

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Revisiting Deglobalisation:

A vision for progressive social transformation

FOCUS
ON THE
GLOBAL
SOUTH



2018 marks the first year of Focus on the Global South's (Focus) new three-year [work plan for 2018 to 2020](#) under the overall theme, *"Revisiting Deglobalisation: a vision for progressive social transformation"*. This work plan has three interrelated thematic areas: [Political Economy of Development](#), [Power and Democracy](#), and [People's Alternatives](#), which frame key issue areas and projects. The following is a narrative of the activities grouped along the key highlights and achievements of our work in the year 2018. The details of key activities and outputs, including dates, and places can be found in the annex, which has been separated to give a better sense of how Focus conducted its activities.

Focus on the Global South staff in February 2019.



12 Highlights and Achievements of 2018

1. Drawing strength from integrated strategies that are grounded and networked

Focus on the Global South engages high level national and international policy platforms on trade, investment and human rights, but also works with communities and people's organizations at the grass-roots and national levels. Our advocacies are based on our knowledge of impacts and actions at multiple levels by different groups/actors, providing platforms and opportunities for representatives from different constituencies and communities to directly articulate their struggles, for example on investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS), free trade agreements (FTAs), investment projects, democratization, peasant rights, rights to land, water and territory, and accountability of transnational corporations (TNC).

Focus partners with local, national, re-

gional and international organisations, networks and coalitions on trade- investment, finance, regionalism, peoples' rights to land, commons, food sovereignty, gender equality, systemic alternatives, environment and climate, to expand our work across different sectors and groups, as well as to develop the content of our analyses and advocacies. Our India and Philippines offices have organized and maintained long-term networks such as the [Forum Against FTAs](#), [Trade Justice Pilipinas](#) and the [Save Agrarian Reform Alliance](#), that link international campaigning with local contexts, and enable us to share our analyses, actions and updates on relevant topics and issues.

The work with and support for community-based action researchers in Cambodia, who are at the forefront of land and natural

resource struggles, reflect the concrete realities of the impacts of extractive investments and policies on communities. These and their communities continued to be strengthened through practical trainings, exposure visits inside and outside the country, overseas exchange visits, local and national issue-based workshop, and semi-annual reflection meetings.

In the Philippines, Focus works with fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, peasant, labour and human rights groups to contribute to their resistance against urgent issues ([resist Manila Bay Reclamation](#), [assert indigenous rights in the Bangsamoro Basic Law](#), land grabbing, mobilise against misogyny and extra-judicial killings, [oppose rice tariffication](#), etc.).

Internationally and regionally, Focus is an active member of networks such as the Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF), Land Research Action Network (LRAN), NGO Forum on ADB, Save the Mekong, Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD), and the ASEAN Peoples' Forum (APF), as well as in campaigns on the Binding Treaty for corporate accountability, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and new generation Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). These networks and campaigns provide spaces for us to share and build collective analyses, and for our grassroots partners to participate and amplify their voices.



Asia-Europe People's Forum 2018 in Ghent, Belgium. [September 2018]



Thai farmers sell their products at a commemoration fair for the Thai Farmer's Federation anniversary. [October 2018]



Various groups press the Philippines military for accountability on a massacre of indigenous peoples. [8 December 2018]

2. Strengthened integration of gender issues

In our new workplan, gender is a cross cutting issue, not only because of gender differentiated impacts of trends, policies, programmes and agreements, on the struggles of various sectors, but also because we work with women's groups in different sectors. More importantly, there is a need to highlight the gender dimension of issues that cut across sectors and often place particular and heavier burdens on women.

In Cambodia, the community-based action research teams (ARTs) among farming, fishing, forest and urban workers' communities count on strong and determined women leaders in their respective struggles against destructive resource development and investment projects. They also lead livelihood projects that make communities more viable and resilient. To link the importance of gender in land and natural resource conflicts, the ARTs and their communities organized local events in three provinces on national tree planting day, International Women's Day and International Human Rights Day to

raise awareness on women's rights, and to encourage greater participation of people with communities involved in land/natural resource struggles.

In the Philippines, Focus has long term co-operation with national women's networks of peasants (PKKK, the National Coalition of Rural Women) and indigenous peoples (Lilak: Purple Action for Indigenous Women's Rights) through campaign platforms for the commons, the Save Agrarian Reform Alliance, and the Loyukan campaign. This year, both women's groups have joined the Focus-initiated platform on food sovereignty among small-scale producers.

On March 8, Focus launched online photo exhibition titled [The Hands that Feed Us](#) to explain and draw attention to the crucial role of women in food provision, as well as the issues and structures that surround their often unrecognized work. The exhibit features photographs by Focus staff and partners.

Indigenous women join the State-of-the-Nation protest on 24 July 2018.



POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEVELOPMENT

3. Consolidating and broadening resistance to RCEP and new generation FTAs

This year continued to reflect the shift in trade justice advocacy from a focus on the WTO toward mega-FTAs. Particularly for Asia, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)—involving 16 countries in the region—has become the most urgent trade issue involving transparency of the negotiations, lack of public scrutiny and participation, and potential impact on communities, food sovereignty, self-determination and public health. Focus participated in civil society events during the official RCEP negotiation round in Singapore from May 2-5, including speaking at a workshop on trade with public sector unions organized by Public Services International. Unlike previous negotiation rounds which included stakeholder engagements with civil society, the Singapore government instead held consultations with business. Focus and other

civil society groups [issued a statement](#) to denounce this backwards move by the Singaporean government.

Prior to the next round of negotiations in Bangkok in late July, Focus held national meetings on RCEP in Cambodia and [Thailand](#), participated in by grassroots communities, labor organizations and trade unions, women organizations, academics and NGO partners, to discuss the impact of the agreement on health, access to medicines, agriculture, labour rights and the commons. A press conference was held on the same day as the meeting in Bangkok to brief the Thai press on the issues at stake during the RCEP negotiations. In India, [Focus regularly includes RCEP in its advocacy](#) and workshops on agrarian and development issues. A highlight of such invitations is conducting a session on RCEP



Anti-RCEP protests in Manila (above), New Delhi (opposite page, top), and Bali (bottom)

and agriculture at the Kisan Swaraj Sammelan farmers' assembly meeting in Ahmedabad, Gujarat ([see discussion paper here](#)) on 2-3 November. Discussing these topics helped participants formulate and articulate their positions toward the emerging free trading bloc in relation to protecting their land, water and natural resources, traditional knowledge and plant varieties, as well as how the agreement will affect democracy and corporate and government accountability to the people. Local and national discussions on RCEP helped mobilize and bring together local organizations, grassroots communities, and academia to create initiatives to further discuss and to create monitoring networks on RCEP and other trade and investment agreements' impact on the local people and economy.

During the RCEP negotiations in Bangkok, civil society organisations (CSOs) from across the region [convened to continue putting pressure](#) on governments, and to further strategize on the joint campaign. A two-day regional strategy meeting was attended by over 80 civil society representatives from the various countries party to the RCEP agreement. The meeting gave participants an overview of the context in which the FTA is being negotiated; an analysis of the negotiations and contradictions between country positions;



and an [overview of the possible impact](#) RCEP will have on different constituencies. The meeting was also an opportunity to share information on their campaigns and initiatives, assess the current regional coordination of the campaign, and plan the work ahead. Focus contributed to publications and outreach in regard the RCEP, including co-publishing the book [RCEP: A Secret Deal](#), and taking part in a News-Click [interview](#) and [feature](#).

Focus continued to coordinate efforts at the regional level as well as in the Philippines to advance the campaign on FTAs with the European Union (EU). In the Philippines the work is coordinated under the broad umbrella of Trade Justice Pilipinas where members have taken the lead on contentious issues such as investments and investor protection (i.e. ISDS) and intellectual property rights (IPR).



4. Expanding work on analysis on investments in the Mekong region

In 2017-2018, Focus-published five studies on the trends and impacts of investment in the Mekong sub-region on rural communities and [garment workers](#). Two case studies present and analyse the general situation on investments in the region, particularly in Cambodia and Myanmar. The other three facilitate the ARTs in producing documentation of their struggles to support local advocacy and organizing. The case studies were translated to local languages (Khmer and Burmese) to facilitate discussions with ART members and other communities.

Our work on investment in the Mekong region has also given rise to new partnerships for further studies on SEZs in Myanmar (currently being finalized, due in June) and in Vietnam (a project beginning in 2019). It has also opened opportunities to discuss and engage with other actors, such as those working on China investment and finance, and with researchers on overseas direct investment who invited Focus to participate and give inputs based on our work.

Focus is a member of the Save the Mekong network that campaigns on dams and related infrastructure projects affecting Southeast Asia's longest river. A particular highlight this year was working with other network members to respond to the [collapse of the saddle dam](#) D in Paksong, Attapeou province. The disaster drew attention to the risks faced by communities living in the river basin, where more than a hundred dam projects are being built or planned, particularly in Laos. Focus joined International Rivers in supporting Lao researchers to visit the dam affected area and write a first-person account of the situation. This was published as an [op-ed in Asia Times](#) on August 8. Later in the year, Focus completed a paper which examines how different investors, financial institutions and governments consider and process risks of such infrastructure investments. The paper was released as an [online publication](#) in February 2019 and will be translated into Lao language.



Focus continues to ask, “who does infrastructure serve?” Photo of the Achang irrigation project in Kampong Chhnang, Cambodia.

5. Advancing analysis on trade and investment policies and practice



In addition to campaigning on RCEP and investments in the Mekong region, Focus participated in the public forum, [World Beyond Banks](#) in Bali, Indonesia where the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) held their annual meetings in October. The meeting was an opportunity for people's movements in various countries to share their analyses of World Bank and IMF legacies, and concurrent trade, investment, finance and governance policies and projects. The participation was a response to the invitation by Indonesian partner Gerak Lawan to organize and co-sponsor plenary events and workshops. Focus supported and facilitated the participation of representatives from grassroots partners in Southeast Asia and India so that activists across the region can share analyses, learn about similar struggles in different countries, and foster solidarity and commitment by being able to see beyond their immediate concerns.

