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# Context

Politics in Asia and globally took a dangerous turn in 2016. The victories of Donald Trump in the United States, Brexit, and Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines are signs of backlash against globalization. This is affirmation of what Focus on the Global South (Focus) and many of our partners have consistently argued: that corporate-led globalization has not been beneficial to the working class and marginalized groups; that it has led to greater inequality and wealth concentration; that it has caused further destruction of the environment and deepened the climate crisis; and has eroded peoples' rights. As the number of people that have been neglected, dispossessed, and disenfranchised by the dominant economic system continues to grow, so will disdain for the system and the political forces most identified with it. However, it is the right-wing factions in society that have been capitalizing on this dissatisfaction and gaining electoral success, while maintaining business-as-usual economic policies that rest on exploitation and extractivist economic activities that do little to alleviate the poorest and most marginalized communities.

In the Philippines, the death toll from Duterte's brutal war on drugs reached 6,000 by the end of 2016. Human rights defenders and institutions are being threatened and

undermined. The passage in the Lower House of Congress of the death penalty and the lowering of age of criminal responsibility are clear signals of a retreat by the Philippines government from its international human rights obligations. The war on drugs has further deepened the existing culture of impunity in which vigilantes and rogue police officers go scot free and could operate out of the reach of the law. The central poverty alleviation program of the Duterte government is the war on drugs, which has mostly targeted and affected the poor. Yet Duterte has no clear economic program; the new Philippine Development Plan makes more of the same promises already seen under the previous administrations. A positive development since the administration came into power has been the actions of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary. She has ordered the closure of mining operations that would fail the audit required by law. Conversely, Duterte has come out strongly in support of coal energy, inaugurating a number of coal-fired power plant projects in the Visayas and Mindanao.

In India, the Modi government suppresses any hint of dissent against the regime's policies. The government restricts and silences critical civil society organizations (CSOs) and

non-government organizations (NGOs) by withholding or cancelling their certificates to receive foreign funds under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). According to newspaper reports, more than 10,000 FCRA have been cancelled or renewals withheld. But this has not prevented civil society groups from putting up resistance through demonstrations and other protest actions against government, especially vis-à-vis assaults on freedom of expression, association, and dissent.

In Thailand, the military government's power was further entrenched through a referendum, which won general public approval for a new draft of the constitution that will grant greater powers to the military. Cambodia witnessed a tumultuous year with the public assassination of prominent political commentator, Kem Ley, the imprisonment of human rights defenders, and continuing personal attacks against members of the opposition party. Despite the fact that Laos continues to be one of the most repressive countries in the region,

the international community has ignored the blatant human rights violations and continues to pour aid and investment money into the country. In Myanmar, the promise of peace and justice under the new government has been marred by attacks against the Rohingya

by government forces and continuing armed conflict in the north of the country between the military and ethnic armed groups.

In this political climate, the assertion for peoples' rights, in particular their economic rights, is met with state-led repression even as corporations are having a field day under governments' neoliberal policies. Land and natural resource grabbing, resource extraction and development, mega investment projects, and corporate friendly trade negotiations take place unabated, while those who resist these trends, advocate for the

public interest and defend the rights of people and communities face increasing attacks, with rising numbers of legal harassment cases, assassinations, violent attacks and enforced disappearances.

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# Focus in 2016

Given this context, Focus in 2016 initiated and engaged more vigorously in endeavors that challenged the impunity of state and non-state actors in the region. One of the main approaches in doing this was working closely with human rights organizations and networks of rights defenders and activists. The Focus team from all offices joined protests and mobilizations in solidarity with grassroots communities, social movements, and other civil society organizations. We raised awareness on the increasing criminalization of, and violence against, activists and human rights defenders in the Asia region through our End Impunity Campaign and first edition of our End Impunity Newsletter.

We supported farmers, fisherfolk, urban poor, and workers in defending their rights, whether by providing them with timely analysis, political education, and legal/material support, and by drafting/translating statements and declarations especially through our national programs in Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines and India, as well as by marching with them in protest actions.

Aside from giving support to other organizations and movements, we organized our own forums, gatherings, conferences, with themes/issues ranging from discussions of Humanity

and Nature and what is happening to our forests, to workshops on agroecology, and strategy meetings on trade and investment. We strengthened our campaigns at national and regional levels against multilateral and bilateral free trade agreements such as RCEP and the EU-Philippines FTA, and built greater popular resistance against the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS).

Knowledge outputs were key in our work to raise awareness of social, political, economic, and ecological issues. We wrote numerous articles and produced and disseminated publications throughout the year. Improvement of the content of the Focus website and social media platforms was also a priority to better disseminate our analyses and advocacies we support, and our work and staff were featured on a number of news media platforms (internet, broadcast/television) throughout the year.

We were also resource persons/speakers in a number of public events and with a range of audiences, including at the World Social Forum, ASEAN Peoples' Forum, Asia-Europe Peoples' Forum and 17 conferences nationally, regionally, and internationally.

Detailed on the next page are Focus activities in 2016, organized by thematic area.

## THE COMMONS

### INTERNATIONAL/REGIONAL

#### Engagement with the FAO, small-scale farmers and fisherfolk

Focus engaged with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to promote the rights and livelihoods of peasants, small-scale farmers and fisherfolk in policy-making. As part of Focus' continuing commitments under the FAO's Committee for World Food Security (CFS) Shalmali Guttal attended the Civil Society Coordinating Committee meetings of the CFS on agricultural investment and the annual CFS events in Rome in May, July and October respectively. She was on the drafting team for the *Synthesis Report on Civil Society experiences regarding use and implementation of the Tenure Guidelines and the challenge of monitoring CFS decisions*, and on the editorial team for the publication *Connecting Smallholders to Markets, An Analytical Guide*. Focus was also involved in developing *The Peoples' Manual on the Guidelines on Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests*, released in 2016.

Focus co-organized a workshop on Securing Small Scale Fisheries (SSF) in Mekong region: SSF Guidelines in Action that was held outside Bangkok from 30 April-1 May, which brought together over 40 participants from Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam and other countries in Asia, Africa and Europe, to discuss how to use the SSF Guidelines

recently approved by the FAO's Committee on Fisheries to secure the rights of small-scale, artisanal fishers.

Afsar Jafri of Focus India attended meetings of the International Planning Committee (IPC) for Food Sovereignty in Rome, since Focus is part of the working group on trade and markets. From 29-31 August, Afsar also attended the International Symposium on Agroecology for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems in Yunnan, China, organized by the FAO, which brought together over 230 participants representing research, government, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, and the private sector, from China and over other 20 countries. Afsar Jafri made two presentations, one on "Beyond Productivity: Social Performance of Agriculture & Agroecology" and another on "Economic Impacts of Different Models of Agricultural Development on Small Farmers."

#### Other activities on the Commons

Focus continued strengthening its long-term partnership with La Via Campesina (LVC), the international peasant's movement. Shalmali Guttal represented Focus at LVC's International Conference on Agrarian Reform in Brazil in April, and was part of a team that drafted and edited the final Marabá Declaration. In May, Focus co-

organized a forum on the Future of Rice Farming in South East Asia with LVC and Paragos-Pilipinas, which was attended by delegates from LVC Regional South East and East Asia, and by farmer leaders and civil society organizations.

Focus also continued to contribute to the Nyeleni newsletter, which is a prominent voice in the international Food Sovereignty movement. The 27th edition on smallholders and markets came out in October, for which Shalmali Guttal edited and wrote the editorial. Raphael Baladad from the Focus Philippines team contributed a piece on a farmer's cooperative in the Philippines.

Focus, alongside World Rainforest Movement, Project Sevana, School for Democratic Economics and The Cornerhouse, co-organized a regional gathering called "What is Happening to our Forests?" in Thailand in November. The event gathered approximately 50 participants involved in struggles to defend the territories, forests, and livelihoods of forest-dependent communities. The gathering comprised a field trip to the provinces of Phetchaboun and

Chaiyaphoum, where local communities have been organizing against forest destruction by investors and elites, and against violence and criminalization. This was followed by a three-day meeting in Bangkok where participants were able to exchange, share and discuss information, knowledge, experiences and strategies related to land grabbing and criminalization, green economy mechanisms/instruments, and possible future regional/national collaborations.

