

Vision & Programme 2012-2014



Focus on the Global South

Who are we? And what is our vision?

Focus on the Global South was established in the mid-1990s to challenge neoliberalism and corporate-driven globalisation as well as the US-dominated global system. Focus consciously works in solidarity with the Global South -- the great majority of humanity that is marginalized and dispossessed by globalisation – believing that progressive social change and Global South solidarity are imperative if the needs and aspirations of oppressed peoples, particularly in Asia, Latin America and Africa, are to be met.

Focus remains faithful to its foundational rationale yet aware that there have been developments in the global economy with far-reaching implications, among which are the deepening crisis of capitalism in its traditional centres, the United States and Europe; the emergence of new centres of global accumulation, foremost of which is Asia;

and the association of neoliberal policies with the dynamics of state-managed capitalism as in China and India.

At the same time, in both the South and the North, new forms of resistance, mobilization and action are emerging that challenge not only established power and elites, but also institutionalized politics and narrow understandings of representation and democracy.

Focus believes that positive societal change is (and must be) driven by society in all its diversity and in different ways. While it is obvious that some social changes are regressive and anti-democratic, Focus believes that progressive social change requires not only shifting the balance of forces between those with power and those without, but the expansion of political



spaces and deepening people's participation to channel democratic pressure on the course of globalisation.

Focus seeks to support and mobilize the capacities of progressive social actors by (i) working with these groups to co-generate contextual research, analysis, policy and action (ii) building awareness and capacities through the exchange of knowledge and experiences (iii) convening different actors – from communities through to governments -- around ideas and proposals (iv) identifying and creating

BOX 1

What is Deglobalisation?

The deglobalisation paradigm has several key characteristics. For one thing, it entails the production of goods and services that respond to people's needs, rather than to the demands created by a corporate-driven consumer culture. With deglobalisation, production uses technologies that enhance rather than destroy the community, the environment, and life itself. A deglobalized economy draws most of a country's financial resources for development from within, rather than being dependent on investment from abroad. These resources would be generated largely through the redistribution of income and land. A policy of deglobalisation moreover de-emphasizes growth and maximizes equity in order radically to reduce environmental damage. The deglobalisation approach furthermore acknowledges the centrality of women's contributions to production and reproduction of economic and social systems. Deglobalisation ends the urban-rural divide endemic to capitalist development by re-valoring agriculture, agricultural communities and agricultural economies. Strategic economic decisions are subjected to democratic choice and not left to the market. The private sector subordinated to state regulation, which is kept firmly under popular, democratic control. The new production, exchange, and distribution complex in a deglobalized world includes community cooperatives, private firms, and state enterprises, while excluding transnational corporations. Deglobalisation enshrines the principle of subsidiarity in economic life by encouraging production of goods and services at community and national levels wherever possible. The framework upholds human rights, promotes self-determination, and supports rather than undermines cultural and political diversity.

spaces for discussion and participation (v) enabling progressive social actors, particularly those movements representing the poor, to fill and make dynamic those spaces.

Focus has the capacity and experience to convene a broad spectrum of progressive social forces around ideas and processes. It has a history of bringing together diverse actors – from government through to social movements, from North and South -- to share and deepen analysis of emerging power patterns and new experiences of social transformation as the basis for broad collective mobilization for democratic change.

Focus works in various ways to illuminate relations of power and how they create and perpetuate inequality, exclusion and environmental destruction. It generates high quality, credible and accessible materials that aim to contextualize, inform and support people's struggles. Together with partners, Focus seeks to unravel the links between developments at the micro-level with broader macro-level changes to enable communities to

understand and resist the multi-faceted forces that marginalize them and to locate themselves as part of global movements building countervailing power.

Focus' South-centred work on global trade, finance, development and defence of the commons¹ has been its principal concern and strength. Focus will continue to specialize and update these analyses, actively monitoring, from a peoples' perspective and with partners, the major shifts in the global economic system and their connection to the overarching ecological crisis.

At the same time, Focus will continue to promote the identification, in theory and in practice, of alternatives to the neoliberal system that have emerged directly out of analysis, struggles and experiences, the most central of which are the counter-paradigms of deglobalisation and food sovereignty (see Boxes 1 and 2).

The current crisis of global capitalism has made people increasingly receptive to Focus' deglobalisation paradigm. This creates the opportunity for Focus to

move forward in updating its approach in collaboration with activists and movements in the North and South, as well as intellectuals, feminists, ecologists, and media in order to better articulate practical global solidarity with non-violent systemic change.

