous communities, supporting local resource rights activists and promoting Right to Food and Food Sovereignty.

International and Regional

Forums, Conferences, Round-Table Discussions

February

Focus on the Global South co-organised the conference **"Contested Access to Land in the Philippines and Indonesia"** with UP Third World Studies Center, UP Asian Center, University of Amsterdam and ISS. Focus staff presented on *Who owns the land after land reform*, facilitated sessions on gender and land, and synthesised the two-day conference.

March

On the occasion of the World Water Day (March 18), Focus, as facilitator of the Asia Working Group on Water, held a webinar titled **"Virtual World Water Day Party: Celebrating the Victories of the Global Water Justice Movement,"** which featured activists who shared their experiences in struggles to protect water resources and services around the world. It also became an opportunity to update each other and share strategies from key water campaigns. The Asia Working Group on Water is composed of organisations working on water justice issues.

April

Focus continued its engagement with the ASEAN People's Forum (APF) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia by organising the workshop called **"Reclaiming the Local Peoples' Rights to Land and Natural Resources."** This served as space where land rights activists had the opportunity to present their proposals on land and natural resource governance. To further foster and strengthen regional solidarity on the issue, we also conducted a post-AFP strategy meeting with our key partners in the region.

June

Focus organised a panel on **Social Movements and Agrarian Struggles** during the international academic conference titled **"Land grabbing, conflict, and agrarian-environmental transformations: perspectives from East and Southeast Asia."** Its goal was to discuss global land grabbing cases and generate deeper, meaningful, and productive debates on its causes and implications. Our panel featured land activists and representatives of social movements who presented their perspectives on and experiences in land grabbing and land/forest-related conflicts.

The conference was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and jointly organised by: BRICS Initiatives for Critical Agrarian Studies (BICAS); Land Deal Politics Initiative (LDPI); Mosaic Research Project; Transnational Institute (TNI); Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation (ICCO); Focus and Chiang Mai University. It gathered 240 participants from NGOs, governmental and intergovernmental organisations, social movements, research institutions, and development funding agencies from 39 countries.

Policy and Outreach

Shalmali Guttal, Focus' Executive Director, was elected to represent NGOs from the South in the Coordinating Committee of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) under the Committee for World Food Security (CFS) for a second term of two years (2016–2017). She also co-facilitates the civil society working groups on investment and water, respectively. She participated in the annual CSM and CFS meetings in Rome in October, where water, investment, and markets were key discussion issues. She was a key speaker in workshops on the links between trade-investment agreements, agricultural markets, and the right to food, and was also one of the negotiators for the CSM in negotiations on CFS decisions about the governance of water to ensure the right to food.

The purpose of this meeting was to finalise a technical guide for governments, civil society, and other concerned actors on how to operationalise the CFS-FAO Tenure Guidelines on land, forests, and fisheries in the context of the commons. She has served as member of the support team preparing the guidelines since 2014.

Ms Guttal also participated in an expert group meeting organised by the United Nations Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR), titled **“Early warning in the context of land-related human rights violations leading to an escalation of human rights violations, violence, or conflict.”** She spoke about the various impacts of business operations on human rights and actions needed to prevent human rights violations arising from business operations.

Focus also participated in the November 24–26 FAO-organised **Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on Agroecology** in Bangkok. To prepare for the Consultation, Focus, the International Planning Committee (IPC), and La Via Campesina co-organised a strategy meeting of social movements from the Asia-Pacific region which discussed issues related to agroecology in the region and to formulate positions around these issues.

Focus joined meetings of the **Convergence of Land and Water Struggles** at the World Social Forum in Tunis in March and in Paris in December. This is an important platform that brings together social movements, grassroots organisations, and civil society organisations to strengthen the defence of rights to land and water.

Research/Publications

Mary Ann Manahan, a senior programme officer from the Philippines office, produced two key papers on the issue of water. *Veolia in Asia* was produced as contribution to the alternative World Water Forum in South Korea in April. *In deep waters: addressing the water and climate crises*, became a chapter on water security

and climate change in the TNI book *The Secure and the Dispossessed: How the military and corporations are seeking to shape a climate-changed future*, published by Pluto Books.

A special double edition of *Policy Review*, with the theme **Understanding Land Grabbing and Land Rights in the 21st Century** launched in October. The key articles in the policy newsletter are: *The Context of Land Grabbing in the Philippines; Post-disaster Land Contestations; Tourism and the Struggle for Land; Economic Policies and Foreign Investments on Local Lands; Financialisation of Local Food Systems and implications to Local Land Investments.*

Mekong

Action Research in Cambodia

Community activists in Cambodia trained through **Focus' Action Research (AR) project** were active in seven provinces, documenting, mobilising, and raising awareness on

investment and land struggles. Over the year they helped to support and advise 33 communities, comprising over 4,000 households, who were affected by land or natural resource disputes.

To raise national awareness of the negative impacts of economic land concessions and forced evictions on peoples' lives and on nature, the AR teams held a [*national press conference*](#), together with the Community Peace Building Network (CPN), in Phnom Penh in February. The press conference was well-attended by media and NGOs, and several media reports about the conference came out after the event.

The cumulative and collaborative advocacy efforts to win back land from corporations and the state led to some progress for communities. Land conflicts in the villages of Pursat and Oddar Meanchey, Cambodia were resolved, while activists were able to get the National Assembly to investigate cases in Kampong Chhnang and Sihanoukville.



Action Research Team members receiving legal training.
Photo credit: Ridan Sun

Livelihoods trainings, for example on home gardening and raising livestock, were also given to the AR team members to help them improve their income and food security, a growing and significant problem for rural communities who are finding it harder to cover their basic needs, while also dealing with concerns about land and natural resource grabbing.

Save the Mekong Campaign

Focus worked alongside other founding members of **Save the Mekong** campaign to strengthen community voices and participation in the campaign's activities.

In July, Shalmali Guttal participated in the Steering Committee meeting in Amphawa, Thailand, which assessed the past successes and challenges of Save the Mekong. A special meeting of local community representatives from Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam took place in September, in order to plan a Mekong Peoples' Forum. The participants drafted a statement addressed to Mekong region governments about the importance of listening to community voices before planning dams and other water infrastructure projects in the Mekong basin. Ms Guttal assisted the participants in translating the statement into English and in strategising how to use the document. The Mekong Peoples' Forum took place in Can Tho, Vietnam in November; the Mekong people's statement was sent to the Mekong region governments shortly thereafter.

Philippines

In the Philippines, Focus stepped up its research and documentation, campaign work, political

education, and movement-building, especially concentrating on agrarian reform, land and water rights, and food security.

Agrarian Reform & Land Rights

We remained co-convenor and secretariat of the **Save Agrarian Reform Alliance (SARA)**. SARA continues to be the main platform for Focus' work on agrarian reform, rural development, land grabbing/land rights, and agrarian justice. In June, on the eve of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program's (CARP) 27th Anniversary, Focus and SARA organised a multi-sector mobilisation/protest called "*Daluyong: The Surge of Struggle for Land and Food*" in front of the Department for Agrarian Reform (DAR). It was attended by more than 400 farmers, rural women, youth, urban poor, and students. Part of the protest action was the padlocking and barricading of the DAR's main gates.

Focus and SARA also started working on the concept paper and strategies for the conduct of the CARPER (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with Reforms) Audit. The initiative aims to present society and government with an evidence-based and systematic accounting of the State's implementation of CARPER and the challenge of fully realising it; to conduct a financial audit of how funds were used and allocated vis-à-vis the objectives and implementation of CARPER; and to come up with a clear set of indicators to assess the success or failure of the program.

We also participated in joint efforts of civil society organisations to call for the immediate passage of **House Bill 4296 (HB4296)** or the **CARPER Extension Bill** and **HB 4375 in**

Congress. These efforts consisted of various actions organised by Sulong CARPER in May, such as the joint press conference at the House of Representatives, the Lakbayan (journey) mobilisations, as well as an action that called for the investigation into the violent dispersal of farmers who protested in front of the House of Representatives.

As part of its political education and movement-building work, Focus co-organised the first-ever **Agrarian Reform Youth Congress** in the Philippines in May. It was attended by about 70 students, youth leaders, and organisers. The Congress aimed to create a national platform/network of student and youth leaders which will actively promote agrarian reform and rural development as a youth issue, and heighten awareness and participation of the younger generation. Key leaders from the agrarian reform and rural development movement provided inputs on the history of the peasant movement, concepts of agrarian reform and rural development (ARRD), land rights as human rights, the challenges of climate change, gender dimensions of the issues, and updates on agriculture and agrarian reform. Leaders of the movement gave inspirational messages on community organising, advocacy, education, and research. The youth participants also shared their views and experiences in the various challenges faced by their generation today. It was capped with a field visit to an

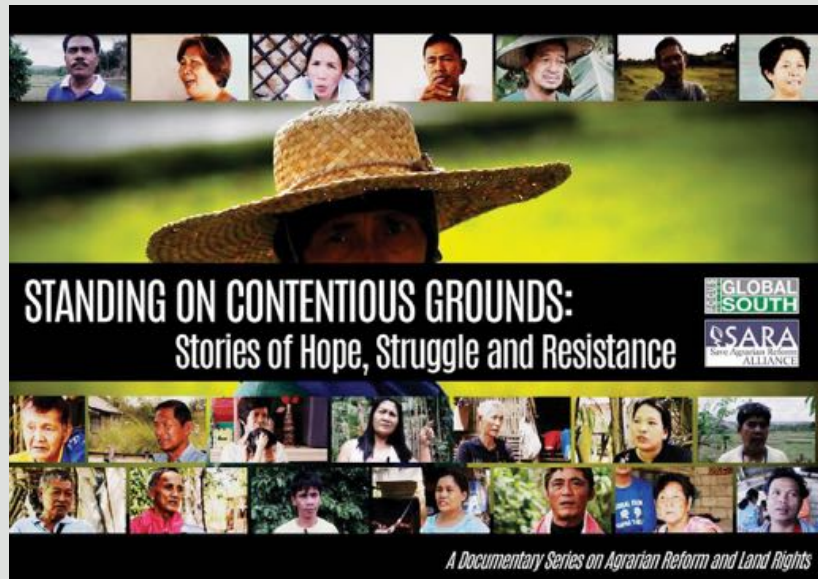
organic farm in Rizal, an afternoon visit/educational discussion with the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, a meeting with the Committee on Agrarian Reform, and demonstration of solidarity with the farmers camped out in front of the DAR. Follow-up activities were conducted in June and July: the core members of the Agrarian Reform Youth Congress actively participated in the June CARP anniversary mass action, and the final vision document and plan of action was circulated to the participants.