In relation to promoting the concept of the commons, Shalmali Guttal spoke on "The creative power and resistance potential of the commons" at the 2016 International Transform Conference on "Red/Green Alternatives—Breaking with Growth and Neo-liberalism" held in Copenhagen in March by Transform! Danmark. Shalmali also made a presentation at Afrika Kontakt in Copenhagen about Focus' work on trade, investment and the commons in the Asia region. An article, "In Defense of the Commons," written by Shalmali and Mary Ann Manahan of Focus Philippines was featured in CETRI's quarterly publication *Alternatives Sud*.

## PHILIPPINES

### Agrarian reform and support to farmers

Focus Philippines remained active in agrarian reform and remained active in its role as the secretariat of the Save Agrarian Reform Alliance

(SARA), providing technical support in research and campaigns, and influencing the strategic directions of the movement.

Focus co-organized the Agrarian Reform National Conference titled, *Protecting Farmer's Land Tenure*





Kalampag, in front of DAR after the massacre of farmers

*and Ownership, Prospects of Maximizing the Opportunities and Addressing the Challenges in the Duterte Administration*, with Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines (CBCP-NASSA) and other CSOs, held in June in Quezon City. Around 70-100 participants came from various provinces nationwide, as well as national civil society organizations from around the capital. A video and a publication were produced and submitted to CBCP-NASSA. The event became a space for farmers to voice problems to the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Secretary, and the event documentation became a tool to exact accountability from the DAR and its leadership in their efficiency to implement reforms and address the issues identified during the event.

On 20 December, Focus participated in a CSO policy consultation organized by the DAR regarding the administrative order regulating alternative venture agreements (AVA) between small farmers/agrarian reform beneficiaries and corporations/private sector. Focus provided

policy formulations and analyses, in particular on protecting the rights of farmers against onerous contracts, more support service provision, a moratorium on AVAs pending serious review of past and current contracts/agreements, and re-casting of the framework and state policy around AVAs.

Focus supported farmer groups to defend their rights and fight against criminalization of peasants. During the year, Focus joined and documented several farmers' mobilizations and struggles. Focus also worked towards facilitating partnerships with local agrarian communities, the government, and academe for the promotion of sustainable agriculture. Focus organized several activities with Paragos-Pilipinas, including field and immersion visits for university students to learn about farming and agrarian reform and exchange visits with farmers, to enable them to share and determine the viability of organic farming methods, as well as to exchange seeds and stories, especially regarding their on-going agrarian struggles.



## MEKONG

Focus participated in several Mekong regional events during the year, including the regional meeting of the Save the Mekong coalition that was held in Siem Riep, Cambodia, 22-24 March. Six members of the community-led Action Research team in Cambodia also participated in the meeting and presented their experiences in mobilizing against the Sinohydro dams in western and northern Cambodia.

### Working with land rights activists and farmers in Cambodia

Focus continued with the capacity building and political education of rural Cambodian land rights activists to equip them with the knowledge and abilities to defend their rights,

resources, and livelihoods. Since 2007, Focus has trained 115 rural activists as Action Research Team (ART) members who continue to grow in their capabilities, helping communities to battle against corporations and elites who grab community land and resources in rural areas. ART members were able to participate in a number of trainings and workshops held throughout the year by Focus and partners, including legal training on Land Law and Economic Land Concessions, a trade and investment workshop, paralegal training, and media training. To complement the documentation and advocacy efforts of the ART members, Focus also provided trainings on livelihoods to improve their financial and food security which often suffer as a result of having their land and resources grabbed, and engaging in long battles against the perpetrators.



Farmer in Cambodia

## Working with grassroots movements in Thailand

In Thailand, Focus also continued to strengthen its partnerships with rural and urban movements fighting for land rights. In May, as part of the Assembly of the Poor's annual training to its members, Focus was invited to give a presentation on trade and investment agreements and plans of Thailand.

In June and September, Focus organized two trainings with Essarn Land Reform Network and Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand on the state of play of trade and investment agreements and its impacts on peasants. The main participants of the training were key movement leaders, and community members. The training aimed to increase awareness and analytical capacity of social movement members on national, regional and global trends, and policy on trade and investment.

## INDIA

### Agroecology

Focus India has continued to work intensely on the issue of agriculture and agroecology; organizing, facilitating and speaking at numerous events and workshops to discuss and address issues affecting small farmers. Focus' booklets on agroecology are in popular demand and are circulated widely among farmer's groups at the many workshops and events Focus is involved in. 2016 additions to the agroecology series included *Trade Liberalization and WTO: Impact on Agriculture and Farmers*, as well as *Let's Cooperate! Rural Producers Collectives in India*. Also part of the agroecology project, Focus co-organized a series of trainings on agroecology for small farmers. Five trainings were held in the states of Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Darjeeling, with a total of over 600 participants.

### Right to food

Focus India has also been active on the issue of Right to Food (RTF). Afsar Jafri was invited as a speaker at the State Convention of Maharashtra Anna Adhikar Abhiyan (Right to Food Campaign, Maharashtra) in Mumbai. In September, Focus and the RTF Campaign co-organized a 3-hour parallel workshop on "Right to Food and Trade Agreements" at the 6th National Convention of the National RTF Campaign in Jharkhand.

In November, Focus co-organized with Anna Adhikar Andolan-Maharashtra, Forum against FTAs and RLS, a two-day workshop on "Trade Agreements and People's Right to Food: Shrinking Spaces" in Mumbai. The workshop aimed to educate farmers and members of the RTF campaign in Maharashtra about the different aspects of trade policy, WTO,



Native seeds in India

and FTAs, and how they impact the RTF programme, farmers' livelihood and the policy space of the nation.

### Other workshops/speaking engagements on agriculture

Afsar Jafri was involved as a resource person on agriculture and trade in several different events over the year. On 1-3 April, he participated in the 3rd Kisan Swaraj Sammelan (KSS), a confluence of farmers practicing agroecological agriculture and seed conservation, farmer organizations, and supporters of the farming community, held in Hyderabad. Afsar Jafri coordinated six workshops on trade and agriculture with the participation of more than 450 delegates and also wrote a background note on "Trade Liberalization and Agriculture," which was translated into four languages and distributed widely among all delegates.

On 7th April, Focus, along with South Asian Dialogues on Ecological Democracy (SADED), co-organized a panel discussion on the Agricultural Crisis in India with special reference to Karnataka.

On 12-14 May, Afsar Jafri was invited by the government of Madhya Pradesh to participate as a resource person at the Simhasth Vichar Kumbh, the International Convention on the Right Way of Living. More than 50,000 people, including foreign delegates from 32 countries, participated at the convention where the Prime Minister of India was the chief guest. Afsar Jafri spoke in a workshop on the current problems in agriculture, and agroecology as only possible solution to the current agrarian distress. This workshop was widely reported by local media and which quoted Focus.

As part of our efforts to engage with the youth, on 15-17 May, Afsar Jafri attended a youth camp held in Patna (Bihar) and organized by Rashtriya



Seva Dal and Samajwadi. The camp was attended by more than 150 youths from almost every district of Bihar. Mr. Jafri made a presentation on the agrarian crisis and possible solutions.

## Strategising/campaigning with partners

Focus India has been active in developing campaign strategies with partners to counter the increasing privatization of land and resources under the government's development agenda for India.

On 1st February, Afsar Jafri attended a water group meeting in Delhi, which was called to discuss how to support the campaign against privatization of municipal water in Nagpur. In April, he participated at the *National Convention, Industrial Corridors: A New Ploy*

*to Plunder Resources and People's Sovereignty*, organized by National Alliance of Peoples Movement (NAPM) in New Delhi. The objective was to have concrete strategy to counter the five industrial corridors being planned for India, mobilize support and share experiences from the ground where the project is going to have an impact in the form of land acquisition. In June, Focus also joined the Strategy and Supporters Meeting of Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) in New Delhi.