Central to this updating will be to deepen the ecological and gender dimensions, including key questions such as global ecological governance, energy, employment, social and ecological reproduction. In this new phase we will seek to better understand and accompany the multiplying youth-led expressions of resistance. Solidarity demands we take on the complex political and institutional challenge and goal of transforming top

Finally, Focus considers itself as an agent of/for change and we see our contribution to change through trends monitoring and analysis, research; convening, dialogues and outreach; and engagements with institutions of power.



What is food sovereignty?

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. Food sovereignty prioritizes local food production and consumption. It gives a country the right to protect its local producers from cheap imports and to control production. It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food and not of the corporate sector. Therefore the implementation of genuine agrarian reform is one of the top priorities of the farmer's movement.

From Vision to Action

The emblematic centrepiece of Focus work will be *Whose New Asia? Understanding the political, economic, social and ecological challenges of the New Asia; building resistances, alternatives and solidarity*

Over the next three years Focus will produce and co-produce research and analysis; publish and popularize the resulting output; support contextualised political formation, education and training for emerging movements; engage media and policy makers and convene like-minded groups as well as forums bringing together diverse voices around common themes.

The focus of these activities will be the New Asia, in particular how the growing economic political and military powers of China and India are shaping and impacting the region, in terms of class and social structures, political and economic processes and institutions, as well as ecological systems, natural resources and the commons.

The aim of these activities is to strengthen the capacities of poor, marginalised and struggling sectors to understand, articulate and advocate for practices, policies and institutions that support long-term socially just and ecologically sustainable societies.

The approach will be trans-border, multi-disciplinary and multi-level. The viewpoint will be “from below” aiming to generate a Global South perspective, firmly grounded in local realities and with a strong crosscutting social, gender and ecological justice perspective.



EDSANGANGDAAN

About EDSA Stories

EDSANGANGDAAN: The EDSA Film Festival is part of Focus on the Global South Philippines' broader contribution to the 25th Anniversary of the People Power Revolution—the EDSA Stories Project. Through EDSA Stories, Focus has sought to rekindle the interest of the new generation in the continuing significance of the EDSA events, for how history is told will have an indelible impact on how history is made.

About EDSANGANGDAAN: The EDSA Film Festival

25 Years. Seven Films. EDSANGANGDAAN tries to reimagine the meaning of EDSA for a new generation of Filipinos, by a new generation of Filipinos. Featuring the works of acclaimed and up-and-coming young filmmakers, this is film fest that tells new stories and explores fresh angles about the three EDSAs, envisioning cinema in the process, as a vehicle for socio-political change.

About EDSANGANGDAAN: Mga Pagtatagpo't Pagpapasya

EDSA: Where from and where to? 25 Years after EDSA, EDSANGANGDAAN: Mga Pagtatagpo't Pagpapasya follows a farmer, a university student and a laundrywoman as they seek to connect the circumstances of their everyday lives with the broader historical phenomenon of EDSA. The conclusions that they make, and the questions that they raise are not always flattering or reassuring.



1985
Ma. Angela Garrido

An ordinary woman loses her husband and is permanently scarred by a hot oil spill amidst the EDSA uprising. Nine years after, having given birth to a son, she tries to come to terms with her losses.



Kaba, Takot at Pangamba ng EDSA
Eva Aurora Callueng

A short documentary film narrating the stories and perspectives of the mothers and wives of soldiers in every EDSA, and exploring the influence of these women throughout the duration of these events



Bagong Buhay
Andrea Regine Reyes & Co.

A mother and her daughter leave their old home and try to build a new life together. Over the years, however, the mother's unending pursuit of perfection takes its toll on her daughter, putting their relationship on a collision course.



Patron ng Laging Saklolo
Seymour Sanchez

A short mockumentary of enduring patterns of patronage politics in the Philippines, Patron ng Laging Saklolo, chronicles the activities of a barangay politician throughout typical election season. By examining the fiesta mentality of Filipinos, and their attitudes towards politics, several gripping comparisons will be drawn.



Pamatid Gutom
Eloisa Sanchez and Richard Legapsi

Pamatid Gutom is a stark rendition of electoral politics in post-EDSA Philippines. A mother, desperate to feed her child, takes part in the feeding program of the Mayor of a city. Upon seeing the favorable response of the wife of the mayor to her child, she undertakes a disturbing gamble.

Why are we doing this?