In solidarity with the farmers of Hacienda Dolores, Bondoc Peninsula, Yolanda-stricken areas, and Bataan, Focus Philippines helped in the writing and dissemination of media releases and in campaigning for these farmers' **local land struggles**. We are also part of the Task Force Hacienda Dolores, an ad hoc campaign committee of human rights groups, farmers, and agrarian reform advocates behind the "Free Apung Tony Campaign" and supporting actions to reclaim lands in Hacienda Dolores that should go to farmer-beneficiaries. In April and July, several mobilisations in front of the DAR and in front of the Pampanga Regional Trial Court, respectively, were held to call attention to situation of farmer-leader Apung Tony and the plight of Hacienda Dolores farmers. We helped create the Facebook page of Task Force Hacienda Dolores and an online petition for Apung Tony.

Standing on Contentious Grounds documentary series

In March, Focus and SARA launched “Standing on Contentious Grounds”, a series that documents struggles for land, cases of land grabbing, and post-land distribution accounts that have yet to find successful endings but can already show better beginnings for farmer-beneficiaries. So far, five documentary videos and articles featuring struggles in Luzon have been produced:

- “*Life at Hacienda Luisita*”, with an accompanying article by Salome Guiedion, a volunteer from the University of Montreal—one of the most contentious and controversial agrarian reform cases in the country, especially considering the lack of support services provision for newly installed agrarian reform beneficiaries
- “*Agaw Lupa*” or “*Land Grab*” tells the recent plights faced by farmers in Hacienda Dolores, whose lands are being grabbed and converted into a commercial/residential/recreational complex
- “*Hustisya*” or “*Justice*” emphasises the human rights violations committed against the farmers in Hacienda Dolores, the unjust detainment of one of their



leaders, and the unresolved killing of two more farmers

- “*Until when shall we wait*” highlights the difficulties faced by farmers in Abucay, Bataan, waiting for the implementation of agrarian reform and the anomalous purchase of their lands by a South Korean company
- “*Fenced in, fenced out*” narrates the stories of farmers and residents in Hermosa, Bataan, and their years of struggle for food security, life with dignity and peace, and a violent-free countryside.

These videos can be viewed on the [Focus YouTube account](#)

Right to Food/Food Security

As part of the **National Food Coalition (NFC)**, Focus has been engaging the Philippine Government on the issue of addressing the country's food security woes by adopting a human rights perspective in implementing food security programmes and supporting small-holder agriculture and fisheries production. In February, the UN's Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Dr. Hilal Elver, visited the Philippines and met with several government agencies and civil society organisations to assess the hunger and poverty situation in the country, as well as the challenges faced in attaining food security and fulfilling the right to food. During her visit, Dr. Elver issued a nine-point recommendation to address the challenges of hunger and to fully realise the right to adequate food, which revitalised the entire discourse on food and hunger in the country. Currently, the NFC is pursuing the passage of the National Food Framework Law or the "Zero Hunger Bill," which aims to integrate various Philippine policies on the right to food within a single framework.

The proceedings and recommendations from the meeting between Dr. Hilal Elver and Philippine CSOs were published in the book ***Right to Food***. The publication also covers themes such as indigenous peoples' rights and the right to food, prioritisation of smallholder agriculture, women workers in the informal economy, the climate crisis and food security, and food security versus mining (based on the presentations given by various groups during Dr. Elver's visit in February). More importantly, the publication also presents the recommendations of CSOs/POs on addressing the right to food at the national policy level and at the sectoral level.

In December, Focus co-organised the **Right to Adequate Food Conference**, which aimed to: (a) bring the right to food discourse into the national development agenda; (b) collectively assess and create a common understanding on the state of the right to adequate food in the country; (c) discuss government plans, programmes and actions (PPAs) on RTAF; (d) support people's struggles on the RTAF; and (e) recommend a joint government-people's agenda on the RTAF and come up with proposed actions. Around 150 participants coming from CSOs, POs, and representatives from government agencies attended the conference. The workshops generated critical information on food availability, accessibility, security, and safety. The workshop outputs were incorporated in the Zero Hunger Bill filed in Congress.

Water

Focus was part of the **National Conference on Food, Land, Water, and Climate Change (FLWC)** held in September, with over 100 participants coming from the agriculture, fisheries, water, and environment sectors in the Philippines. The objectives of the conference were to develop and launch a nationwide campaign on Food, Land, Water, and Climate Change and create a link to the Global Campaign on the same topic. Workshop outputs were incorporated into a National Food, Land, Water, and Climate Change Framework.

Focus, Freedom from Debt Coalition, Save Sierra Madre Network Alliance, Our Rivers Our Life, Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development, and Alyansa Tigil Mina (Stop Mining Alliance) were the main organisers behind the **2nd National Freshwater**

Conference in September which discussed the water crisis from a social movement and civil society perspective, anchoring it on the fundamental human right to water. The conference looked at the current state of Philippine freshwater resources and identified existing issues and emerging threats. A common agenda was drawn up for our future water campaigns.

In this conference, we shared a presentation, highlighting corporate interests and how governments have been supporting the corporate agenda. We also underscored how the water crisis has become an opportunity to push for more privatisation in all its various guises—stronger support for the private sector, greater deregulation, deepened commercialisation of the public sector (running of public services like a private business), and public-private partnerships (PPPs). Other key information generated from the conference were about: the link between water struggles in Asia and the wave of privatisation (the increasing push for bilateral, regional, and plurilateral trade and investment agreements); the push for corporate control of water despite the failure of privatisation; and the strong gains in re-municipalisation in Europe, US, and Asia.

Focus Philippines has also been **monitoring the privatisation of water** in Metro Manila, specifically the two cases of international arbitration proceedings lodged by the two private companies operating there. Together with the Freedom from Debt Coalition, Focus conducted several briefings with other CSOs and champions in the House of Representatives on the issue, with the objective of filing a resolution to call for a hearing on the case. In May, Focus participated in a dialogue with

the Regulatory Office of the MWSS and the Commission on Human Rights to discuss the updates on the arbitration case.

India

The highlight of Focus India's Commons work in 2015 was on agroecology, through the publication of resource materials, workshops, an exposure tour and presentations by Focus India's Head of Office, Afsar Jafri, at key events.



Afsar Jafri making a presentation on the importance of agroecology

Workshops, conferences and meetings

January

Focus participated at the one-day workshop on **Land Ordinance, Corporate Land Grab and Green Field Capital for Andhra Pradesh** organised by the National Alliance of Peoples Movement in New Delhi. The aim of the meeting was to examine different aspects of the Land Ordinance 2014, passed by the Central Government, and the large-scale land grabbing resulting from the development of a new 'greenfield' capital city of Andhra Pradesh.

February

Focus made a presentation titled, "**Agroecology can feed the world: An Indian perspective**", at the international workshop of the UK-India Agroecology Initiative at Calcutta University. This was jointly organised by the Centre for Pollination Studies, along with the Agricultural Ecology Group of the British Ecological Society and Society for Agro-ecology, India.

Focus attended the **India WASH Summit 2015** organised by WaterAid and the Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation and the Ministry of Urban Development in New Delhi. It aimed to effectively implement the Swachh Bharat Mission, a campaign launched by the government to make India "clean" through improved water, sanitation and waste management.

March

We participated in the following forums to promote, discuss, and learn from others on agroecology: the 5th National Organic Convention in Chandigarh; the Scientific Conference on Mainstreaming Agroecology;

and the Society for Agroecology-India farmers workshop in Karnal, Haryana, where we presented on the importance of agroecology as the best possible solution to deal with the present agrarian crisis in India. We also put up an exhibit to showcase some of the successful cases of agro-ecological practices.

April

Focus represented the National Platform against Water Privatisation in India at the "**National Consultation on Conservation of Ganga Basin: Possibilities and Challenges**" in Varanasi. This consultation was organised to oppose the government plan for the development of River Ganga and for building dams and barrages disturbing the natural flow of the river and affecting the livelihood of millions of people living near its banks. Afsar Jafri presented on the two aspects of the Ganga Development Plan, especially the Inland Water ways and the Ganga Riverfront Development project, and how they will impact on the sanctity of the River Ganga and the people living along the river in Varanasi.

July

Focus attended the National Workshop on "**Best Practices in Food and Livelihood Security in India: Lessons for Upscaling and Future Agricultural Policy Direction in India**" organised by the Council for Social Development (CSD) at the India International Centre, New Delhi.

Focus also attended the second meeting of the Global Network for the Rights to Food and Nutrition held in Kathmandu, which discussed the range of issues confronting the global food and nutrition sector, as well as future strategies of the network.

We joined the launch of the **Sarson Satyagraha (Non-violent resistance against GM Mustard)** led by Alliance for Sustainable & Holistic Agriculture (ASHA) network. From all reports, it was clear that the commercial release of GM mustard was expected any time, and therefore it was decided to launch the satyagraha against the entry of GM mustard into India and in defence of mustard seed diversity. The event started with a collective pledge-taking ceremony renewing our commitment to local seeds, agroecology, and food sovereignty, which brings peace to our lands and does justice to our farmers. The ceremony was followed by a meeting to plan various events and actions around the country to mobilise public opinion against the GM mustard.