The three key activities led by Focus at World Beyond Banks were the public

forums on [infrastructure](#), on [extractivism](#), and on [the impunity of corporations and financial institutions](#).

An emerging concern in trade and investment in Asia is the rise of e-commerce and digital/online trade, which has quickly made inroads into national markets to the detriment of small and medium scale producers and traders, and can enable transnational corporations (TNCs) to consolidate power over different segments of supply chains. This issue was highlighted in India in May with the take-over of online retailer Flipkart by U.S. food retail giant Walmart. The deal resulted in the domination by two TNCs (the other being Amazon) of India's booming online retail trade. A series of meetings and strategy sessions outlined a local campaign against the takeover, which created a platform for some 108 organizations to join in. A highlight of the campaign was the June 4 press conference [opposing the merger](#).

Digitalization is also an important issue in

relation to food sovereignty with the threat of concentration from the increasing power of not only of e-commerce but also of global agricultural giants in chemical and farm technologies. (See activity on corporate concentration and food sovereignty in highlight 10.)

The Focus Executive Director contributed an article, “[The Changing Face of Food Retail in India](#)” ([original link](#)) to the Right to Food and Nutrition Watch 2018 publication, *When Food Becomes Immaterial: Confronting the Digital Age*. This article served as an impetus for a collaborative exploratory research project in India between Focus, the Alternative Law Forum and IT for Change, on the potential impacts of foreign direct investment (FDI) in digital food retail. Focus prepared an initial draft of a policy paper that provides an overview of India’s FDI policy. The project will be completed in 2019 and the full research report will be released at that time.

Finally, Focus participated in the global process of reforming the onerous investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism that is imposed as part of



global trade policy through new free trade agreements. We participate in the annual United Nations Commission on International Trade Law working group meetings. Opposition to the ISDS has been promoted by Focus at most trade justice related meetings, as a key input toward understanding the global free trade regime.

6. Promoting new human rights frameworks to support the struggles against corporate impunity

Focus actively participated in the global campaign to promote a binding treaty on TNCs and human rights by sending representatives to the treaty negotiations and people’s mobilizations in Geneva. As part of the global network for the binding treaty, Focus pushes this agenda in various national and regional platforms, as a counterpoint to the destructive neoliberal

economies that renders TNCs untouchable under national laws.

On the ground, Focus undertook public awareness and education work on the issues of corporate concentration and control in agriculture/food, as well as exposing the effects of transnational investments at the regional level, for example during



the World Beyond Banks protests in Bali in October, and at the Asia Europe People's Forum (AEPF) meetings.

The nexus of trade and human rights has been tackled as well in the engagement on the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP+) between the EU and the Philippines. Focus co-organized and was a speaker in a side event at the AEPF in

Ghent on GSP+ where we [criticized](#) the non-action of the EU in the wake of the worsening human rights crisis in the Philippines. Focus also assisted human rights network Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) in discussing GSP+, and the nexus of trade and human rights in a series of provincial discussions with civil society that it organized in 2018.

POWER AND DEMOCRACY

7. Analysis and engagement of regional and national political trends

Focus's 2018 work on this thematic area is anchored and reflected on two publications, on The Rise of Populist Authoritarianisms in Asia (January), and the 2018 issue of its Newsletter on the "Shifting Ground of Democracy" in Asia (August). Focus also published a chapter (The Hindu Counterrevolution: The Violent Recreation of an Imagined Past) of Walden Bello's up-

coming book State and Counterrevolution: Explorations into the Global Rise of the Right. Walden's paper has been translated into Hindi to reach a broader audience in India.

Focus co-organised events and discussions on the rising trends of authoritarianism with like-minded organisations and peo-

ple's movements in the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia. Focus Philippines is part of the [iDefend](#) campaign on rising impunity and violations of the President Rodrigo Duterte government. The country office also conducts discussions related to the economic, and social policy of the government, taking forward the analysis and framing of the issues under “Dutertismo”, which was put forward in the Focus Policy Review in 2017. Focus Philippines also conducted political education sessions with various sectoral groups, particularly to tackle the issue of Charter Change as a ploy to consolidate Duterte's political control.

In Cambodia, Focus provided support to the Cross-Sector and other grassroots networks to organize a citizen's forum prior to the general election to build a common political position, as well as to discuss how community members respond to intimidation and suppression at the level of their local struggles. Our support was appreciated because there were almost no such activities allowed, and it took a lot of risk to organize the event. Focus also co-organized a series of exchanges on “cross-generation learning” where participants of different backgrounds and life experiences were brought together from different points in history: post-colonization, the Khmer Rouge, the transitional period and

the current regimes. This discussion series resulted in a draft discussion note (in Khmer language) of Cambodia's history, governance and leadership, including the role of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), and peoples' struggles.