Focus has also been supportive of mass mobilizations to show solidarity with communities who were on the frontlines confronting mega development projects and land and natural resource grabs. Afsar Jafri joined farmers' protests, anti-GM and dam protests, and the countrywide general strike which drew participation of approximately 150 million workers.

# TRADE AND INVESTMENT

## INTERNATIONAL/REGIONAL

Focus continued to be active in coordinating the EU-ASEAN FTA campaign, which at regional level, focused maximizing regional spaces and platforms for information sharing and presentation of analysis on EU free-trade agreements (FTAs) and other mega regional and new generation trade and investment agreements. Many key events and workshops

also took place over the year to strengthen the regional campaign against FTAs, international investment agreements (IIAs), Investment State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) and the growing power of transnational corporations.

In Jakarta in January, Focus, EU-ASEAN FTA Campaign, Indonesia for Global Justice and TNI

co-organized a strategy meeting on confronting the policy convergence on trade, investment and corporate power. This was followed by a Regional Workshop on Rethinking International Investment Agreements co-organized by IGJ, ETO Consortium, EU-ASEAN FTA Campaign, Madhyam and TNI. Joseph Purugganan from Focus Philippines made a presentation on the “new generation” of trade agreements that incorporate enhanced investment chapters, such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and Transpacific Partnership (TPP).

On 27-28 July, Focus co-organized a regional strategy meeting on RCEP in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which brought together 80 people from national and regional organizations from 18 countries to understand the implications of RCEP, as well as strategize for solidarity and coordinated actions across the Asia-Pacific region.

On 17-19 November, Focus co-organized a Regional ISDS workshop with TNI, EU-ASEAN network, 11.11.11 and national groups from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Myanmar. The design of the workshop included space for substantive discussions on ISDS and ISDS cases, FTAs and investment agreements, argumentation skills development, and a strategy session. The interactive workshop had participants from India, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and with speakers from Australia, Belgium and the Netherlands. As a follow-up to this regional meeting, national level meetings were planned,

including a National Forum on RCEP and new generation FTAs held in the Philippines on 22-23 November.

Focus made use of other regional/international spaces to share analysis on trade and investment. Joseph Purugganan attended the Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on International Investment Agreements (IIAs) and Indigenous Peoples on 2-3 May in Bangkok and spoke on “21st Century Trade Wars: Big economies and their aggressive push for new generation free trade agreements” and “TPP and Trade in the 21st Century”. In October, Joseph shared his insights on the TPP and new generation FTAs in a discussion on the TPP and its future effects on Asian migrants organized by the Migrant Forum Asia and Lawyers Beyond Borders. Joseph was also one of the speakers at the Asia-Pacific Regional Seminar of the global union Building and Woodworkers International (BWI) on labor rights, migration and trade agreements held 6-8 December in Yangon, Myanmar.

## ADB and AIIB

Part of Focus’ work on trade and investment was also monitoring the role of development banks and international financial institutions in Asia, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Several times in the year, Focus participated in discussions organized by the NGO Forum on the ADB on the AIIB, Asian Peoples Safeguards and planning for the 50

years of ADB campaign. These were held in the Philippines on 27-28 January, 15-16 March and 2 September, and in Thailand on 22-25 July and 4-8 December. In these meetings, Focus staff made presentations on regional investment trends and projects. On December 7-8, a workshop on AIIB Project Monitoring was also co-organized by Focus, Bank Information Center (BIC) and TERRA. Sophea Chrek, our Mekong program team member, was asked to

present a case study from an investment project monitoring perspective. The meeting concluded by identifying key specific areas to work on further, including researching the projects' impact on local communities, producing an easy to understand document on the role of AIIB and co-financing from other multilateral development banks, coalition building and coordination, and continuing to support local action to seek justice for affected communities.

## PHILIPPINES

The first round of talks for a comprehensive EU-Philippines free trade agreement were conducted May 24-27 in Brussels. The EU-Philippines Campaign Network was able to send a two-person delegation composed of Ana Maria Nemenzo of Woman Health and Joseph Purugganan. A series of activities were conducted in Brussels with the support and assistance of 11.11.11 and TNI, including: meetings with civil society organizations, meetings with EU and Belgian parliamentarians, a press conference, and a dialogue with Philippine trade negotiators.

The EU-Philippines network also engaged in the trade-related technical assistance (TRTA) project with the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry, which an off-shoot of the network's effort to push for social impact assessments on key areas of IPR, public health and access to medicines, ISDS, fisheries, and labor rights, commenced with the arrival of the

short-term expert for fisheries. The aim of the TRTA on fisheries was to determine whether or not and to what extent artisanal or small-scale municipal fishers are linked to international trade, and to describe the relationship between artisanal and commercial fishing sub-sectors in relation to tuna value chain, as well as the underlying governance issues underpinning this relationship. To gather civil society inputs and engage with the TRTA on an ISDS study spearheaded by IDEALS, Focus co-organized two national ISDS workshops on 15-16 November, which were attended by around 40 people. The first workshop was for CSOs, with a second multi-sectoral workshop with CSOs, government, and business sector. Joseph Purugganan provided inputs on bilateral investment treaties, FTAs and ISDS.

Focus collaborated with Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM) and TNI on a briefing paper on ISDS and Mining in the Philippines and published



the report *Signing Away Sovereignty: ISDS and Mining in the Philippines* in June. A press release and op-ed piece was released in the media.

On 9th November, following Duterte's anti-US comments during his visit in China, Focus co-organized with EU-ASEAN Network, IDEALS, SENTRO, Alyansa Tigil Mina, Tambuyog Development Center, and 11.11.11 a public

conversation with the newly-appointed Philippine Ambassador to China, titled *Decoding the Pivot to China*.

Focus was also part of a core group of organisations (including SENTRO, IDEALS, Tambuyog, Woman Health, Philippines, and 11.11.11) which established Trade Justice Pilipinas, a national campaign on trade and investments.

## MEKONG

### Investment in the Mekong

Focus started a new research project to better understand and document transboundary investment trends, policies and regulations of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), which involved field research in Cambodia and Myanmar. In May, Focus released a paper titled, "The 'Engine of Economic Growth': An Overview of Private Investment Policies, Trends and Projects in Cambodia."

On 19-20 September, Focus held a two-day workshop on trade and investment with over 30 Cambodian grassroots rural and urban activists. The main goal of the workshop was to build the activists' knowledge of trade and investment issues and how they affect the well-being and development of ordinary people in Cambodia. The participants included activists from different sectors, including fisherfolk, land/natural resource activists, and garment workers.

In October, Focus was invited to give comments on the research study on Thai Investment in the Mekong region conducted by Toward Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance (TERRA). Aside from Focus, academics, community members, and activists were invited to give their comments on this study. In December, Focus represented FTA Watch at a round table meeting on investment organized by the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this meeting, the MFA also presented its study on how Thailand should pursue its plan on foreign investment projects, in response to which Focus, on behalf of FTA Watch, raised concerns about the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

### Supporting garment workers in Cambodia

On May 22nd, Focus staff took part in the panel discussion on "Wage and Working Conditions" at the Worker's Forum on Understanding the

Garment industry in Cambodia, hosted by United Sisterhood Alliance and attended by garment workers. Ros Sokunthy from our Focus Cambodia team was also able to share her knowledge of the garment sector in Cambodia at two regional meetings organized by the International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Focus, along with the Workers Information Centre (WIC), was involved in helping garment workers win approximately half a million US dollars in compensation for about 2,200 garment workers in Phnom Penh as a result of a labor dispute about unfair dismissal involving large brands such as H&M and Marks and Spencer.

## INDIA

Following the WTO Ministerial in Nairobi in December 2015, Focus India continued to work closely with allies to continue the campaign against the WTO, free trade agreements (FTAs), and other bilateral investment treaties (BITs).