August

Afsar Jafri was invited as keynote speaker at the “**International Experience Sharing Workshop on Agrarian Strategy**” at Dhaka, Bangladesh, a workshop on agrarian strategies, alternative farming, and agro-ecological experiences of Bangladesh and South Asia. He talked about alternative farming as viable alternative for small farmers. Besides researchers, economists, farmers, and activists, Mr. Rashed Khan Menon of the Government of Bangladesh also attended the workshop.

Focus participated in the general meeting of the **International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) Working Group** at Gujarat. Mr. Jafri, as resource person, discussed trade and agriculture in view of the WTO Ministerial in Nairobi. He also joined the side meetings on the IPC Asia process the IPC agroecology meeting in Bangkok happening in October.

September

Afsar Jafri was invited by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), Government of Delhi, for a **consultative workshop on the draft Water Policy**, also attended by the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and DJB Vice Chairman, Kapil Mishra. The Delhi draft Water Policy was formulated as per the mandate of the National Water Policy to address the issue of demand management, water conservation and water use efficiency, ground water management, etc. Focus and our partner organisations trashed the draft water policy, since it was designed to favour corporations. As a result, the Chief Minister and the Chairman DJB decided to further improve the policy. The Chief Minister also made a statement in the media stating that there will be no privatisation of water in Delhi. The DJB Vice Chairman further started that there is a need for a people-oriented planning and comprehensive approach to water, wastewater, and sewage. He also said that the draft policy is currently under review by experts and will be thrown open to the public for their suggestions.

October

Focus and Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) co-organised a one-day **South Asia Roundtable on Agrarian Questions** at the India International Centre in New Delhi, attended by more than 50 experts, activists, and practitioners of agriculture from across South Asia who discussed agrarian distress plaguing agriculture at an unprecedented level today. A wide range of issues pertaining to the sector—from the state-corporate onslaught in the form of forcible land acquisition, through the complexities of ownership, to the challenges of the increasing corporatisation of agriculture—were addressed by the speakers, attracting animated discussion.

Agroecology Exposure Tour

On 9-17 March, Focus India organised a 10-day exposure tour on agroecology, in partnership with Research Initiative Bangladesh (RIB) and Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS), for farmers and activists from Bangladesh. During the exposure tour, a delegation of eight people from Bangladesh (farmers, farm union activists, and researchers from RIB), three Focus staff, and one representative of RLS visited institutions and organisations that are known centres of agroecology in West Bengal and Orissa, and are engaged in promoting and conducting training in this field. The team also interacted with farmers and tribal groups, and learned about their experiences with, and the benefits of, cultivating indigenous varieties. Dialogue with farmers (mainly women farmers) and farm visits in Sudarbans exposed us to their integrated farming practices which included conserving seeds, vermicomposting, intercropping, nutrition garden (instead of kitchen garden), using weeds for nutrients, and building small ponds for water security and irrigation. Towards the end of the exposure tour, we visited a Panchayat-run Kashipur Kishore School on the outskirts of Kolkata, where they have introduced farming, biodiversity conservation, and nature classes as part

of their syllabus, and the kids actively participate in farming practices.

As part of the exposure tour, on 11-12 March, Focus organised a two-day workshop on **Agroecology and Seed Conservation** at the Basudha Centre of Agrobiodiversity and Vrihi Seed Bank at Rayagada in Orissa, conducted by Dr. Debal Deb. At the workshop, farmers were taught about the conservation of indigenous varieties of seeds, seed selection, maintaining passport data of seeds by documenting various characteristics and features of a seed, maintaining community seed banks, SRI techniques, maintaining soil health through mulching, intercropping, and multiple cropping. Focus also organised a **Half-Day Conference with Left Experts** and farmer leaders at the Southern Plaza Hotel in Kolkotta. The key objective of the conference was to have a discussion with left experts on agrarian questions, especially on the issue of the agrarian crisis in India/South Asia; what contributions they have made to the mobilisation of farmers to accept and promote agroecology; and what steps they have taken to make small farmers viable, etc.

Supporting popular movements and mobilisations

Focus India joined farmers and other groups protesting against the **Land Acquisition Ordinance** throughout the year. The order demonstrates the government's push of genetically modified crops and lack of fair and remunerative prices for farm produce. Protestors instead demanded a farm income commission, the removal of agriculture from free trade agreements including the WTO, and adequate disaster relief for farmers. Thanks to the multi-sectoral campaign against the ordinance and consultation with political leaders from all major parties, the ruling party was forced to drop the bill in its current form in August.

Focus joined a **large farmers' mobilisation** at Jantar Mantar in Delhi, in August, organised by Jai Kisan Andolan of the Swaraj Abhiyan and coordinated by Yogendra Yadav. The Jai Kisan Andolan is a public movement for farmers' rights in India, and aims to highlight the plight of farmers as a result of lapses in public policies related to agriculture. The 10 August rally was the culmination of a 10-day-long Tractor March, which started on 1 August from Punjab. One unique aspect of this protest was a display of more than 5,000 earthen pots with soil brought by Andolan farmers from their respective farms. There were several hundred earthen pots with local varieties of seeds as well, brought by protesting farmers.

In November, Focus participated in the national meeting of the **Bhumi Adhikar Andolan (Movement for Land Rights)**, which was attended by representatives from 22 States and over a hundred peoples' movements, peasant unions, and farmers' organisations. They all

decided on a comprehensive agenda to achieve land rights and fight forced land acquisition, agrarian crisis, and fascist politics. Bhumi Adhikar Andolan brought together struggles against the draconian Land Acquisition Ordinance brought by the present government, and had played a significant role in defeating the move. Representatives of various mass movements agreed on broad-based unity that will not only take forward the issue of achieving land rights for the peasantry, agricultural workers, forest dwellers, dalits, and adivasis, but also fight divisive forces trying to communally polarise the country. The joint alliance resolved to strengthen the struggle at the state-level, and outlined detailed resolutions tackling the major problems of forced land acquisition, fascist repression, agrarian distress, food security, and livelihood security.

Climate and Environmental Justice

International and Regional

One of the main highlights of Focus' 2015 work on climate and environmental justice was at COP 21 in Paris, through its participation in parallel social movement activities and events and a successful social media campaign. Focus Executive Director Shalmali Guttal and Philippines Programme Head Joseph Purugganan were in Paris to lead and participate in several forums and protest actions.

At these meetings, workshops, and gatherings, Focus contributed to discussions on the convergence of climate and related issues such



COP21 photo credits: Joseph Purugganan, Isagani Serrano

as trade, investments, agriculture and food, land, water, corporate power, and security. Focus also joined the mobilisations on the streets of Paris.

Focus shared its analysis through its newsletter edition, ***Focus in Paris: Climate Justice from Below*** and by contributing to and signing statements. Following the final agreement, Focus published an article on the COP outcome.

For its social media campaign, Focus created the hashtag #COP21andBeyond to cover all its social media posts and campaign messages. Parallel to the actions taking place in Paris was social media coverage of the events and tweets of what Focus thought of the unfolding issues coming out of COP 21. For more information, see <https://storify.com/focustrade/cop21-and-beyond>.

All year round, Focus actively engaged in Climate Space and participated in their regular calls, activities, and events. Focus is also member of the Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice.

Mekong

In Thailand, Focus, through its senior programme officer Niabdulghafar Tohming, provided analysis for the campaigns and actions of **Thai Climate Justice** and participated in its activities. Focus also provided briefing papers on the “Intended Nationally Determined Contributions” (INDCs) of Thailand and of other countries.

Philippines

Focus sustained its leadership role in the **Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ)** through its spearheading of the False Solutions Working Group. It was re-elected as member of the National Council and now continues to be part of PMCJ’s Coordinating Committee.

The PMCJ-led **REDD+ documentation project**, which aimed to stimulate public debate on the policy readiness of the government, pushed forward in 2015 with the implementation of two key project components: the on-the-ground documentation of REDD+ demonstration sites through the conduct of focused-group discussions and the conduct of climate justice forums in REDD+ areas. A team of documenters and process facilitators was deployed in three REDD+ demonstration sites in the Philippines: Quezon, Palawan, and Southern Leyte. A review of available project documents and other related materials about REDD+ and the demonstration sites was also completed. Focus and its network Lilak (Purple Action for Indigenous Women’s Rights) were assigned to the municipalities of Narra and Quezon in Palawan.

Focus joined Lilak in its **Indigenous Women’s Gathering** with the theme *Indigenous Women: A force for Climate Justice*, held in Punta de Hagdan, Tobias Fornier, Antique province, central Philippines, on 17–18 May. A Focus staff member was a resource person on climate justice.

Together with the Canadian Catholic Organisation for Development and Peace (CCDOP), Freedom from Debt Coalition,

and NASSA-CBCP, Focus Philippines also co-organised a public forum on the **State of Yolanda Reconstruction: Aquino Legacy**, 24 July 2015. A Focus staff member discussed in a panel the issue of the corporate capture of Yolanda rehabilitation and recovery and disaster capitalism.

India

Focus published its latest booklet entitled ***Climate Change and Agriculture Crisis: Agroecology as a Solution***. The booklet's objective is for readers to understand how agroecology farms hold immense mitigation and adaptation potential and are better suited to deal with the climate crisis. Focus also contributed to *Mausam*, the newsletter produced by India Climate Justice, through an article on agroecology and climate change.

Focus India along with South Solidarity Initiative-ActionAid and Beyond Copenhagen Collective co-organised a half-day interactive session in New Delhi, February, **"The impasse on progressive action to address the climate crisis: A southern perspective from people's movements."** This interactive session intended to go beyond the impasse at the international level and discuss perspectives of activists on the challenges in grounding the climate crisis. At this interactive session, Pablo Solon (Focus' former Executive Director) decoded the latest UNFCCC agreement, while other speakers presented on the lack of civil

society involvement in discussing INDCs, government failure to come up with a clear planned transition to sustainability, and the role of labour movements in responding to the climate crisis. A report on the session was published in *Mausam*.