National level campaigns and analyses are also brought to regional and international platforms, as Focus is invited to speak on regional political trends at various conferences and seminars.

Focus has been involved in the AEPF since it started and serves on the AEPF's International Organising Committee (IOC). We are a leading member of the clusters on participatory democracy and trade justice. Participation in AEPF provides a long-term inter-regional platform for building common campaigns, planning collective actions and seeking responses from governments in Asia and Europe. In 2018, the [AEPF 12](#) was held in Ghent, Belgium, where Focus staff from Cambodia and the Philippines, along with some partners from the grassroots movements shared their perspectives and analyses. Also, prior to the AEPF in Belgium, Focus staff co-organised and made presentations at AEPF organized events on Trade Justice and Corporate Accountability in Indonesia and on Social Commons in Spain.



Leading the rightward shift to authoritarianism in Asia: Cambodia's Hun Sen, India's Narendra Modi, Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte and Thailand's Prayuth Chan-ocha

8. Prioritizing people's rights and democracy amid rising authoritarianism

Under repressive political situations, grassroots movements have been bearing the brunt of state suppression in the form of violent attacks and the closure of redress systems for local struggles for rights to land, forests and water resources.

The meetings among the ART and other network partners in Cambodia highlighted the need for consolidation and creativity in the context of new political realities. During 2018, several ART communities consolidated their victories in local struggles for greater control of protected fisheries, obtaining social land concessions and fair compensation against so-called

'blood sugar' plantations and China-funded hydropower dams. Additionally, fishery committees and fisherfolk in Pursat province have heightened their actions against encroachments backed by powerful and wealthy elites. These changes were realized as a result of three years of action including fact finding and collecting evidence in their own communities.

Focus continues to support the commemoration and quest for justice on emblematic cases of impunity, particularly those involved in grassroots development work and struggles. These include the 2016 killing of anti-coal plant community leader



The protest streamer says "Life and livelihood, not Martial Law!" [Manila, 24 July 2018].

Gloria Capitan, and the [massacre of eight indigenous peoples](#) in South Cotabato in 2017 who were resisting investment encroachment in their homeland. More broadly, Focus works with the iDefend human rights coalition in looking into these killings, while also coordinating the coalition's social justice campaign on social and economic rights. The Focus Philippines team also issued a number of statements in regard to [growing impunity](#) under the Duterte regime, including on [withdrawal from the ICC](#), human rights in [EU-Philippines relations](#), the [ouster of the Supreme Court Chief Justice](#) and [two years](#) of the Duterte Regime. On the positive side of advocacy, the Loyukan campaign, which includes Focus Philippines, was able to push for the inclusion of key IP provisions in the Bangsamoro Basic Law. Focus contribution was in the area of social media promotion through the [Loyukan Facebook page](#), and [videos of the voices of indigenous leaders](#) who articulated claims to their rights within the Bangsamoro autonomous region.

The Focus Bangkok office helps sustain international support for the case of Sombath Somphone by working with regional and international organizations, and supports the [Sombath.org](#) website. A forum marking the [sixth anniversary](#) of



the disappearance was held in Bangkok on December 12 in cooperation with the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH). Focus deepened support and collaboration with grassroots movements in Thailand, on their rights to resources, justice and demands for democracy. We supported some activities of the [People's Movement for a Just Society](#) (P-Move), including activities of its members, the Isarn Land Reform Network, the [Southern Peasants Federation of Thailand](#) (SPFT), and the [Democracy Restoration Group](#), linking them with regional and international advocacy and media groups, and supporting their participation in regional events in Thailand as well as other countries.

Focus and eight other organisations submitted a [joint letter](#) to the EU ahead of the EU-Lao Human Rights Dialogue in March to outline the continuing abuse of civil



liberties in Laos, and to ask that the EU use its development aid to support basic human rights. No response was received.

Focus also continued to expand its work on more cultural forms of campaigns and alliance building. Focus co-organized a planning workshop and facilitated number of cultural events with the Asian Movement for Peoples Peace and Progress (amP3) in 2018 including peoples' music concerts in Bangkok, Manila and Bali. The collective also initiated an effort to put together a compilation album of songs tackling different issues like human rights, environment, land issues from around the region.

In Cambodia, Focus co-organised and supported an event called the "[Art of Collective Power](#)", featuring performances and

exhibitions about grassroots issues and the political situation in Cambodia, performed by progressive artists and representatives of communities, including several ART members. The event featured modern art forms and adaptations of traditional art forms to convey messages of hope for sectoral struggles in the context of the current difficult political environment.

Focus supported and participated in an assembly of people's movements, organized in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 12-13 January. We organised a delegation of 12 participants from Southeast Asia (Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand) to participate in this Assembly to encourage sharing of struggles and strategies in the region. The meeting is the regional leg of a global effort expected to culminate later in 2019.