On 4th February, Focus India along with South-South Solidarity (Action Aid), Third World Network and India FDI Watch co-organized a Workshop on Corporate led Free Trade Agenda and Impacts on People's Livelihoods under the Forum against FTAs banner. The workshop dealt with different issues like FDI in retail and e-commerce and how it will impact hawkers' livelihood, the EU-India FTA impact on retail, how trade liberalisation has devastated Indian agriculture and its impacts on hawkers, as well as demystifying trade policies and their impact on privatization of public services.

On 20th April, Afsar Jafri attended a press conference by Forum against FTAs on the latest development in the RCEP just before the negotiations started in Perth, Australia 22nd April

2016. It was demanded that if RCEP were meant to be Asia's counter to the other FTAs such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement, then it must be truly responsive to Asia's realities. The panelists also urged the Indian government to stay strong and re-think its strategy for RCEP, while staying away from TPP-like agreements.

On 24 July, a day which marked 25 years of reforms that brought economic liberalization to India, Focus co-organized a one-day conference titled "25 Years of Disastrous Economic Liberalization in Delhi." The conference aimed to evaluate the impact of economic liberalization on economic development in India and to what extent it has helped to reduce poverty, inequality, and hunger.

On 31st July, Focus participated in the All India Thematic Social Forum on "Dignity, Democracy and Diversity" held in Hyderabad and co-organized a workshop with South-South Solidarity on FTAs and Agriculture, which aimed to explore and develop awareness of the impact of mega regional FTAs.

# CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

## INTERNATIONAL/REGIONAL

In May, Shalmali Guttal was a keynote speaker at the 40th anniversary conference of The Tricontinental Centre (CETRI) in Brussels. Her keynote presentation focused on global and national inequality and inequities, and North-South politics in the context of development and climate change.

Focus shared its analysis of climate and environmental justice issues at various events at the World Social Forum in Montreal from 9-14

August. Shalmali Guttal was a panelist at the Laudato Si event organized by Development & Peace and spoke on climate change, ecological disaster and impacts on indigenous peoples. Meanwhile Joseph Purugganan participated in the Climate Space events, including *Climate Change: Crisis or Collapse*, at which he presented on the Philippine experience of disaster capitalism, as well as the workshop, *What are our Strategies After Paris Climate Agreement?*



Shalmali Guttal speaking at WSF



## PHILIPPINES

### Working with the youth

In the interest of spreading environmental awareness while looking into building a broad network for climate and environmental justice among the youth, Focus supported and participated in the four-day Summer Environmental Youth (SEY) Camp in April organized by the Struggle for Environmental Protection and Regeneration (STEPGen), together with Youth for Nationalism and Democracy (YND), and Teatrong Bayan (People's Theater).

Focus and STEPGen followed this activity with 3-day Youth for Climate Justice training in Zambales on 25-27 November. Galileo de Guzman Castillo, Focus Junior Programme Officer, was part of the Organizing Committee for the training and gave inputs on the sessions, and facilitated discussions and workshops. The activity was designed to raise awareness among youth leaders on environment concepts, perspective, and alternatives, and capacitate them to lead education awareness activities in schools, universities, and communities with environmental issues.



Summer Environmental Youth Camp



Focus joins the protest action against coal mining in Batangas province, Philippines

## Break Free campaign and Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ)

Focus joined the Break Free from Fossil Fuels Campaign, a globally coordinated effort to escalate the fight against fossil fuels and to accelerate the just transition to 100 percent renewable energy. As part of the campaign, on 4 May, anti-coal activists from all over the Philippines converged in a climate march that mobilized 8,000+ people in Batangas City, where a coal-fired power plant was planned. Unfortunately, the Batangas City Council voted in favor of the approval of the plant.

On 10 October, Focus joined about 150 activists, community leaders, and climate justice advocates from various climate networks and people's movements in a march that was part of Global Reclaim Power 2016. The Reclaim Power 2016 October Days of Action kicked off with a sign-on statement to demand all governments of the world to make a swift and just transformation of energy systems—"from fossil fuel and dirty energy dominated systems, towards clean, renewable and democratic energy systems that ensure universal access for people and communities."





On 4 May anti-coal activists from all over the Philippines converged in a climate march that mobilized 8,000+ people in Batangas City, where JG Summit Holdings plans to put up a 600-Megawatt coal fired power plant on a 20-hectare site in Barangay Pinamucan Ibaba, Batangas City.

The people sought the cancellation of the coal plant in Batangas as well as all 27 other proposed plants in the Philippines.

The Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ) held two back-to-back events in August 2016—the National Council meeting on 2 August, and the National Campaign Conference on 3 August. As a member, Focus led the presentation on PMCJ's work

on false solutions at both events, which were attended by around 30-40 members of the National Council and general membership of PMCJ. Focus is also still involved in a REDD+ documentation project with PMCJ and other groups.



## Community of Yolanda survivors and partners

Focus became part of the newly-formed alliance, Community of Yolanda Survivors and Partners (CYSP) and was active in a number of CYSP activities in 2016. This included joining a CYSP-organized delegation to the government-organized Yolanda Summit in Cebu in October, which drew close to 200 participants from government, local government units, academe, and civil society, and was an opportunity to advance the advocacy demands of CYSP as well as of Focus. During the summit, we were tasked as part of CYSP to lead the delegation's inputs on the workshop on IP rights and we raised the issue of IP exclusion in disaster relief and recovery efforts. We also used the opportunity to distribute copies of our publication, *The Philippine Experience: Climate Change, Disaster Capitalism and Food Insecurity*, to government officials and the participants. Focus also participated in the Yolanda Forum organized by Development and Peace and CYSP, marking the third year since the Yolanda disaster.

As part of our continuing advocacy work related to recovery from super typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan), which aimed to raise awareness and strengthen the capacity of

affected communities, Focus initiated a research project in partnership with Lilak as part of the CYSP campaign program, to examine and document the experience of Yolanda affected indigenous communities in relief and rehabilitation.

## Other climate-related activities

Focus co-organized the forum on *Capitalism vs. Climate: System change, yes, but how do we proceed?*, held on 2 March at the University of the Philippines Asian Center. The discussion was led by Dr. Butch Montes, formerly of UNDESA and now with the South Center. Joseph Purugganan facilitated the discussions with a panel of reactors from civil society groups.

Focus participated in the Multi-sectoral Policy Conference on Resilient Housing and Human Settlements organized by the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development Foundation, Inc. (PLCPD) held on 27 October. Focus raised the issues of land and IP rights, and disaster capitalism as key concerns in disaster recovery and building resilience of disaster prone communities. The conference was attended by around 50 participants coming from government, academe, and civil society.

# POWER AND DEMOCRACY

## INTERNATIONAL/REGIONAL

2016 saw a number of cases of incarcerations and killings of activists and human rights defenders. Focus drummed up awareness and support for Saeed Baloch, Secretary General of Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF), who was arbitrarily arrested in Karachi, Pakistan on 16 January by members of the Rangers, Pakistan's paramilitary police force. In the Philippines, the team mobilized the support of fisherfolk communities to support Mr. Baloch's case. On 4 March, Berta Caceres, a prominent Honduran environmental activist was murdered. Focus joined the international condemnation of her assassination

and issued a statement condemning the killing. Gloria Capitan, an anti-coal activist, was gunned down in Bataan, Philippines on 1 July, while Kem Ley, prominent political commentator was shot in broad-daylight in a popular coffee shop in Phnom Penh. Given the alarming escalation of violence and criminalization of dissent, especially in Asia and the countries in which Focus operates, we started planning a campaign on Ending Impunity in Asia. Focus also released its first End Impunity newsletter in August, which gave a regional overview of the issue, as well as national situational updates.