Also in February, Focus India co-organised a dialogue on the **"Meaning of Life & Meaningful Life"** at the India International Centre in New Delhi. Pablo Solon spoke on *buen vivir* while Mr. Arif Mohammad Khan spoke on the "Notion of Good Life in Islam."

Trade and Investment

International and Regional

End WTO Campaign

Capping our year-long work on trade was the social media campaign #ENDWTO, which was initiated to complement Focus' participation in



social movements' initiatives in Nairobi, Kenya, during the 10th Ministerial meeting of the WTO (MC10). Through this campaign, Focus ensured that information on the gatherings and actions in Nairobi were regularly disseminated. The campaign also aimed at widening the awareness of the general public on the MC10 and other key WTO related issues.

India Programme Head Afsar Jafri was in Nairobi in the second week of December to represent Focus in the activities organised by La Via Campesina.

These are the highlights of Focus' presence in Nairobi:

- A 2-day seminar on "20 years of WTO and the Struggle to Dismantle it", which was attended by LVC farmers from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Women's groups, slum-dwellers, hawkers, and Nairobi residents were also present in large numbers at the YWCA, the venue, to represent the World March for Women, Bunge la Mwananchi, Centre for Constitution Implementation, Dandora Must Change, Wanana Sasa na Uwanguzi, and Mathera Social Justice Centre. Participants deliberated on various aspects of the multilateral free trade regime represented by the WTO and its impact on the small farmers of the world, especially in the Global South.
- Afsar Jafri was one of the resource persons in this seminar, where he also distributed two papers: *Reforms & Development—the Wrong Agenda for Nairobi Ministerial and Food Security Concerns at WTO's Kenya Ministerial*

2015: A Wrong Move Will Jeopardise the Third World's Food Security Forever.

During the MC10 and after its conclusion, Afsar Jafri wrote three pieces on the negotiations and analysing the draft declaration which came out on 17 December and the *final declaration*, on 19 December.

- Every day after the seminars, LVC members led by Korean farmers from KPL held impromptu **marches on the streets of Nairobi** and more demonstrations at the Tom Mboya Monument at the centre of the city, very close to the MC10 venue, Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC). On 17 December, an #EndWTO March started from Freedom Corner to Tom Mboya Monument passing through Kenyatta Avenue, Kimathi Street, Moi Avenue, and City Hall Way to the KICC, then to Parliament Road, Harambee Avenue, and Moi Avenue. This march was widely covered by the media.
- Afsar Jafri also participated in the inside action organised by Our World is Not for Sale and took part in the workshops and seminars organised by civil society groups at the KICC. He also interacted with the Indian delegation at the KICC.
- On 21 December, following the close of the WTO 10th Ministerial, Focus India, along with South Solidarity-Action Aid, Third World network, and the National Working group on Patent Laws and WTO organised a **press conference in Delhi** to present to the Indian media alternative views about the so-called victory at Nairobi claimed by the Indian government.

EU-ASEAN FTA Campaign Network

Focus has remained as co-coordinator for the eighth year now of the EU-ASEAN FTA Campaign Network, a regional network with members in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines that monitors negotiations on free trade agreements between the EU and ASEAN member states, as well as global and regional trade and investment policies. Aside from coordinating the network, Focus also serves as the lead in the network's consolidation and campaign efforts in the Philippines.

2015 Highlights

January

The Asia-Europe Peoples Forum (AEPF) Thematic Dialogue on Sustainable Land and Natural Resources Management, held in Jakarta, focused on the theme **21st Century Trade and Investment Policies: Challenges and Implications on Land and Natural Resources in Asia and Europe**. Focus made presentations on the 21st-century trade and investment regime; impacts of Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS); and Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) in India.

A regional meeting of the EU-ASEAN network was also convened in Jakarta

to share updates and discuss plans for coordinated actions.

February

In support of the national campaign in Thailand, the EU-ASEAN network co-organised a forum on the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) with FTA Watch Thailand**, which was held on 11 February in Bangkok. Focus discussed RCEP in the context of 21st-century trade and investment regime.

April

Focus and the EU-ASEAN network contributed to the **Global Day of Action on FTAs** on 18 April, firstly by co-organising a People's Caucus on FTAs in the Philippines with Kilusanon 14 April, followed by an "FTA Kills" mass action in front of the Department of Trade in Manila on 17 April.

Focus and the EU-ASEAN network co-organised a workshop on the **Impact of trade and investment models and the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) on people, especially workers, farmers, fisher folks, etc.** at the ASEAN Peoples Forum in Kuala Lumpur. Other co-organisers included Indonesia Global Justice (IGJ), Workers' Information Centre (WIC), and Monitoring Sustainability of Globalisation (MSN).

The workshop was attended by around 70 people and produced clear demands for ASEAN regarding trade and investment and suggestions on how groups could work together.

August

A **Regional Trade Strategy** meeting was conducted in Manila, which had the participation of network members from Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, as well as contacts from Vietnam and Cambodia and other trade campaigners from India, the UK, and the Netherlands. The strategy meeting was an opportunity to share updates about on-going campaign efforts in SEA and outside the region and to develop common strategies and mechanisms for coordination and linkages.

September

Focus supported the participation of two members of the EU-ASEAN Network at the **National Conference on the WTO, Investment Treaties and Implications on Policy Space** held on 21-23 September in New Delhi, India. The Delhi forum was

meant to consolidate the position of CSOs for the upcoming WTO ministerial meeting in Nairobi in December. Riza Damanik from IGJ and Raphael Baladad from Focus Philippines came to share the perspectives from Southeast Asia and to see how the network could support the efforts leading to Nairobi.

October

Focus and the EU-ASEAN Network provided additional **support to national campaign efforts on trade and investments in Indonesia and Malaysia**. In Indonesia, IGJ organised a National Forum on Bilateral Investment Treaties with 50 participants from various civil society and social movements, and also a discussion with Parliamentarians and members of the Constitutional Court on ISDS and investments in November. In Malaysia, the network supported activities like town-hall style meetings and focus group discussions as well as mobilisations, printed materials, and a social media campaign related to the on-going TPP campaign in Malaysia.

Other Major Initiatives

Focus also had the opportunity to share its research and analysis on trade and investment in Europe this year. Focus took part in the **Take Back our World Conference in London** in February, which was organised as part of the re-launch of the World Development Movement, now known as Global Justice Now. Joseph Purugganan made a presentation on the panel

on People versus Corporate Power: How we beat TTIP and contributed to the Energy Justice Assembly and the workshop on How do we Build a Global Movement.

In October, Focus was invited to a **speaking tour in Germany** organised by the Philippinen buro. Joseph Purugganan spoke on trade, investment, human rights, and business at several forums in Cologne and Berlin, Germany.

He was also the keynote speaker at a forum organised by the European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS) in Brussels attended by trade diplomats and civil society organisations.

Several papers and presentations were developed throughout the year on trade and investment issues. Among these are an overview paper on EU-Philippines trade relations, a fisheries and trade paper co-authored with Pepe Tanchuiling of Tambuyog, and an abridged paper on trade, IPR, public health, and access to medicines. These papers were translated to German and were distributed widely in Germany among Philippinenburo partners.

Focus Philippines worked with other CSOs and networks to formalise the **People's Forum on APEC 2015 (PFA)** platform. Focus drafted the initial call to action and was later designated as head of the popular education committee and member of the finance and fundraising committee. Focus prepared a briefing paper on the APEC trade agenda, which was presented in the State of the People's Address (SOPA), organised by Freedom from Debt Coalition on July 23. Focus was a panel member in several forum-discussions on APEC including the university-based forums in La Salle (30 October), the University of the Philippines (10 November), and at the Ateneo de Manila University (27 November). Aside from the public forums, Focus represented the PFA network in a [television appearance](#) on the business program Market Edge, raising PFA's critique of the APEC economic paradigm and how the continued pursuit of this development paradigm leads to worsening inequality and wealth concentration, destruction of the environment, and the erosion of people's rights.



Joseph Purugganan being interviewed about APEC. Image credit: ABS-CBN News

On 7 April, Afsar Jafri of Focus India joined the meeting called by the **People's SAARC Secretariat**, which was attended by activists and groups working on trade and investment issues. The groups assembled here decided to form a PSAARC India Working Group on Trade and Investment and also developed a terms of reference (ToR) for the working group. It was decided that the PSAARC Working Group on Trade and Investment could possibly focus on three broad aspects of trade and investment issues in the region: SAARC countries' engagement in multilateral forums on trade and investment issues; SAARC countries' engagement in bilateral and regional free trade and investment agreements with countries from other regions, and SAARC level - Food Bank and Informal trade.

Mekong

Focus continued to collaborate with and support **FTA Watch in Thailand**, including monitoring trade and investment agreements and analysing BITs and ISDS clauses for the

group. During this period, Focus assisted FTA Watch in a submission to the UN Human Rights Commission for the 2nd cycle of the UPR in Thailand. The submission raised concerns about the impact of trade and investment agreements on the right to health.

Focus also prepared an analysis of **Thailand's Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITS)**, commissioned by the Law Reform Commission of Thailand. This comprehensive analysis found that the treaties granted wide privileges and power to foreign investors, leaving the Thai government vulnerable to legal challenges. The paper calls on Thailand to conduct a review of all of its BITS, reject ISDS, and study alternative forms of economic cooperation.

In Cambodia, Focus completed an overview of **private investment in Cambodia** and the impacts on community and human rights. Together with local activists, Focus conducted, and continues to document, investment projects and their impacts on people's rights. Four case studies on fisheries, water infrastructure, Lor Peang, and Pheapimex will be published in 2016.