9. Promoting new human rights frameworks to uphold collective rights and the commons

Focus has joined La Via Campesina (LVC) and other international organizations in the campaign for the adoption of the Declaration on Peasant Rights. The historic document would eventually be adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council in October and the General Assembly in December. The Declaration breaks ground on new and specific human rights standard on land, seeds, protection of traditional knowledge, determining food and agricultural systems, among others. It is also a new reference material for peasant advocacy and education. Partner peasant groups and communities in Cambodia, India and the Philippines are enthusiastic to use the document for developing

community education programs and local advocacies.

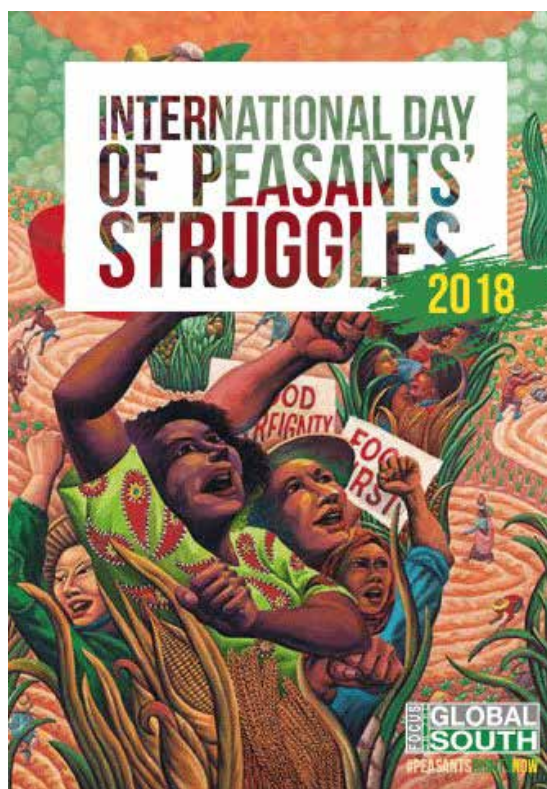
Focus India organised public meetings and worked with La Via Campesina members in India to reach out to other groups and mass movements and to the government bodies to support the draft declaration. Focus also wrote articles on this Declaration to reach out to larger audiences and explain its importance.

At the regional level, Focus produced a special publication marking the International Day of Peasant Struggles as a platform to promote the draft declaration. We also released the publication from the 2017

event on Human Rights-based Tenure and Governance in the Asia Pacific later in the month.

Advocacy for the Peasant Rights Declaration and the Binding Treaty on the Human Rights Accountability of Transnational Corporations (see Highlight 6) are efforts by Focus to contribute to the development of protection mechanisms and standards to improve access to justice of communities affected by neoliberalism and extractive development.

Finally, Focus organized the second [Sombath Symposium on Human Rights and Development](#) which examined the complementarities between human rights and development frameworks/concepts and policy, and the contradictions in approaches and applications, including reflections from practitioners from trade justice and food sovereignty advocates, workers, fishers, farmers, and indigenous peoples.



PEOPLE'S ALTERNATIVES

10. Stronger Food Sovereignty and Agroecology advocacy and practice with partners

In India, Focus organised several training and education activities with farmers' groups and civil society organisations on agro-ecological farming concepts and techniques. More than 700 farmers were trained in these activities on different aspects of water-efficient, toxics-free, and bio-diverse farming. Content is derived from education materials published in 2016-18 by the Focus India Office, and of-

ten available in Hindi and English, which are distributed in print and downloadable electronic copies. At least 10-15 percent of those trained made a commitment to start this practice from this year in small areas, which is a good reflection of the success of this programme. The important aspect of these trainings is that the requests were made by either the civil society groups who work with local communities or by the peasant movements themselves. This

indicates that Focus is now being recognized as a dependable ally by progressive social movements on agroecology.