Action in front of Pakistani Embassy in Manila calling for release of Saeed Baloch

## PHILIPPINES



100 days of Duterte

### Duterte and human rights

In response to Duterte's war on drugs and extrajudicial killings of HRDs and movement leaders in the Philippines, Focus joined iDEFEND (In Defense of Human Rights and Dignity Movement), a broad grassroots movement launched in August, which aims to defend the rights and uphold the dignity of all Filipinos. iDEFEND engages with the government, educates and organizes the public, and transforms collective voices into public action and works towards the realization of a rights-based governance anchored on respect for due process and rule of law. Focus is very active with iDEFEND as part of its

education and campaign committees. Clarissa Militante has drafted a manual on Women's Rights for Trainers, as a project of iDefend, while a manual on Land Rights is being drafted by Meanne Manahan. Focus carried many press releases on its website, and mobilizations as part of iDEFEND.

Focus also joined various activities protesting the burial of Marcos at the Heroes Cemetery. Focus was involved in #Block Marcos, a group of individuals and organizations mostly from the youth sector who have come together to hold President Duterte to account for betraying the Filipino people by ordering the burial of the dictator at the Heroes Cemetery; to demand



the immediate exhumation of said dictator's remains; to counter historical revisionism; to stop the Marcoses' return to power; and to fight authoritarianism.

In addition to mobilizing on the ground and making new alliances, Focus Philippines also wrote a number of articles and briefers in the context of Duterte's leadership in 2016. Clarissa Militante, our Communications Officer, noted in an article prior to the ASEAN Summit in September that Duterte was likely to receive an "old boys club" welcome into ASEAN, given the culture of impunity and strongman personalities that dominated the region. She also wrote a briefier on *Human Rights, Impunity and the Duterte Government*, a shorter version of which was published by UCA news in December. Focus Philippines also produced a briefing paper on the political situation, *State of Emergency and Securitization in the Philippines*, which was shared to Focus staff members, associates, and international partners and allies in September.

## Working with indigenous peoples

On June 1-5, Focus was invited by the Alyansa ng Kabataan Mindanao para sa Kapayapaan (AKMK) to the 9th Mindanao Summer Youth Peace Camp with the theme "Continuing the 14-year of Intergenerational Struggle for Peace, Justice and Development." The camp provided an avenue to discuss issues, struggles, and experiences of the tri-people youth, strengthen the solidarity among the youth, at both local and international, and chart collective action and demands considering the May election result.

Focus continued to be an active member of Loyukan, an alliance of indigenous peoples' groups and support groups pushing for the full inclusion of indigenous peoples' rights in the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law. On 12 August, Loyukan held a strategic planning workshop participated in by representatives of member organizations. Focus helped develop the network's workplan and list of activities together with other Loyukan members.

In September, Focus was invited to the Round Table Discussion on Indigenous Peoples and Rural Poor Communities: “Asserting Rights and Self-Determination Amidst Current Challenges and Opportunities.” Joseph Purugganan was invited as a speaker to share perspectives from climate justice movements. In December, Joseph and Galileo Castillo represented Focus at the 8th Mindanao Peoples Peace Summit, which was around the theme “Rekindling our Conviction for the Realization of a People-centered, Just and Inclusive Society.” Focus spearheaded the discussions on two issues: The Paris Climate agreement: results, challenges and call to action, and the Trade and Investment.

## Freedom of Information

Focus is also part of the Right to Know Right Now network (R2KRN), which advocates for the passage of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill. In the process of data gathering for research and articles, Focus utilized the “FOI Practice Tool,” to exact data the government would otherwise not release, and has been able to document the efficiency (or the lack thereof) of the government in releasing data, particularly in relation to data about land distribution, land conversions, support services delivery and budget utilization. During the year, Focus maintained its substantive involvement in the network’s initiatives.

## MEKONG

### Working with land and environmental rights defenders in Thailand

Focus, along with Forum-Asia, Southern Peasant Federation of Thailand (SPFT), Community Resource Center, Amnesty International and Protection International, held a panel discussion in Bangkok on 9 March, titled “The Struggles of Land and Environmental Rights Defenders in Thailand: Challenges and Ways Forward.” The panelists assessed the current protection measures available in Thailand and suggested more effective ways to ensure the safety of human rights defenders on the ground.

Focus co-organized two strategy meetings in May and November to bring together community members, social movements, human rights organizations, lawyer associations, and OHCHR representatives to analyse and respond to the challenging situation in Thailand for land and environmental rights defenders under the military government.

In June, Niabdulghafar (Hamdee) Tohming, our Thailand Program Officer, joined the Cross Cultural Foundation, International Commission of Jurists and OHCHR, in a fact-finding mission regarding land disputes between local communities and the Department of

National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation in Chaiyaphum province in the northeast of Thailand. The aim was to discuss with community members to better understand and discuss different land conflict cases and the challenges and threats they are facing. A broad strategy and immediate support needed by communities were identified. A meeting was also held with the local police chief to discuss and follow-up on the disappearance case of Mr. Den, a prominent land rights activist in the Northeast of Thailand.

In August, Focus participated in a national meeting on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Human Rights in Thailand. The meeting was organized to prepare civil society on the UPR process. In the meeting, Hamdee Tohming was nominated to be the focal person for the land cluster in the Thai coalition on the UPR, working together with land movements to prepare implementation plans in response to UPR recommendations for the state and civil society.

## Thai politics

Along with Thai CBOs and social movements, Focus co-hosted a widely-attended event at Thammasat University in Bangkok prior to the August referendum on the draft constitution, which gave people a rare platform to voice their criticisms of the junta. Unfortunately, the referendum delivered an overwhelming victory for the Thai junta and its draft constitution. A new network was formed from after this event, the People Go Network, of which Focus is part. The network organized a weekend of workshops

and other activities on political, economic and environmental issues at Chulalongkorn University on 10-11 December.

Since June, Focus has also been conducting interviews with individuals from different backgrounds and political spectrums in Thailand. The interviews are part of a joint research project that aim to probe the opinions of selected respondents on various dimensions of the political crisis in Thailand over the last 15 years.

## The Sombath Initiative

The Sombath Initiative (SI) continued to be active in raising awareness about important issues in Laos and the disappearance of Sombath Somphone. One of the core goals of the SI is to promote Sombath's ideas and ideals. With this in mind, we held a three-day Sombath Symposium on 15-17 February. Titled, "Humanity and Nature: Traditional, Cultural and Alternative Perspectives," the symposium brought together 14 participants from the Mekong region and India to present perspectives and practices that broadly fell into four categories: indigenous and ethnic perspectives, spiritual and cultural perspectives, livelihood perspectives and perspectives on the work of Sombath. The third day of the symposium was organized as a public forum, which was attended by 65 people, including activists, social movement members, researchers, and members of media. Five panelists were nominated from among the symposium participants to present the key conclusions from the symposium and lead the discussion. The discussion was rich,

with audience members who made links between the points presented by the panelists with existing community struggles to protect nature and the environment against destructive investment and development projects. The symposium was documented and published in written and audiovisual form to share these key perspectives with a wider audience.

Substantial work went into updating, expanding, and managing the Sombath.org website and related social media sites. The website and social media sites remain the main source of up-to-date information on Sombath's disappearance and related issues for audiences within Laos, as well as for others working on these issues at the regional and international levels.

Prior to the ASEAN Summit in Laos in early September, Focus/SI worked with human rights organizations to conduct a press conference in Bangkok and release a set of briefing papers to raise media awareness and coverage of human rights abuses in Laos. Focus also co-organized a workshop on the shrinking space for human rights defenders in ASEAN at the APF in Dili in August and a workshop on "Humanity and Nature," following from the Sombath Symposium in February. On 19 December, Focus/SI co-organized a press conference in Bangkok on "Sombath Somphone and the Tragedy of Enforced Disappearances," where three cases of enforced disappearance were discussed by the family members of the disappeared.



Sombath Symposium





## MULTI-THEMATIC

### Peoples' Alternatives

In line with our three-year program, Peoples' Alternatives for Asia, Focus organized and participated in events aimed at generating discussion and proposals around social, economic and political transformation and alternatives.

Focus held the Mekong Regional Conference on "Peoples' Proposals for Social, Economic and Political Transformation" on 27-28 January in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The conference brought together 44 participants from across the Mekong to build stronger links between social movements, progressive NGOs and other actors; enable them to share their struggles and increase awareness and solidarity on key challenges; and facilitate dialogue and build synergy around peoples' proposals and demands for social, economic and political transformation. As a result of the conference, Focus agreed to further examine transboundary investments.