As economic crises jolt the “old” centres of capital in Europe and the US, Asia – led by China and India -- is being touted as the new engine of the global economic system, fulfilling the dual roles of producer and consumer. Much has already been written about the “winners” in this “New Asia” and there have also been critical assessments of the social and environmental impacts of resource-intensive economic growth. Much less, however, is understood about how these developments are seen and experienced “from below” in China, India and across the region.

More importantly, as the social and ecological costs of this development model rise, the question of if and how Asia's booming economies could shift from their present trajectory to a more equitable, ecological and democratic path becomes all the more pressing. These questions are important not only for ensuring social development and democracy, but because the ecosystems and resources underpinning the livelihoods of the vast majority of people in Asia are being destroyed by “business as usual” economic growth.

Why is this important?

The Whose New Asia? programme responds to the centrality that Asia has assumed in global capitalism as a centre of accumulation, as a market, and as a production platform for the rest of the world, with new centres of powers that are challenging the current global hegemonic powers.

The Whose New Asia? programme will focus on three main issues: trade and finance, development and the commons. Emphasis on these issues is based on Focus' 16-year track record, inputs from other advocates and activists regarding our strengths and what our allies identify as the most useful contributions we can make.

The key questions we seek to answer include:

- How has Asian trade changed or remained the same and what new impacts has it had on peoples and communities? How have finance and financialisation² pervaded in the region, in what ways, and how have societies changed or reacted to them? How do trade and finance disturb and



disrupt the lives of ordinary people and the already precarious status of the Asian commons and what have been the responses of communities and governments?

- In all these areas, who are the new players and how strong are their influences? Which are the key institutions and processes shaping the New Asia? What are the main axes of tension and alliance? What economic, social and political model of capitalism is emerging? Is Asia becoming the centre of the new world system? How do developments in Asia affect or influence the dynamics in the rest of the world? How deep are the supposed differences with the United States?
- Who is paying the price for Asia's economic boom? What are the social and ecological costs? How is Asia being shaped from below? What would a different social and ecological Asia look like? Where are the opportunities for transformation and Global South solidarity? Who are the emerging social movements and social actors? Is there a basis for trans-Asia solidarity to counter growing elite power? What can movements learn from ongoing resistance experiences in other parts of the South, particularly

the 'Arab spring' or from the US 'Occupy Wall Street' and the indignad@s global phenomena -- and the response by capital and elites?

The questions will be approached at multiple levels and with different methodologies to produce an integrated but dynamic micro-macro analysis.

As a starting point for this new programme, Focus will be updating its macro-level understanding and analysis of how the dynamics of trade and finance, development and defence of the commons play out in the region.

At the same time, Focus will work with progressive social actors, in particular marginalised and struggling groups, to co-generate contextual research, analysis, policy proposal and practical actions of resistance that address these issues and questions from a peoples and global solidarity perspective.

Building on Focus' long experience and relationships, much of the work will be grounded in Thailand, the Mekong region, Philippines, India and China. However, the activities will not be limited to these countries and the perspective will be Asia-wide and global.

A. Developing the *Whose New Asia?* Programme



This work will be completed in 2012 under the leadership of the new Executive Director.

MAIN ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

1. CONSULTATIONS WITH PARTNERS, FUNDERS, NETWORKS, MOVEMENTS and other external actors to develop and define key themes and directions and explore the most effective means of turning reflection and research into practical actions and outcomes. (Depending on funding this could include an international workshop to review and consolidate ideas.)
2. RESEARCH AND POLICY ANALYSIS to “update” understanding of the New Asia and the production of short briefing papers to feed into larger global debates on issues such as:
 - Who are the new and emerging players (India, China, Indonesia and Vietnam) and how do they affect Asian and global developments? How are economic and political governance organised in the region, and what impacts do they have globally?

- “Green economy” initiatives in Asia: a critical perspective
- Who owns the commons? An overview of who controls Asia’s resources and to what extent Asia controls resources elsewhere
- Sustainable development: where are we 20 years after Rio?
- What are the impacts of the North’s economic crisis on Asia?
- The relative strengths and weaknesses of different Asian social movements to achieve the large-scale changes they desire. Are there lessons to learn from the “Arab Spring”, “Occupy Wall Street” or other present or past popular movements?”
- What are the impacts on people of the development strategies being followed in both India and China? Are their investment and trade policies based on the third world solidarity they espouse?

B. Continuation and Completion of Existing Projects



1. LAND GRABBING IN ASIA

Asian countries have been targets of large-scale land acquisition by domestic and foreign investors, many of whom also come from within the region (e.g. China, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Kuwait, South Korea and Saudi Arabia). The project will look into how land grabbing affects local agriculture and economy, dispossesses and fractures communities, and inspires local action. It will situate land grabbing at the heart of capital's compulsion for accumulation and explore its ecological impact.