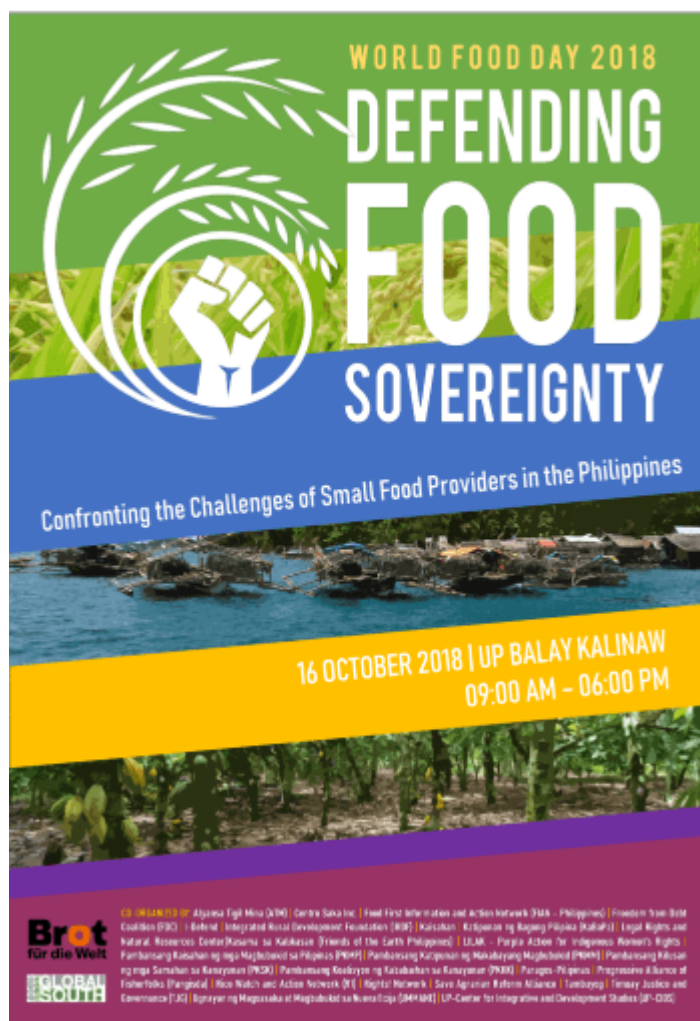
Focus supported exchange, sharing and learning on agroecology and local markets in Cambodia through training workshops, and exchange visits to Thailand and other communities in Cambodia. ART members have been receptive to the concepts behind agroecology as a concrete approach to improve the viability of their communities, and to strengthen local residents through beneficial projects, including poultry raising, home gardening and livelihood grants. The livelihood support received by ART communities have been adapted to include agroecological farming methods. The strong belief by the partner communities in agroecology and sustainability is such that they are resisting offers to engage in contract farming being pro-

moted by some NGOs. The ART technical team (Focus Staff) has also reached out to other peasant and indigenous communities to conduct consultations on advocacy strategy and community projects.

The [National Conference on Food Sovereignty](#) held on World Food Day in the Philippines strengthened cooperation among fishers, indigenous peoples and peasants people's movements to push for food sovereignty as the alternative to market-oriented and neoliberal models of food production. Among other objectives, the platform seeks to bridge the gap between policy and practice by highlighting the

need to re-prioritize small-holder food production and challenge dominant food systems.

Focus co-organized in July a [regional forum on corporate control and food sovereignty](#) that brought together analyses of different aspects of this global trend, and develop possible responses. The public forum examined how technology (digitization and e-commerce), corporate mergers, FTAs, food conglomerates, ISDS, and multilateral mechanisms affected food production and consumption, and promoted land grabbing.



11. Supporting struggles for the commons

Focus in the Philippines and the Save Agrarian Reform Alliance co-published a book documenting the outcome of over 40 years of agrarian reform policy in the Philippines. The book put together case studies of farmers, who despite being beneficiaries also faced political and commercial pressures that reverted them back to being de facto tenants. While being primarily a national study, the book is helpful to peasant organizations in other countries with similar land redistribution programs.

Focus worked LRAN to prepare its Briefing Paper No. 4: New Challenges and Strategies in Defense of Land and Territory. The publication, released in February 2019, puts together narratives and analyses of land struggles across Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Three case studies developed in Cambodia are about community struggles for defense and control of land and resources. The case studies on Illegal Fishing and the Pheapimex and Lor Peang land conflicts are led by ART efforts to document their experiences, which helped gain clarity of their experiences in struggle. These three are victorious cases of communities who are partly or fully able to resist encroachment into their territories. The case studies, which also includes policy and context analysis from Focus, serve as the legacy of the community activists who seek to share their experiences with the younger generation of community residents and activists, as well as to other communities facing similar resource conflicts.

In Thailand, Focus has prepared a case study on alternative land management



Focus participated in the celebration of the 10th anniversary of one of its partners, the Southern Peasant Federation of Thailand in December 2018.

systems being put forward by the Southern Peasants Federation of Thailand (SPFT) to counter the state centric and commercialized system of the governance. SPFT farmers have occupied land owned by the government which were previously part of agribusiness land concessions. Control of the land has enabled SPFT to practice alternative governance of their community, and to apply agroecological and sustainable farming systems.

Focus in India has concentrated on educating farmers and other groups on the impact of free trade agreements, digitalization and government policy on agriculture and food sovereignty, by utilizing and distributing material produced in years previous years. The new booklets on Contract Farming, Climate-Smart Agriculture,

Agrarian Crisis and the Politics of Seeds address issues important for farmers to understand to fight monopolization and control of their basic resources. More than 3,500 printed copies of our agroecology series booklets were requested by phone, or online messaging, or post; while 10,000 pamphlets on GMOs and FTAs were distributed among farmers at rallies in India. The 15,000 downloads of agroecology series booklets recorded in the website are also a testament to their popularity.

Regionally, Focus staff frequently made presentations at seminars and workshops on the impacts of extractive investments and free trade on land, water, forests and peoples' rights to resources, and the importance of the commons in upholding and realizing food sovereignty.