Sopheha Chrek from the Mekong team attended the 2nd meeting of the "Permanent Working Group of Socio-Ecological Transformation in Asia", hosted by Rosa-Luxembourg Stiftung (RLS) in Hanoi, Vietnam, on 4-5 April. The meeting brought together RLS staff, researchers, Vietnamese policy makers, Laotian policy makers and NGO partners to share and explore ideas related to socio-ecological transformation in Asia. Sopheha spoke about the socio-ecological

context and experiences in the Mekong sub-region and peoples' alternatives for social, economic, political and environmental transformation.

### Systemic Alternatives

The Systemic Alternatives project, co-implemented with Fundacion Solon and Attac-France, continues to be Focus' main platform for exploring and discussing alternatives with intellectuals and activists from across the world. Systemic Alternatives held two events at the World Social Forum. One was on Post-Extractivist Societies, at which Shalmali Guttal moderated and Joseph Purugganan presented. Joseph's presentation focused on: the role of mining and extractive industries in sustaining growth in Asia; mining in the Philippines and the demands for policy reforms; and what the demand towards a post-extractivist society implies for the Philippines. The second discussion was on Engaging with, Confronting and Challenging State Power, at which Shalmali presented.

### ACSC/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (APF)

Focus is also very active in a number of regional and international spaces, processes and platforms to pursue a progressive agenda with partners and allies. One of the key platforms is

the ACSC/ASEAN Peoples' Forum, which seeks to engage ASEAN and issues in the ASEAN region.

Focus attended both of the Regional Consultation Meetings of the ACSC/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (APF) on 31 March-1 April in Bangkok and 10-11 May in Vientiane. The meetings were held to prepare for the APF in August. Focus challenged the ACSC/APF process, which this year has seen an increase in the number of GONGOs attending the consultations and main forum, a push for institutionalization and reduced opportunities for CSOs to voice their opinions. An article written by Sophea Chrek prior to the ACSC/APF raised concerns on the democratic space for CSOs at the ACSC/APF, especially CSOs from Laos.

Focus also remains a member of the Philippine Process, a broad network of CSOs, peoples' organizations, and social movements that strategically engage the issue of ASEAN through the ACSC/APF. Focus was nominated by the group as the Philippine representative to the drafting committee for 2016. On April 1, Focus and other members of the Philippine Process were invited by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to a CSO Consultation Meeting that aimed to solicit inputs from civil society organizations in preparation for the Philippine Chairpersonship of ASEAN in 2017.

On 2-5 August, the 11th ACSC/APF was held in Dili, Timor-Leste at which over 1,000 regional and local participants took part. Galileo de Guzman Castillo and Sophea Chrek represented

Focus and also organized a thematic workshop session on Environment and Natural Resources, entitled "Humanity and Nature: Traditional, Cultural, and Alternative Perspectives."

The thematic session aimed to be a space for ASEAN peoples and civil society to share traditional, cultural, and alternative perspectives on humanity's relationship with nature. This was an offshoot activity of the Sombath Symposium held in February.

Focus also organized with La'o Hamutuk an informal Trade and Investment meeting with Timorese activists and allies. Sophea Chrek shared perspectives on ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the Mekong Region, while Joseph Purugganan presented (via Skype) his paper on "21st Century Trade Wars: Big Economies and Their Aggressive Push for New Generation Free Trade Agreements."

## Asia-Europe Peoples Forum

At the 11th Asia-Europe Peoples Forum (AEPF11), held in Ulaanbaatar on 15-16 July, Focus co-organized three trade and investment workshops, which were attended by around 70-80 people, mostly from Mongolia. Meanwhile, the AEPF11 final declaration that Focus had a hand in drafting as an International Organizing Committee (IOC) member, urged a halt to all negotiations based on current trade and investment protection frameworks, withdrawal of the ISDS mechanism and the reigning in of corporate power.

## World Social Forum

Focus renewed its involvement in the World Social Forum (WSF) 2016 held in Montreal, Canada 9-14 August. In addition to the Systemic Alternatives and climate justice events, Shalmali Guttal and Joseph Purugganan participated in a number of other events and meetings at the WSF. The week kicked off with Shalmali and Joseph speaking on the panel at the Water Justice Strategy Meeting, at which they talked of water justice struggles in Asia, and the threat of neoliberalism to water justice. Both also spoke at the WSF Grand Conference, People and Planet before Profit: Voices of Resistance and Alternatives, as well as the convergence assembly, People and the Planet before Profit: moving away from free trade and extractivism to dismantle corporate power. Shalmali was a speaker at the event, Laudato Si: a Call for Change and workshop, Building a Movement to Fight Inequality, a discussion organized by the Fight Inequality Alliance. Shalmali was a speaker at another WSF Grand Conference, From Africa to the Americas, Women Fight for their Rights. Focus also co-organized events with partners on corporate impunity and ISDS, including a workshop on Corporate Rights or Human Rights? The case of ISDS, co-organized with Inter Pares, and Peoples Sovereignty versus the Architecture of Impunity, co-organized with TNI. Shalmali was also a speaker at a briefing session for the EDGE Funders' alliance.

## BRICS Peoples Forum

Focus India was involved in the planning of the BRICS Peoples Forum, which was held in Goa on 13-15 October, just before the official BRICS 2016 heads-of-state summit. Focus was represented by Mansi Sharma from the India office and former Focus colleague Dorothy Guerrero. Focus along with National Alliance of Peoples Movements (NAPM), Plachimada Anti Coca Cola Struggle Committee, Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF), Research Collective and Transnational Institute (TNI) co-organized two events at the BRICS forum: a workshop on "People Vs Corporate Power: Updates from struggles against TNCs" and "Profits over people and the Planet: Defeating the Free Trade Agenda". Ms Guerrero wrote an article for Focus following the forum, titled The Rise of Chinese TNCs, BRICS and Current Global Challenges.

## Fighting inequality

Focus is on the Steering Committee of the Fight Inequality Alliance, alongside a number of INGOs and other CSOs. On 6 December, Meanne Manahan represented Focus at the Fight Inequality Alliance roundtable in Manila, which brought together 15 Philippine-based organizations (regional and national groups). Focus took on the role of drafting a narrative on inequality in Asia, which will be discussed by NGOs and grassroots organisations in early 2017.

## Questioning “development”

On October 6-8, Shalmali Guttal participated in an international conference, “Development in Question,” that was organized by the Department of Development Sociology at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, USA. Shalmali Guttal was one of the keynote speakers in the first conference session on “For Whom, Development?” Focus also joined an international research consortium on development policy and research that emerged from this conference.

Shalmali Guttal was also a keynote speaker at the annual conference of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) held in Melbourne on October 26-27. The topic for the keynote was the role of NGOs in the

present regional-global conjuncture. At the same conference, Shalmali also served as a resource person in a thematic workshop on the roles of Australian NGOs in development.

Focus has also been providing spaces for discussion of alternatives and local perspectives on development at different national and regional events. In September, Focus co-organized a conference on Deconstructing and Reconstructing Sustainable Development Conference, bringing together international activists, academics and Thai social movements to interrogate and redefine the concept of sustainable development. Also in September, Focus Philippines participated in a roundtable discussion, “Indigenous Peoples and Rural Poor Communities: Asserting Rights and Self-Determination Amidst Current Challenges and Opportunities.”