We also started a simple action research process with garment workers in Cambodia who are members of the Workers' Information Centre in the United Sisterhood Collective. The purpose of the research is for workers to be able to track and monitor working conditions in the factories of particular clothing brands, which they can then use for advocacy and negotiations.

Philippines

The year revolved around deepening network building and increased collaborative efforts

through joint discussions and mobilisations for Focus Philippines. We reached out to the indigenous peoples sector, the academe, government agencies, and anti-mining advocates. There was also the regular collaboration with labour and the EU-ASEAN Network.

In cooperation with IP women's advocacy group Lilak, Focus planned a **fact-finding mission (FFM)** to assess the impact of an 8MW Mini-Hydro Power Plant on a local IP community. IP leaders protested the non-compliance of Catuiran Power and its contractor, Sta. Clara Power, with the provisions of the memorandum of agreement (MOA) signed between the renewable energy developers and the affected communities. The FFM will also look into whether free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) process was conducted properly. The team will study the following: 1) human rights violations, 2) environmental impact assessment, 3) water and socio-ecological issues. Each member is now doing preliminary desk research and conceptualising a design for an FFM. This is to document the environmental impacts of the project for the past years and to take the pulse of the community on the issues.

Focus Philippines provided **resource persons on trade and investment issues** for several events. Focus spoke on the panel **"Decoding Trade Agreements: What are the impacts on digital rights"** at the Rights Con Summit in March in Manila, at the Building and Woodworkers International (BWI) Congress on April 8 and Labour Forum on trade and investment organised by SENTRO, April 16.

We also co-organised discussions on trade and investment with Centro Saka on the latest

developments in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture and the implications of the lifting of quantitative restrictions on rice. Focus and the EU-ASEAN network also held a discussion with UP professor and China expert Chito Sto. Romana on RCEP and China's economic policy towards ASEAN and the Philippines on 29 April. Focus, together with IDEALS and SENTRO, organised a forum on the Trade in Services Agreement or TiSA. Focus provided a background on the trade in services regime under the General Agreement on Trade in Services or GATS of the WTO. In September, Focus and the EU-ASEAN Network co-organised a round-table discussion with Women's Legal Bureau on women and trade. The RTD was attended by 40 participants. Focus made a presentation on the 21st-century trade and investment regime.

Several meetings were also conducted following up on the engagement with DTI and ACE Consultancy of Dr. Florian Alburo of UP School of Economics towards the conduct of several studies on the potential impact of the EU-Philippines FTA on labour, small fishers, public health and access to medicines, and the implications of an ISDS provision in the FTA. Key members of the network have taken on the task of being leading agencies in the implementation of these studies and workshops, which are set to begin in 2016.

Together with Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM), SENTRO, and PAHRA, Focus co-organised a **discussion on GSP+ and the proposed binding treaty on TNCs** held in June.

Joseph Purugganan of Focus joined the [*People's Mobilisations on the Binding Treaty in Geneva*](#) in July to monitor the developments

in the first session of the Inter-Governmental Working Group on the Binding Treaty on TNCs under the UN. Later in August, Focus co-organised a national consultation on business and human rights, which discussed the developments related to the first session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Binding Treaty on TNCs and Human Rights under the UN Human Rights Council. The one-day consultation was attended by around 60 participants.

Direct Engagements with Government

Focus and the EU-ASEAN Network in the Philippines participated in the One Country One Voice (OCOv) consultations on 13 March organised by the **Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)**. The discussions centred around the government's trade strategy towards Europe. Network members made strong interventions on issues related to GSP+, investments and ISDS, IPR, and access to medicines. A bilateral meeting with DTI was also convened on 13 March to discuss the process of finalising the terms of reference for several trade-related technical assistance (TRTA) studies that DTI is spearheading. The network consolidated and presented in the meeting its position paper on the TRTA studies in connection with its earlier demand for social impact assessments on IPR and access to medicines, labour, and fisheries.

A follow-up discussion was organised by the DTI on IP and Public Health, which was attended by representatives from the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) of the Philippines, Department of Health, and Food and Drug Administration where the group reiterated its position

against TRIPS+ provisions in FTA, and raised concerns over rumoured amendments to the implementing rules of the Cheaper Medicines Law to make it more compliant to US demands on data protection and data exclusivity. Focus participated in another dialogue with DTI on the ASEAN Post-2015 vision document organised by the Women's Legal Bureau, a member of the EU-ASEAN Network.

In October, Focus and SENTRO participated as speakers in a roundtable discussion organised by the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE). Discussion with the DOLE revolved around the **proposed FTA between the Philippines and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)**, which were launched in May. The labour officials were particularly interested in developing a position on the labour clause in free trade agreements and the implications of the ISDS and investment chapter on labour.

In December, Focus and the EU-ASEAN Network participated in the One Country, One Voice Consultations organised by the Department of Trade and Industry. The December consultation focused on the topic of the **WTO and the upcoming Nairobi Ministerial Meeting**. The network was represented in the meeting by Joseph Purugganan of Focus, Pepe Tanchuling of Tambuyog, and Ana Maria Nemenzo of WomanHealth.

India

The Right to Food and its close link to trade and the WTO ministerial in Nairobi were at the heart of Focus India's campaigns, participation in forums and conferences, and mass actions.

In July, Asfar Jafri was invited as a resource person to the **Right to Food Campaign National Consultation** in Delhi, which aimed to call attention to the second year of non-implementation of the National Food Security Act (NFSA). The aim was to get to know more about the implementation of the 2013 Act in different states of India and to explore different aspects of it. One of the key issues highlighted at the consultation was the December WTO Ministerial, where stockholding for food security would be an important agenda item. It was hoped that India and other developing countries would try to seek a permanent solution to this issue so that they don't get sued for increases in their food subsidy. Mr Jafri presented on this issue in the perspective of NFSA and how this can be detrimental to the food security of the country where more than 60 percent of the population depend on the public distribution system.

Focus India has been participating in the **Indian Forum against FTAs** and other networks and organisations, planning advocacy actions, mobilising civil society groups, and participating in meetings, particularly in preparation for the 10th WTO Ministerial in December. As build-up activity for Nairobi, we co-organised a national conference on **"WTO, FTAs, and Investment Treaties: Implications for Development Policy Space"** along with ISID, Madhyam, MSF Access Campaign, National Working Group on Patent Laws and WTO (NWGPLW), Public Services International (PSI) – South Asia, South Solidarity Initiative – ActionAid, TWN, and Forum against FTAs. The themes of the conference were: "No to free trade", "Stop corporate globalisation", and "Protect livelihoods; defend democracy & development policy space." It was attended by more than 80 participants from different

parts of India in addition to researchers from Indonesia, Philippines, and the USA. There was an intensive discussion in the context of multiple emerging challenges, the upcoming 10th WTO Ministerial Conference in December, and several bilateral/regional free trade agreements (FTAs) and investment treaties being implemented and negotiated by the Government of India. Afsar Jafri of Focus India made a presentation on the “Food Sovereignty, Peasant Livelihood and Free Trade” and also contributed a paper on *“Trade and Investment Treaties: Implications for Agriculture & Food Security in India”* jointly with Ranja Sengupta of TWN.

Mr Jafri also spoke at various conventions, seminars, and workshops on agriculture and trade, particularly on what was at stake at the WTO negotiations in Nairobi in December. These events included the annual convention of the South Indian Coordination Committee of farmers’ movements (SICCFM), a one-day seminar on “Recent Concerns related to Agriculture,” a workshop on TRIPS and Agriculture,” and a seminar on “Future of Agriculture & Food: Issues of Sustainability, Sovereignty and Food Safety”. He was also asked to present his views on the GMO mustard (which is yet to be commercialised) and its implications for Indian agriculture, especially the biosafety aspect of the GM technology.

In October, Mr Jafri was invited by the Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare to discuss the key issues in agricultural negotiations at the 10th WTO Ministerial in Nairobi. He made a detailed presentation about the WTO and the Agreement on Agriculture.

In November, Focus India joined a close consultation with trade activists called by the

WTO Division of the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) in Delhi. The aim was partly to get an update on the developments in the negotiations in Geneva for the WTO Ministerial, and also to strategise on what civil society groups in India should do to build up pressure on the government so that they remain firm in their stand for seeking a permanent solution on the food stockholding issue as well as on the special and deferential treatment, especially the issue of the Special Safeguard mechanism (SSM).

The Forum against FTAs and the National Working Group on Patent Laws and WTO co-organised a **National Convention on the WTO** in New Delhi, in December. The purpose of the convention was to mobilise support to ensure that Indian people’s rights would not be compromised at the WTO and that the government would not compromise the interests of India’s working classes at Nairobi. Attended by more than 300 people representing political parties, mass organisations, trade unions, peasant unions, women, students, youth, and campaign organisations, the convention also featured several prominent leaders, economists, and activists, namely BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi, Former Finance Secretary SP Shukla, activist Medha Patkar, and economists Prabhat Patnaik, CP Chandrashekher, and Jayati Ghosh. The convention unanimously adopted a declaration that called for no further commitments at the WTO before due debate and ratification by the Indian Parliament. It also demanded that government thoroughly re-orient its stand on international trade and investment negotiations by aligning with a pro-people agenda of self-reliant and sustainable development.

We were also at the demonstration organised by the Indian Right to Food Campaign along with National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), Pension Parishad, and National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI). The organisations condemned government moves that undermined poor people's rights in favour of corporations and oppose any kind of dilution in the scope of food security programme. In this demonstration, Afsar Jafri was asked to present the latest development in the WTO and India's position and how it will undermine India's food security programme.

Power and Democracy

In response to increasing criminalisation of dissent, attacks on human rights defenders and unresolved extra-judicial killings, as well as the need to identify and support viable alternatives and movements to challenge the status quo, Focus launched its Power and Democracy programme in 2015. Much of the work has been through the Sombath Initiative in the Mekong region and by working closely with IP groups in the Philippines, specifically on the issue of the Bangsamoro Basic law.