Country-based and sub-regional work on land grabbing will explore the negative repercussions and the complicity of countries and/or regional associations; highlight community responses; and facilitate the development of strategies for advocacy and action.

This work fits very well into the agenda for the new Focus programme and will contribute to the meta-analysis described above.

Output: Two major sets of research will be completed: regional land grabbing studies and the TNI-FIAN Hands Off the Land papers.

Outcomes: The Asia land grabbing project findings will feed into the activities-campaigns that Focus has been involved in on challenging capitalist agriculture, food sovereignty, the global campaign on agrarian reform, stopping the World Bank led RAI (Responsible Agricultural Investment) principles, stopping special economic zones (SEZs), resisting large dams, stopping financialisation of land and agriculture, resisting corporate takeover of eco-systems, pushing smallholder friendly policies in the Committee for World Food Security (CFS), and others.

The TNI-FIAN project is aimed at advocacy in the EU to build human rights based land-natural resource governance systems.

2. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE PHILIPPINES (CONTINUING PROJECT)

The neoliberal experiment has been comprehensively implemented in the Philippines with disastrous results in many areas, making it a good case study illustrative of global trends. The project will look into the prospects for genuine social development amidst a liberalized setup; agriculture and the new face of the countryside; environment and the control of the commons; structural poverty and marginalization; the orphan Constitution and the prospects for political reforms; and the global Filipino and the shaping of new national identities.

On the one hand, this country case study is a continuation of the existing Focus country programme in the Philippines. On the other, many of its findings will provide useful foundations and comparators for the analysis of *Whose New Asia?* that is the focus of the new Focus.

The Philippine Political Economy update will be done within the framework of *Standing with the Poor and Marginalized*. *Standing with the Poor and the Marginalized* is the overarching framework of the Focus Philippines programme and is an explicit attempt to make the country level work more coherent and relevant by taking a clear stand with the poor and marginalized. This perspective will help not only Focus Philippines but all of Focus to craft the alternatives to which we commit ourselves.

Output: Findings will be presented in a book to be published by the end of 2012. Regular updates on Philippine political economy will be published on the



Focus websites; published in the Focus Policy Review and the Focus-on-the-Philippines Newsletter; and mainstreamed through the continuing platforms of the Development Roundtable Series (DRTS).

The Philippines Program will continue its convening role, especially in the areas of ecological and equitable trade and industrial policy, and agrarian reform, building from the process, policy and network outcomes of the DRTS; and its capacity building role through the Standing with the Poor platform.

Outcome: The Standing with the Poor platform will help build capacities and resources for advocates, campaigners and community based groups.

The project will help revive the discussion on ecological and equitable trade and industrial policy, and revitalize the push for national-level alternatives in these areas. The project seeks to ensure the full implementation of the CARPER (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with Reforms) through effective monitoring and advocacy, partnerships with various agrarian reform advocates, and solidarity with beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries.

3. EUROPEAN UNION FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS WITH ASIA

The stalemate in the World Trade Organization has prompted the proliferation of bilateral and regional free trade agreements peddled by Northern countries to the South. Deemed more aggressive and comprehensive than the most-favoured nation approach of the WTO, these FTAs also open up spaces for Northern and Southern activists to come together against the neoliberal free trade ideology.

The campaign links together national convenors from five ASEAN countries (Focus on the Global South in Philippines, Monitoring Sustainability of Globalization (MSN) in Malaysia, FTA Watch in Thailand, Institute for Global Justice (IGJ) in Indonesia, and the Vietnam Peace and Development Foundation (VPDF) in Vietnam); it connects with ASEAN peoples processes (ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples Forum); and

engages inter-regional platforms (Asia-Europe Peoples Forum).

The EU-ASEAN FTA will be a continuing focus in the next two years, also as part of its earlier commitment. While the regional arrangement has been stymied, EU bilateral negotiations with several ASEAN countries have started (Singapore, Malaysia) or are about to start (Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines).

The campaign seeks to stop lop-sided FTAs as a maximum target. It will use the specific issues of intellectual property rights (IPR), especially access to medicines; raw materials (related to natural resource extraction); and investments (particularly in finance), to highlight why they are unacceptable.

The campaign combines country-level work, regional engagement, and inter-regional solidarity.