Thai social movements gather on World Habitat Day



Involved in **185** Activities Total

**FOCUS**  
**IN 2016**



## TYPES OF ACTIVITIES



Political  
Education

**115**

Events/Activities

Advocacy &  
Campaigns

**42**

Events/Activities



Twitter  
Growth



**19%**



Research &  
Writing

**28**

Articles/Publications

Website Visit  
Growth



**23%**

Facebook  
Growth



**58%**

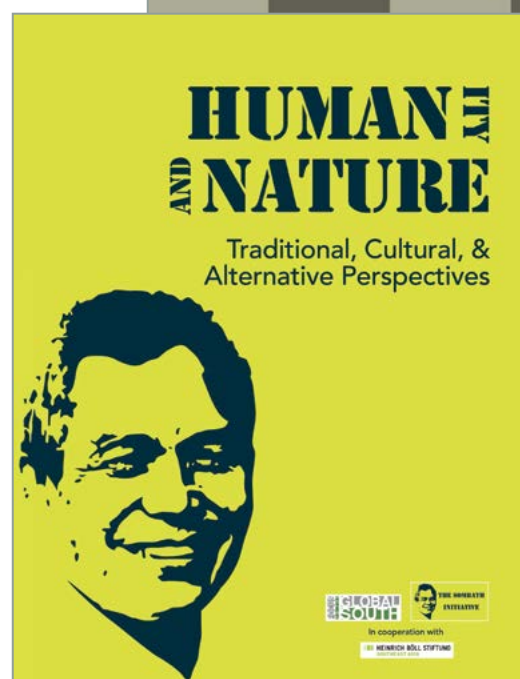
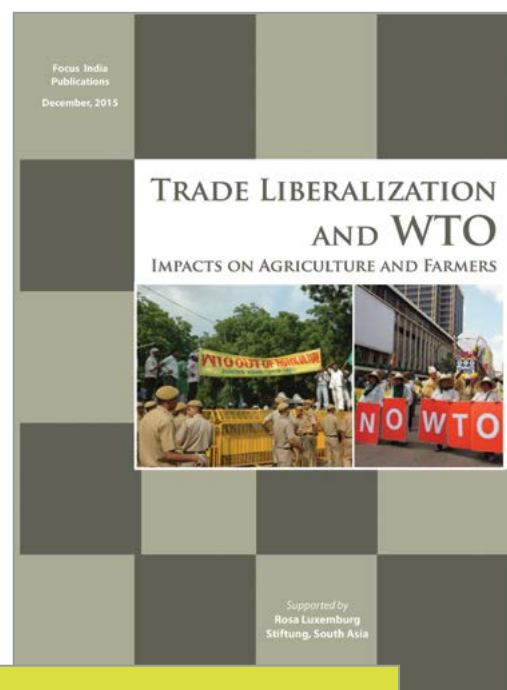
# Publications

## Trade Liberalization and WTO: Impacts on Agriculture and Farmers

Marking the twentieth anniversary of the World Trade Organization, this booklet focuses on the marginalization of small farmers by the WTO. The WTO is an instrument of globalization and recolonization that exploits the poor, using processes supported by multinational corporation in their quest for profits and expansion.

## Humanity and Nature: Traditional, Cultural and Alternative Perspectives

Some see the natural economy as a resource to be exploited, however this is not a sustainable view. This text is a compilation of essays that discuss perspectives on the environment, as well as provide a synthesis of the Sombath Symposium. Focus held the Symposium to present knowledge on alternatives to the growth-driven development model. This compilation aims to be a reference for future work on alternative perspectives on humanity's relationship with nature.



## The “Engine of Economic Growth”: An Overview of Private Investment Policies, Trends and Projects in Cambodia

Cambodia has moved away from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. All sectors have been opened for private investment. This supports the development of Cambodia, but comes with the cost of irresponsible investments that can lead to human rights abuses. This paper provides analysis of the current investment landscape of Cambodia to raise awareness and promote discussion among those interested in the trajectory of Cambodia’s development.

## Signing Away Sovereignty: How Investment Agreements Threaten Regulation of the Mining Industry in the Philippines

This report analyses the Philippines’ reliance on the mining industry as a development strategy. The report argues that the country’s ability to shut down or simply regulate mines will be severely limited due to a web of investment treaties that the Philippines has signed, which provide foreign investors with excessive protection.

## Newsletter Volume III No 4: When Murder and Abuse Become Systemic

This edition of the Focus newsletter includes pieces from the different Focus offices overlooking the different faces of impunity. The articles examine why acts of violence against human rights defenders continue across Asia.



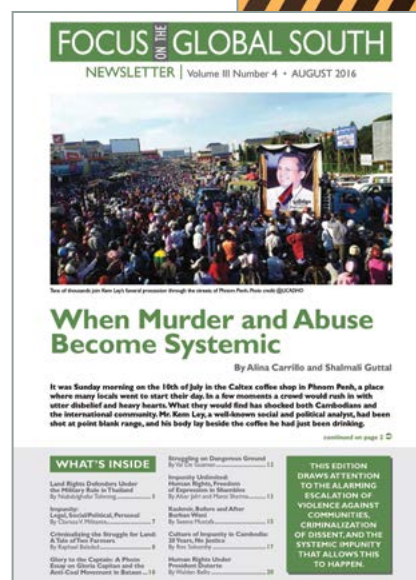
The “Engine of Economic Growth”  
An Overview of Private Investment Policies, Trends, and Projects in Cambodia

May 2016



Signing away sovereignty

How investment agreements threaten regulation of the mining industry in the Philippines



FOCUS ON THE GLOBAL SOUTH  
NEWSLETTER | Volume III Number 4 • AUGUST 2016

When Murder and Abuse Become Systemic

By Alina Carrillo and Shalmali Guttal

It was Sunday morning on the 18th of July in the Calico coffee shop in Phnom Penh, a place where many locals went to start their day. In a few moments a crowd would rush in with utter disbelief and heavy hearts. What they would find has shocked both Cambodians and the international community. Mr. Kam Lay, a well-known social and political analyst, had been shot at point blank range, and his body lay beside the coffee he had just been drinking.

continued on page 2

### WHAT'S INSIDE

Struggling on Dangerous Ground  
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the Military Rule in Thailand  
By N. Chhann  
Human Rights, Protection  
of Environment in Thailand  
By N. Chhann  
Human Rights Under  
Protection in Thailand  
By N. Chhann

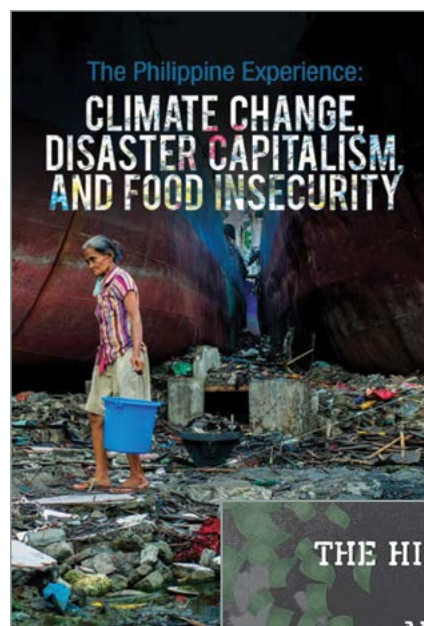
### THIS EDITION

DRAWN ATTENTION  
TO THE ALARMING  
ESCALATION OF  
VIOLENCE AGAINST  
COMMUNITIES  
CRIMINALIZATION  
OF DISSENT AND THE  
SYSTEMIC IMPUNITY  
THAT ALLOWS THIS  
TO HAPPEN.



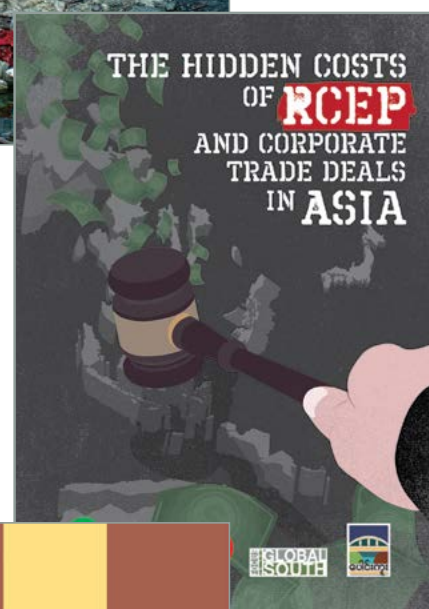
## The Philippine Experience: Climate Change, Disaster Capitalism, and Food Insecurity

This publication highlights critical issues stemming from super typhoon Yolanda's impacts on the Philippines. The most critical issue is that of land tenure and resettlement. The paper examines pre-typhoon social-economic conditions to fully understand the impacts of the typhoon.