12. Strengthening contributions to people's alternatives

Focus is part of an international partnership with ATTAC France and Fundacion Solon in Bolivia to study, elaborate and put forward Systemic Alternatives to the current corporate-centred and neoliberal paradigm that fosters inequality, depletes planetary resources, and threatens humanity's survival. Generally, Focus's contribution to the work of this partnership is in its work to defend the Commons as a key framework within systemic alternatives, and particularly through continuing critique of the system, and promotion of grassroots-based struggles for food sovereignty, and the practice of agroecology.

A significant focused activity on this theme is the new partnership with University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) to document case studies on practices of communities coming from at least nine (9) countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Timor Leste, Thailand, and Vietnam, which were presented in a conference in Manila in November. The land management system of the Southern Peasants Federation of Thailand was among the case studies presented in the conference on November 27-28.

OVERVIEW

List of Focus-led/partnered Activities in 2018

Date	Location	Title/Activity
POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEVELOPMENT		
February 16	New Delhi	Planning and strategy meeting on Dismantling Corporate Power
March	Manila	Public Forum on Dengvaxia (on the controversial anti-dengue fever vaccination program of the government)
April 23- 27	New York	Trade Justice Pilipinas represented by lawyer Tony Salvador participated in the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law meeting on ISDS reform.
April 25	New Delhi	“Who Wants to Fix our Climate and Eat Our Lunch?” a National Consultation on Role and Responsibility of Big Technology in Sustainable and Inclusive Development
May 2-5 July 20 July 12-13 July 21-22 July 23	Singapore Bangkok Phnom Penh Bangkok	RCEP Campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder Consultation• National consultation• National Consultation• Regional Strategy Meeting• Stakeholder Consultation
June 4	New Delhi	Press conference on Walmart-Flipkart deal
October 10-13	Bali, Indonesia	World Beyond Banks (People’s protest against the WB-IMF meeting) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Forum on Infrastructure• Forum on Extractivism• Cooptation of Judiciary System, Corporate and Impunity of International Financial Institutions
September	Bali	Asia-Pacific Gathering on Human Rights and Extractives
October 13-20	Geneva	Week of People’s Mobilizations on Binding Treaty on Transnationals and Human Rights
November 2-3	Gujarat	Session on RCEP and Agriculture during the Kisan Swaraj Sammelan farmers’ assembly meeting
November 6	Phnom Penh	Forum on Trade and Investment Trends and its implication on Labour Rights and Working Conditions in Cambodia
November 24-25	Bangkok	Sombath Symposium: Development and Human Rights
December 3-4	New Delhi	Conference on Global Financial Crisis: A Decade after Lehman

Date	Location	Title/Activity
POWER AND DEMOCRACY		
January 12-13	Dhaka	South Asia Assembly of Peoples Movements
February 18-21	Jakarta	AEPF Thematic Circle on Trade Justice and Corporate Accountability meeting.
March 8	Pursat, Kampong Chhnang	ART Community activities for International Women's Day
April 30, May 10 and 25	Manila	Discussion series on Charter Change and Federalism
May 31	Manila	Beyond Brexit: sharing on Britain in the age of far-right populism and global inequality
June 14-15	Phnom Penh	Strategy meeting on Cambodia Politics (closed-door); and follow-up after elections
June October	Bangkok Bali	Asian Movement for Peoples Peace and Progress (aMP3) • Planning Workshop • Meeting and Performances at World Beyond Banks
August	Phnom Penh	Strategy meeting on Cambodia Politics (closed-door); and follow-up after elections
June 8 to 10	Barcelona, Spain	AEPF seminar on Social Commons in Barcelona. Shalmali Guttal made a presentation on Using the Commons Framework to Resist Capitalism
July	Manila	One-act Play on the Killing of Gloria Capitan
September 29 to October 1	Ghent, Belgium	Asia Europe People's Forum (AEPF) • Cluster on Trade Justice and Corporate Accountability: Workshop on the nexus of trade and corporate power; Strategy Session on Way Forward • Democratization and Human Rights: Participatory Democracy, Resisting Oppressions, Reclaiming People's Rights and Fundamental Freedoms • Open Space Workshops on Food and digitalization; ISDS; Systemic Alternatives in Action
November 24-25	Bangkok	Sombath Symposium on Human Rights and Development
December	Manila	Commemoration of first year anniversary of the Tamasco 8 Massacre
December 18	Sihanoukville, Kampong Chhnang	Community-led commemorations of International Human Rights Day
December 12	Bangkok	Commemoration of the sixth year of the disappearance of Sombath Somphone
December 16	Phnom Penh	Art of Collective Power – performances and arts festival