Mekong

In early 2015, Focus and the **Sombath Initiative (SI)** decided that the SI would become a project of Focus, embedded in the Mekong and Power and Democracy programmes. An intermediate-term strategy for the SI was finalised later on in the year. A great deal of work went into expanding the Sombath website (www.sombath.org) and social media outreach. The website is now fully bilingual—English and Lao—and is

becoming a significant source for information on human rights-related issues in Laos.

Following the **Laos Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** in January, 196 recommendations were made by governments in the UPR Working Group including on enforced disappearances, including that of Sombath Somphone. On 23 June, the Lao Government accepted 116 of the 196 recommendations at the 29th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council, prompting expressions of concern from numerous regional and international human rights organisations as well as the Sombath Initiative. These statements can be found on the [Sombath website](#).

At the ASEAN People's Forum in Kuala Lumpur, SI and Focus collaborated with the International Commission on Jurists (ICJ), the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearance (AFAD), and Justice for Peace Foundation (JPF) on the workshop, **"Enforced Disappearance in ASEAN: in pursuit of a remedy"**. The main aim was to call attention to the continuing danger of enforced disappearance in ASEAN countries and discuss strategies to put an end to it and ensure justice for victims' families. The SI was represented by two board members: Ng Shuimeng, the wife of Sombath Somphone and Angkhana Nilapaijit, Director of the JPF. The SI and JPF also released a statement to ASEAN and the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Committee on Human Rights (AICHR), urging them to put an end to enforced disappearance. The statement had 62 signatories and was sent to the ASEAN Secretariat and AICHR in the first week of May.

In September, a [press conference](#) was organised by the SI, FIDH, ICJ, JPF, and Focus to mark 1000 days since the abduction of Sombath

Somphone. Several other events took place in December around the 3rd anniversary of Sombath's disappearance. SI helped to coordinate another [press conference](#) at the FCCT Thailand in December, which showed new public CCTV footage related to the disappearance. We also organised a public panel discussion at Chulalongkorn University on the "vision" and "reality" of a "dynamic community" within ASEAN. The topics covered were the geopolitics of ASEAN countries, the state of human rights protection and judicial systems, and gaps between the reality and vision of economic and environmental aspects of ASEAN. Speakers were from the Thai National Human Rights Commission, human rights organisations, and the media. Students as well as international and local NGOs interested in ASEAN participated in the event.

Also in December, SI launched a writing contest for Lao youth and Focus supported [The Sombath Somphone and Beyond Project \(SSBP\)](#) in raising awareness about Sombath's case and enforced disappearance amongst the youth.

Human Rights in Thailand

In February, Mr. Chai Bunthonglek, a land rights activist and member of the Southern Peasant Federation of Thailand, was killed. This was the fourth assassination of a land rights activist from Klong Sai Pattana village in the past five years. Focus led the writing of and sign-on to **an open letter to the Thai Prime Minister to urge an investigation**.

Philippines

Political education and awareness-raising was critical to the work done in the Philippines,

especially in relation to indigenous peoples' issues.

The growing debate in the Philippines around the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) became the entry point for Focus to further engage in activities and campaigns around **indigenous peoples' rights**. We joined Loyukan, an alliance of IP groups and support groups pushing for the full inclusion of indigenous peoples' rights in the proposed BBL. In July, Focus was with Loyukan in a meeting/dialogue with UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNSRIP) Vicky Tauli-Corpuz to discuss the BBL and the call of IP groups for full inclusion. Before this, in May, the IP groups engaged in a series of activities and mobilisations, grabbing every opportunity to strongly reiterate their calls. In June, an event to draw solidarity from other communities materialised in the form of an Inter-IP Dialogue with IP groups from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao converging in Manila to talk about important IP issues and concerns.

Several IP communities within and near the proposed Bangsamoro region would be affected should the BBL be passed, among them the Teduray, Lambangian, Dulangan Manobo, Higaonon, Blaan, and Erumanen ne Menuvu.

We participated in the national celebration of the **International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples** which was a three-day gathering in August of approximately 80 indigenous leaders from all over the country, and was meant to highlight key issues faced by indigenous peoples and major successes in terms of strategies and outcomes, from the latter half of 2014 up to celebration. During the international day commemoration, there

was also a conference at which the IPs gave their own State of Indigenous Peoples Address (SIPA) 2015 as a counterpoint to President Aquino's State of the Nation Address (SONA). A press conference was held as well as a public meeting where indigenous leaders presented the highlights of the issues discussed at the internal meetings before an audience consisting of representatives from the national government, United Nations agencies, and support NGOs. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights on Indigenous Peoples and a member of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples were special guests at the dialogue.

Focus, as a member of Loyukan, co-published ***Muntaklat—Our Call for Full Inclusion: A Collection of Articles on Peace, Indigenous Peoples' Rights, and the Bangsamoro Basic Law.*** The collection features position papers, presentations, and articles on the proposed BBL by indigenous women and men leaders within the proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region. Articles and thought pieces of IP rights advocates were also included. The book launch was historic for the IPs of Mindanao, especially those found within the core territory of the Bangsamoro or the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

A Round-Table Discussion on Human Rights and Mining with Loyukan and the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates was a major activity during **Human Rights Week (7-11 December)**, with the theme "Karapatang Pantao—Sinagasaan ng Tuwid ng Daan" (Human Rights, Ran Over by the Government's Straight Path). This involved a week-long series of public fora, workshops, mobilisations, and creative actions from various organisations.

Focus also joined the March for Human Rights on 10th December. About 200 activists from different social movements, civil society organisations, and human rights groups rallied.

Another major engagement was on the issue of international peace, specifically through a series of forums with Stop the War Coalition and Office of former Akbayan Rep. Walden Bello which were hosts to Dr. Richard Falk, former UN Special Rapporteur on Palestine and occupied territories. Through a series of talks called **Global Justice and Peace in the 21st Century**, Dr. Falk delivered talks in various public forums and dialogues.

We were also part of a group of Philippine left groups that held a couple of forums on the political developments in Greece and Spain and lessons for the Philippine. The themes were "Challenges Facing the Left: Reviving the Mass Movements" in April and the Left Positioning in the 2016 Elections in May, while subsequent conversations on the Left's electoral agenda were conducted in June and July.

Focus Philippines has been part of more-than-a-decade campaign on freedom of information under the Right to Know Right Now coalition. In 2015, the coalition, through the **Indignation/Funeral March for FOI and the transition to FOI Practice Initiative**, held in August, ended its part of the campaign directed at lobbying with Philippine Congress. Carrying a coffin symbolising the death of the FOI Bill, the coalition said that no excuses can hide the failure of leadership by President Aquino and the House Speaker. The coalition said that its fight for FOI lives on, but that it will now take the road of FOI Practice. In the past year, the coalition has been systematising the coordination and



Cambodia Grassroots People's Assembly. Photo credit: Ridan Sun

documentation of experience in information requests. R2KRN will scale this up to include administrative and judicial interventions to address the problems that could have been addressed through a comprehensive and progressive legislation. The coalition will seek the assistance of constitutionally mandated independent accountability institutions, such as the Civil Service Commission, the Commission on Audit, and the Ombudsman.

Multi-thematic

The Systemic Alternatives project, co-implemented by Focus, ATTAC France, and the Solon Foundation started in 2014 and continued

this year. Focus joined in co-organising dialogues and events on Systemic Alternatives in Marseille, France, in conjunction with ATTAC's annual summer school. The dialogues on Systemic Alternatives and Power were held on 24-25 August. A presentation of the dialogue synthesis was made during the public events at the ATTAC summer school on 26 August. Shalmali Guttal participated in the dialogues and presented at one of the public events. Another round of dialogues and public events on Systemic Alternatives and Climate Change was organised in December during the COP 21. A public event on Systemic Alternatives and Climate Change was organised on 6 December and a dialogue among selected participants took part on 8 December.

Shalmali Guttal spent three months at the **Centre for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)** (15 February–10 May 2015). During this time, she continued to work part-time for Focus and also gave lectures/presentations at several events in the United States, at the United Nations, at universities, and at social movement gatherings.

In November, Focus staff provided technical support to the Cross-Sector Network's **Cambodia Grassroots People's Assembly (CGPA)**, which aimed to create a dialogue space between relevant government ministries and its people to address the peoples' demands and seek common solutions on the issues of land and natural resources, social protection, agriculture and fisheries, and human rights and democracy. CGPA was held to also voice peoples' concerns about the negative impact of ASEAN economic integration. Over 1,000 people participated in the two-day assembly, including land activists, fisher folk, farmers, garment workers, sex workers, feminists, indigenous people, forestry activists, LGBTQ activists, youths, etc. More than 50 per cent of them were women. Communities also had the chance to explain and share their problems resulting from the current development and economic model, and to explain their solutions to the media.

Social Media Highlights

In light of the increasing importance of social media and online tools to spread our analysis and messages, we put even more effort into increasing our online presence in 2015. This was

done through frequent posts on our website to document and highlight our activities, cross-posting on Facebook and Twitter to reach an even broader audience, and by creating special online campaigns to highlight particular events and issues.

Our 20th anniversary celebration and conference in August gained coverage, both in the press and on our partners' websites, helping to raise awareness about Focus and our key messages. We also created a special website for the occasion, to enable partners to send messages and greetings to Focus on our anniversary, and also to share key documents and videos from the conference. We live-streamed the main discussion panels, enabling partners and allies to view the discussions even if they were unable to join us in person. The video, written synthesis and photos from the conference are available here: <http://focusweb.org/20years/conference-report/>.