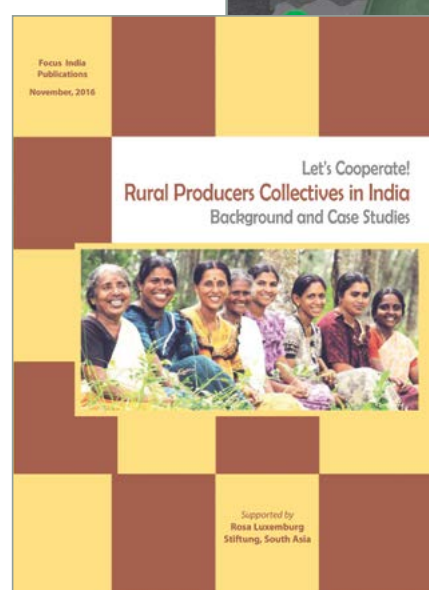
## The Hidden Costs of RCEP and Corporate Trade Deals in Asia

This report emphasizes the costs of the Investor-State Dispute mechanism to countries negotiating the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. It compiles available data from previous ISDS cases taken against countries in the RCEP negotiations. The authors discuss the corporate attack on Asian governments' right to regulate, including measures to protect the environment.



## Let's Cooperate! Rural Producers Collectives in India—Background and Case Studies

Small-scale producers in India are increasingly pushed out of the market due to agribusiness companies undercutting prices, as well as the rising cost of agricultural inputs. This booklet provides an overview of collectives and cooperatives in India, and how these can counteract the effects of agribusinesses. It highlights case studies of successful collective movements, which fall under different laws and operate with a variety of organizational styles.



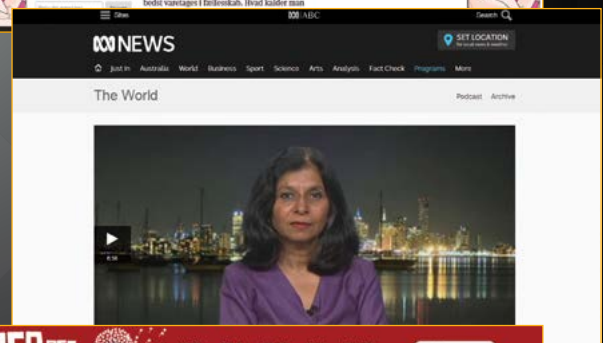
# Media

Afsar Jafri, Focus India's Head of Office, was invited twice as a panelist on the state-run Doordarshan TV channel for a discussion on GM Issues and on Intellectual Property Rights policy, raising public awareness of the threats that these two issues pose.

Shalmali Guttal, Focus Bangkok's Executive Director, has been very active in the media and in getting Focus' voice heard. LVC and Friends of the Earth International in Marabá, Brazil interviewed Guttal and broadcast over their television and radio stations. Here she discussed key challenges faced by communities struggling for land and territory rights.

Guttal was also interviewed by two Danish newspapers regarding ecological issues in the Mekong region, then again in Melbourne over the Australian Broadcasting Service regarding challenges presented by dominant investment trends in Asia.

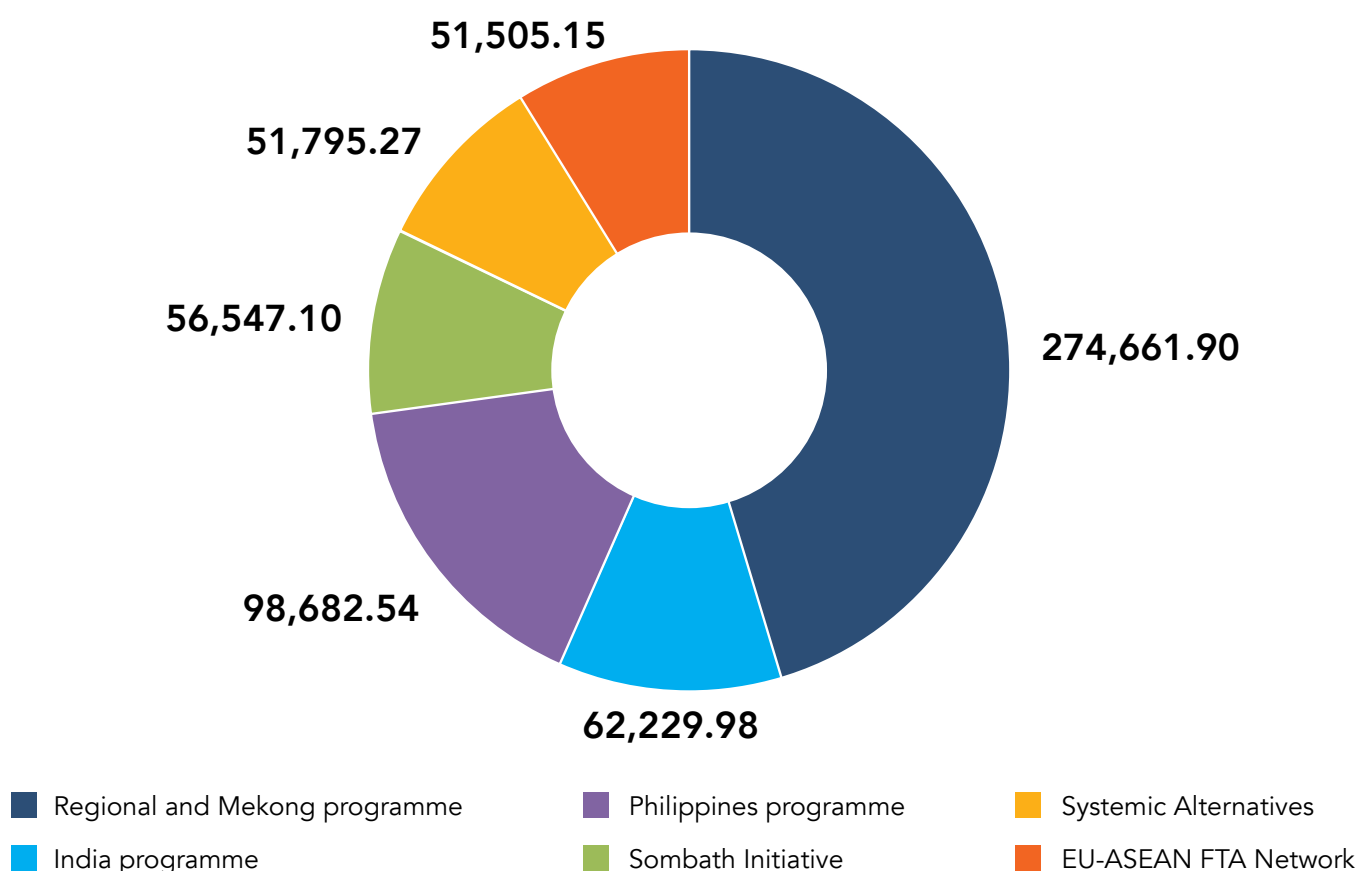
Finally, while in Australia, Guttal presented a public talk at the Addison Road Community Centre in Sydney on resisting Neoliberalism. Her speech was broadcast on community public radio "Earth Matters."



# Financial Summary

Balances (in EUR)	General Funds	Programme Funds	Coalition Funds	Reserve Fund
Beginning balance 2016	85,176.23	30,968.51	19,671.73	63,453.95
Income in 2016	436,634.07	125,121.48	108,902.47	6,065.10
Expenditure in 2016	359,182.88	132,938.63	103,300.42	-
Ending balance 2016	162,627.42	23,151.36	25,273.78	69,519.05

## EXPENDITURE BY PROGRAMME 2016 (IN EUR)



Remark: Exchange rate of BoT.or.th, 31/12/2016(Avg selling rate), 38.1362THB/EUR



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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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