Output: Development and articulation of peoples demands and advocacy positions; popular campaigns in participating countries to put pressure on governments to resist unjust trade and economic agreements

Outcome: These engagements seek to contribute and enhance analysis of regional and cross-regional concerns; articulates and disseminates demands; helps develop an alternative agenda on trade and investment; and broaden the constituency for trade and investment reform.

4. "READER ON A MULTIPOLAR WORLD"

Focus together with the Transnational Institute (TNI) is cooperating on a book project "Reader on a Multipolar World". The project will produce an exploratory reader which gives an:

- informed critical overview of potential and challenges facing social movements from the emerging power of South-South cross regional blocks led by economic powerhouses such as China, Brazil, India and South Africa

- assessment of Brazil, South Africa, India and China (BASIC) individual and collective impact on key issues of trade, climate change and geopolitics
- proposals for economically and socially just alternative policies that should be developed by South-South blocks

Focus will contribute several chapters as well as participating in preparatory workshops.

Output: Book to be published mid-2012; in addition wiki entries on key issues will be developed, individual chapters will be available on websites and promoted through the media

Outcome: This research and writing project will deepen the activist and academic linkages between regions (Latin America, Asia and Africa); deepen the understanding and analysis of emerging global power relations; feed into the development of Whose New Asia? project.

5. MAINTAINING ENGAGEMENT IN NATIONAL AND REGIONAL COALITIONS AND NETWORKS

It is central to Focus' approach and effectiveness that we maintain dynamic and supportive relationships with social movements with whom we work as well as coalitions, networks and campaigns of which we are part. This requires time and resources and as such constitutes a significant part of the organisation's activities.

The nature of the relationships varies both over time and depending on the type of organisation or activity, for example, during campaigns and mobilisations the time demands can be intense. Although there are overlaps between issues, the following list roughly groups social movements and coalitions and networks according to key areas of our work:

Trade and finance: Stop the New Round Coalition in the Philippines, FTA Watch Thailand, and regional level networks and platforms such as the Asia Social Movement Platform, Our World is Not for Sale (member), OWINFS G20 Working Group (active participant)

Commons: Thai Working Group in Climate Justice (convening role and active member) and the Philippines Movement for Climate Justice (convening role and active member), India Climate Justice Forum (regular meetings), Save the Mekong Campaign (contributing research and co-organising events), ASEAN Working Group on Environment, Ecology and Development (convenor), as well as international networks and campaigns including Land Research Action Network (research), Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform, and the Reclaiming Public Water network (contributing analysis, networking and campaigning roles), Climate Justice Now (facilitation group).

Deglobalisation and regionalism: Peoples SAARC, Solidarity for Asian Peoples Solidarity (member of organising committee), ASEAN Task Force on Freedom of Information (convenor).

Evaluation

An important component of the new programme manager's work and of the programme development process is to put in place a system of monitoring and evaluation that will allow the results and impacts of the work to be continuously harvested and fed back into the ongoing work.

Dissemination

In the first phase, Focus will continue to use existing tools and outlets for disseminating materials, such as website, e-bulletins, occasional papers, press releases and so on. However, in the process of developing the Whose New Asia? programme a key discussion will be about how Focus can use new, innovative and effective forms of communication.

Programme & Organisational Oversight & Administration

Focus has completed the initial phase of restructuring that resulted in: lines of responsibility clarified and streamlined, the opening of the Executive Director and Operations Manager posts, and the streamlining of staffing in country offices. Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation will be developed and tested in the first year. Closer Board oversight is being explored and a system of Focus Fellows is being proposed for study by the new ED to ensure continuity and organisations memory.

Structure & Staffing

In addition to an Executive Director and Operations Manager, the new Focus structure will have, initially, the following staffing complement:

Four coordinators: China/East Asia; India/South Asia; Philippines/Southeast Asia; and Thailand/Mekong.

Four programme officers: two based in the Philippines, one focussing on the commons and the other on trade and finance; one based in Thailand, focussing on the commons and land-grabbing; and a fourth based in India.

Bangkok will remain the main office for Focus management and finance, administration and IT staff will be located there. In addition, combined administration/finance positions will be based in Manila and Delhi. The total complement will be 15.

Endnotes

1. In Focus we understand the commons to be the physical, natural, spatial, conceptual and political values and wealth that are the rights of all peoples in the world, including public goods and services. The main focus of our activities has been natural resources (what we call the natural commons), essential goods and services (such as food, public services and markets) and political space (such as democracy and governance).
2. Financialisation is term that describes an economic system or process that attempts to reduce all value that is exchanged (whether tangible, intangible, future or present promises, etc.) either into a financial instrument or a derivative of a financial instrument.