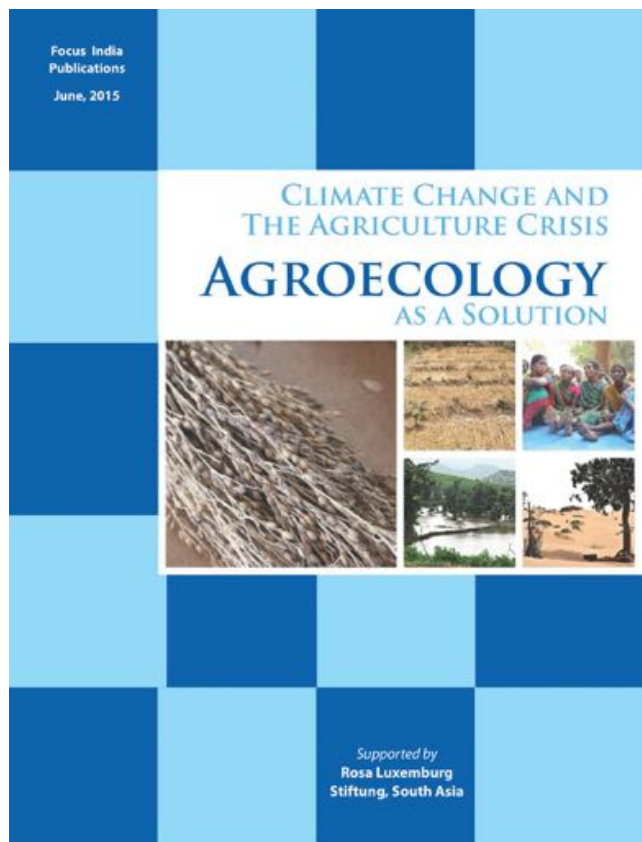
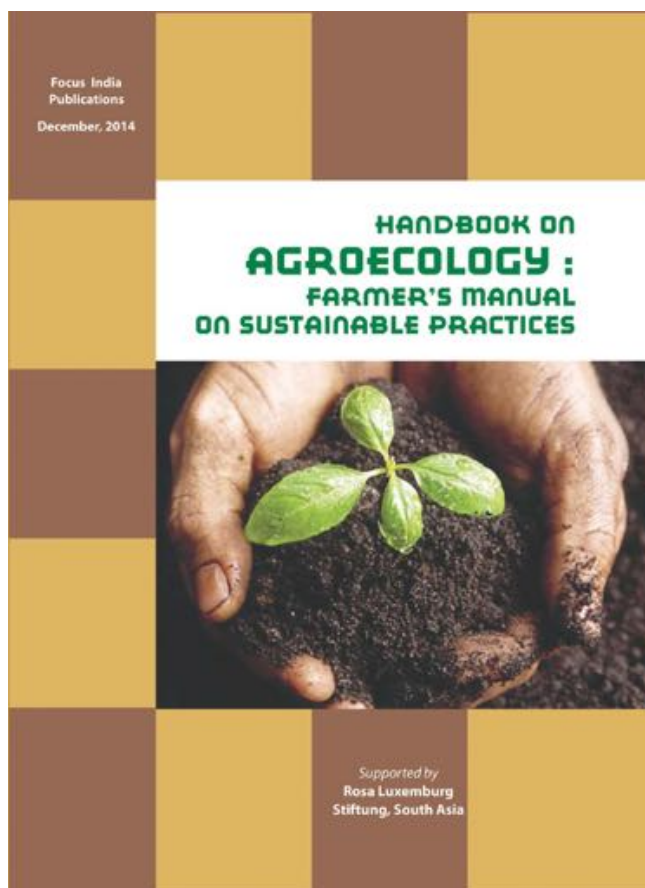
As mentioned above, we also created special campaigns for the climate negotiations in Paris, and the WTO Ministerial in Nairobi, both in December, using the campaign hashtags, #COP21andBeyond and #ENDWTO, respectively. These campaigns enabled us to generate engagement and share our analysis around the two events.

These campaigns and the ongoing media work of Focus helped to grow our website and social media views and engagements. Our website attracted 78,021 unique visitors throughout the year, up by almost 10% from 2014. Our Facebook likes grew by 15% over the year and our Twitter followers grew by 50%.

Publications

Handbook On Agroecology: Farmer's Manual on Sustainable Practices

This handbook is the third in the series of booklets on Agroecology for small and marginal farmers, brought out in partnership with the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung South Asia. It aims to educate and inform farmers about different practices of agroecology and their specific principles, techniques, and strategies. The diverse agroecological practices described in this booklet are further explained with easy-to-do steps for follow-up action.

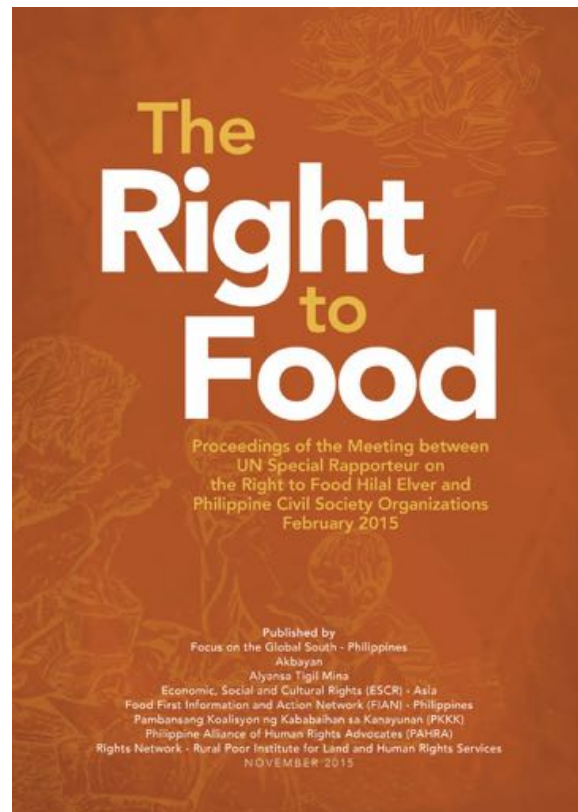
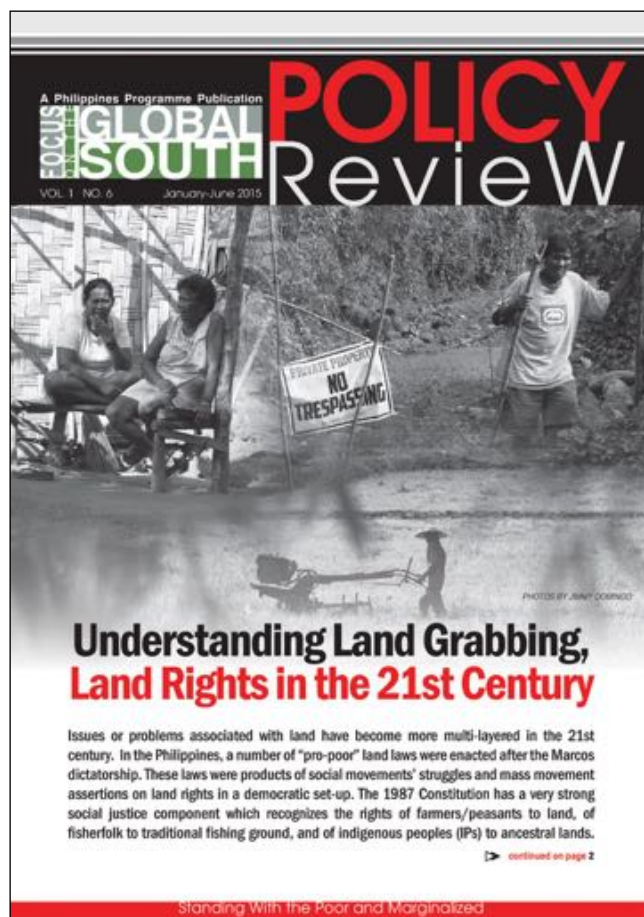


Climate Change and the Agriculture Crisis: Agroecology as a Solution

This booklet intends to shed light on the critical issue of climate change, including questions of what its impact will be, and what we can do to adapt. It outlines how agroecology farms hold immense mitigation and adaptation potential and therefore are better suited to deal with the climate crisis.

Focus Policy Review:
Understanding Land Grabbing,
Land Rights in the 21st Century

The themes discussed in this special double edition policy review include: the context of land grabbing in the Philippines; post-disaster land contestations; tourism and the struggle for land; economic policies and foreign investments on local land; and financialisation of local food systems and implications on local land investments. It is critical for farmers and advocates of land rights as well as the general public to understand how and why land grabbing is happening to make a more effective, strategic campaigning to address and stop it.



Right to Food:
Proceedings of the Meeting between
UN Special Rapporteur on the Right
to Food Hilal Elver and Philippine
Civil Society Organisations

This report documents the meeting between the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and CSOs and social movements representing marginalised sectors in the Philippines in February 2015. The report uses a human rights-based approach in analysing the state of hunger in the Philippines, and how such situation impacts the obligation of our government to respect, protect, and promote the right to life of its own people. Views from below and real life experiences helped give context to these issues tackled in the meeting. The report lays down recommendations for structural reforms and proposes immediate steps.

Focus on Paris (#COP21andBeyond) Focus on the Global South Newsletter

This newsletter tackles the most important issues of COP21 and beyond. Shalmali Guttal writes that the climate justice struggle should be linked to rights struggles since communities are at the forefront of fights against “mining, oil and gas drilling, large dams, fracking, land and water grabbing, deforestation, and luxury property development”. Walden Bello unmasks the Paris negotiations and the “folly of INDCs”, while Pablo Solon exposes why the “emperor has no clothes”—because the Cancun and Paris agreements have no real mechanisms for enforceability. Joseph Purugganan, Afsar Jafri, Niabdulghafar Tohming, and Galileo Castillo critique the INDCs communicated by the Philippines, India, and Thailand.



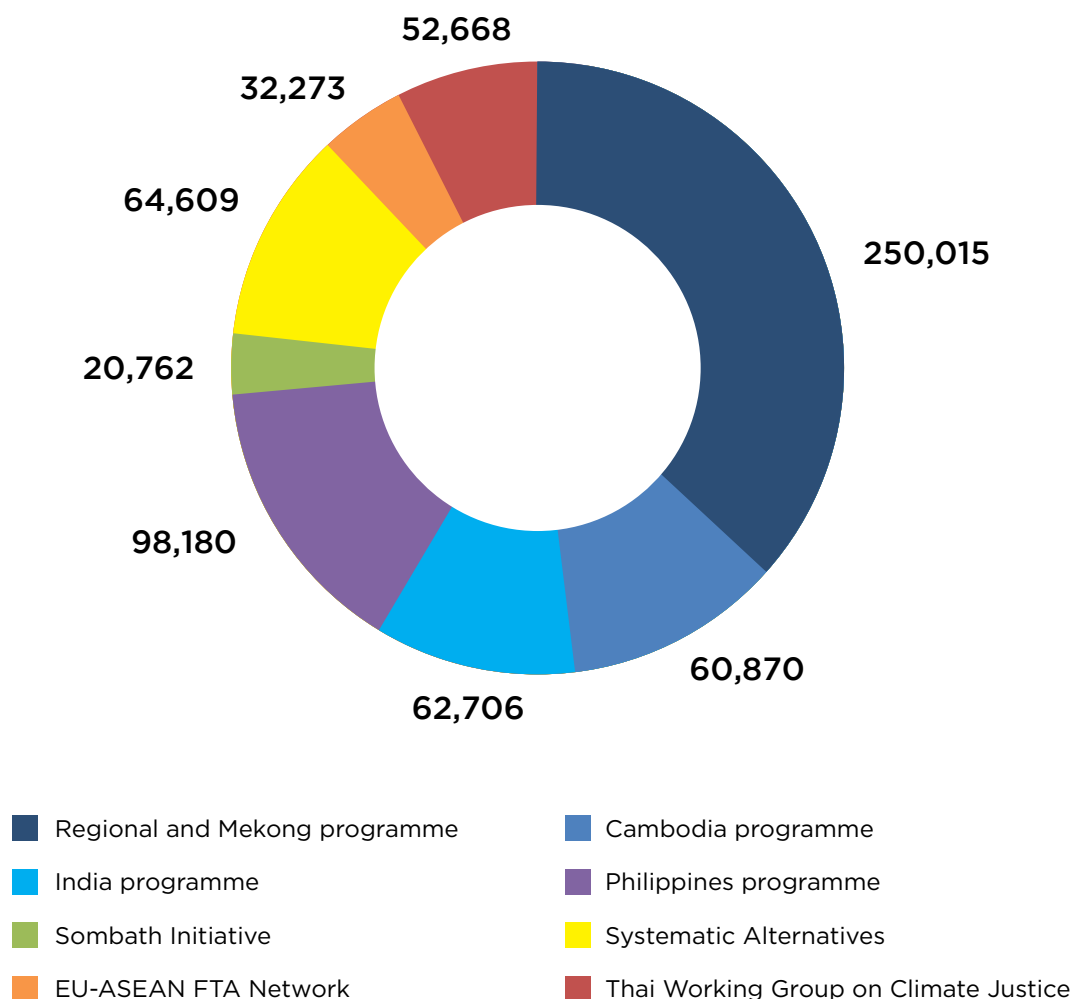
The Road Through Paris: Hope for Climate Justice Lies Beyond Paris

The Road Through Paris was produced by [Global Justice Now](http://GlobalJusticeNow.org) and co-published with [Corporate Europe Observatory](http://CorporateEuropeObservatory.org), 350.org, and Focus on the Global South. This free newspaper was distributed in the run-up to COP 21 in Paris. It critically examines some of the fundamental issues that have underpinned the failure of the UN talks to deliver real emissions cuts, while encompassing some of the bigger, systemic issues connected to the climate crisis.

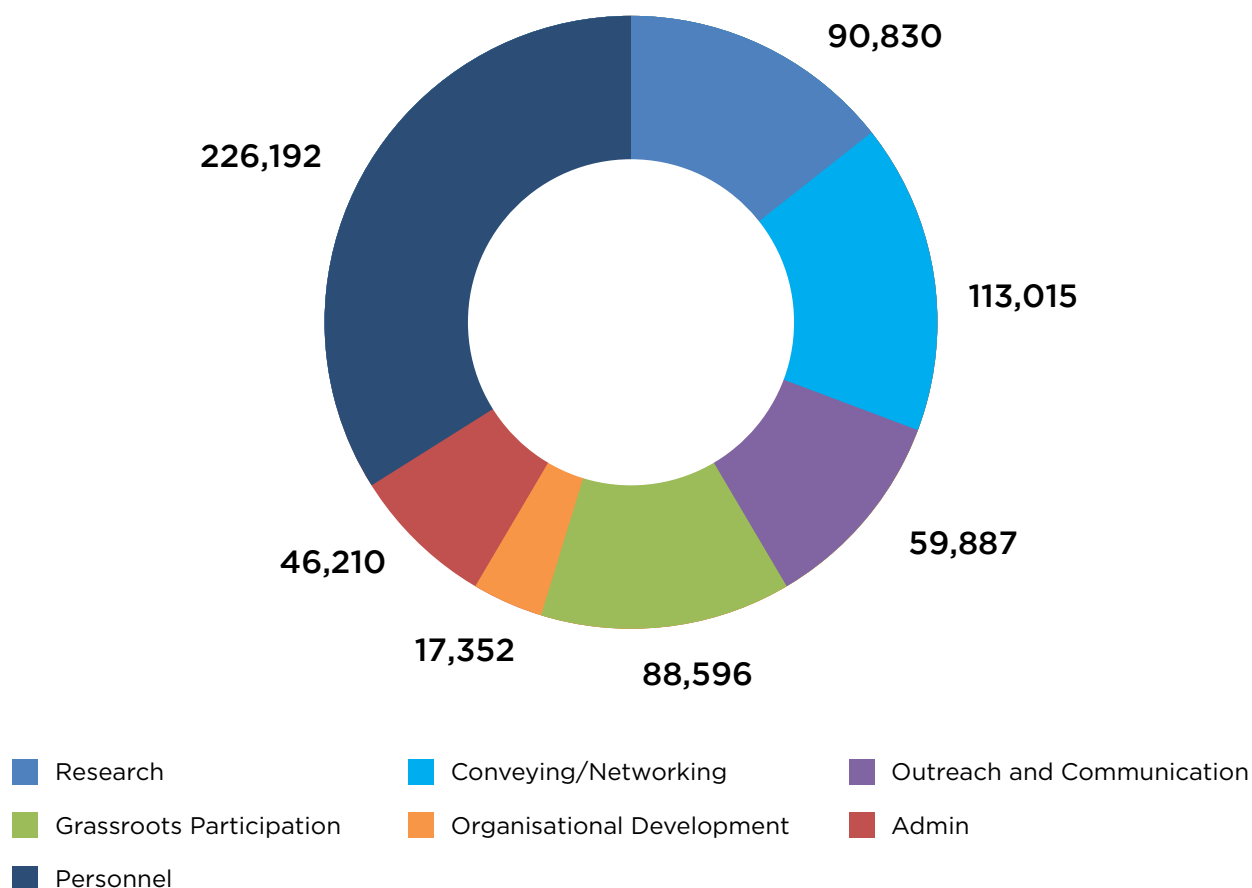
Financial Summary

Balances (in EUR)	General Funds	Programme Funds	Coalition Funds	Reserve Fund
Beginning balance 2015	52,937	17,436	12,502	52,620
Income in 2015	387,936	134,550	155,897	19,145
Expenditure in 2015	359,257	122,312	149,550	10,963
Ending balance 2015	81,617	29,674	18,850	60,802

Expenditure by Programme 2015 (in EUR)



Expenditure by Category 2015 (in EUR)



2015 Donors	2015 Coalition Project Donors
11.11.11, Belgium	11.11.11, Belgium (EU-ASEAN)
American Jewish World Services, USA	CCFD-Terre Solidaire, France (Systemic Alternatives)
Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, Canada	Diakonia, Sweden (Thai Climate Justice)
CCFD-Terre Solidaire, France	DKA, Austria (Systemic Alternatives)
Dan Church Aid, Denmark	Fastenopfer, Switzerland (Systemic Alternatives)
Development and Peace, Canada	KEPA, Finland (Thai Climate Justice)
Fastenopfer, Switzerland	
Global Alliance for the Future of Food	
Inter Pares, Canada	
McKnight Foundation, USA	
Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Germany	
Siemenpuu Foundation, Iceland	
Solidago Foundation, USA	

Staff

Bangkok, Thailand

Shalmali Guttal, Executive Director from June, formerly Coordinator of the Mekong programme

Pablo Solon, Executive Director – left in May

Yasmin Ahammad, Programme Development Officer

Niabdulghafar Tohming, Programme Officer

Sophea Chrek, Programme Officer
– joined in March

Soontaree Nakaviroj, Administrator

Nathaporn Meesuay, Finance and Accounts

Quezon City, Philippines

Joseph Purugganan, Head of Office
– from February, formerly Programme Officer

Mary Ann Manahan, Programme Officer
– on study leave from September

Galileo de Guzman Castillo, Programme Officer
– joined March

Raphael Baladad, Programme Officer
– joined April

Lyn Cacho-dela Cruz, Finance and Administration

Clarissa V. Militante, Head of Office until January, Communications Officer from October

New Delhi, India

Afsar Jafri, Head of Office

Mansi Sharma, Finance and Administration

Parul Thapa, Programme Officer – left in August

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Ros Sokunthy, Programme Officer

Ridan Sun, Field Coordinator – full-time from July

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Seema Mustafa

Director at Centre for Policy Analysis,
Editor at The Sunday Guardian
New Delhi, India

Silvia Ribeiro (joined 2015)

ETC Group
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Focus on the Global South

is an activist think tank based in Asia
providing analysis and building alternatives
for just social, economic and political change

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