Date	Location	Title/Activity
PEOPLE’S ALTERNATIVES		
March and November	Phnom Penh	Action Research Teams semi-annual consultation
April 9-12	Gujarat	Training on organic farming for small farmers
April	Phnom Penh and Kampong Chhnang	Action research team workshop on Understanding the Use of Seeds and Its impacts on Food Sovereignty, Food Security and Food Safety of Small-Scale Farmers
May 26 to 28	Odisha	Training on Organic Farming and Agroecology
June	Battambang, Pailin and Banteay Srey	ART livelihood exposure visit on sustainable and nature friendly agriculture and poultry raising.
July 11-12	Uttarakhand	Training on Water-efficient and toxic free Sugarcane
July 26	Bangkok	Forum on Corporate Concentration of Food
September 11	Manila	Public Forum and book launching of the CARPER audit Repormang Agraryo at Pagbabago: Narratives on Agrarian Conflicts, Transitions, and Transformation
October	Surin, Sisaket, Ubon Ratchathani	Exchange and sharing on sustainable agriculture involving ART members within Cambodia and with Thailand
October	Chaiyaphum, and Surat Thani	Documenting people’s alternatives to neoliberal and capitalist development with specific peasant movements in Thailand
November 16-17	Yawatmal, Maharashtra	Farmers training workshop on Water Efficient, Toxic Free and Multi Crop Farming Technique
November 23	Manila	Farmers’ protest against Rice Tariffication Bill.

Outreach: Social Media

Website

- Publication downloads/views in 2018: 55,169 (from 24,416 in 2017)
- Visits to our website in 2018: 154,761 (from 109,942 in 2017)
- Unique website visitors 2018: 134,169 (from 91,874 in 2017)

Social Media

- Facebook Page Followers, as of 31 December 2018: 6,849 (up by 181)
- Twitter Page Followers as of 31 December 2018: 2,794 (up by 392)

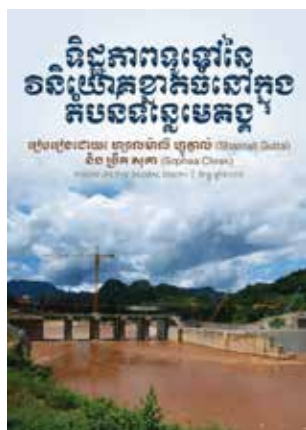
Outreach: Publications

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEVELOPMENT



Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) & India: Dangers of RCEP for agriculture & farmers- printed as a pamphlet in Hindi (Mukt Vyapar Samjhauta aur Bharat: Krishi Aur Kisano ko RCEP se Khatra)for the Farmers Rally in New Delhi on 29th and 30th November 2018

RCEP: A Secret Deal - An analysis of the drafting process of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership free trade agreement; co-published

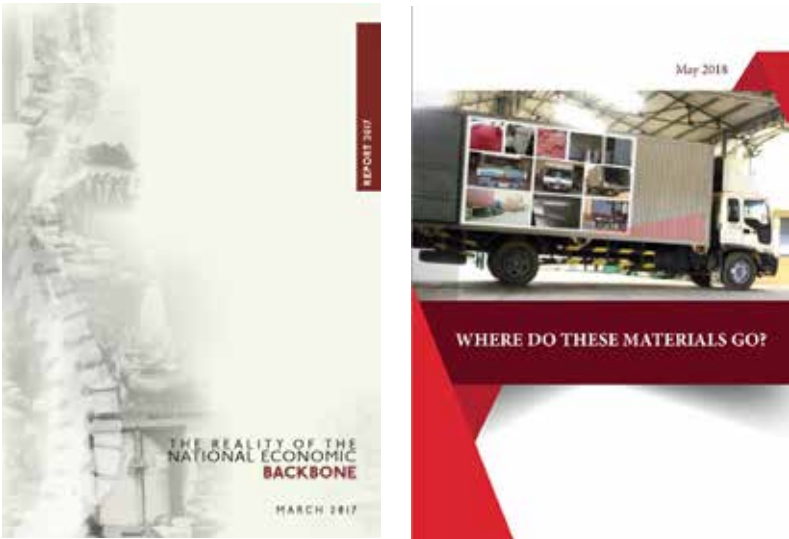


We completed Khmer and Burmese translations of our 2017 publications on investments (**An Overview of Large-Scale Investment in the Mekong**) and special economic zones (**SEZs and Value Extraction from the Mekong**)

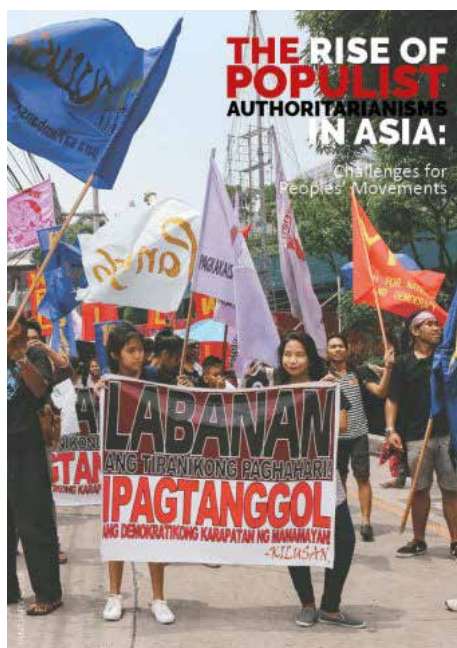
On investment in the Mekong: Case studies community defence against illegal fishing and on two cases of land encroachment.



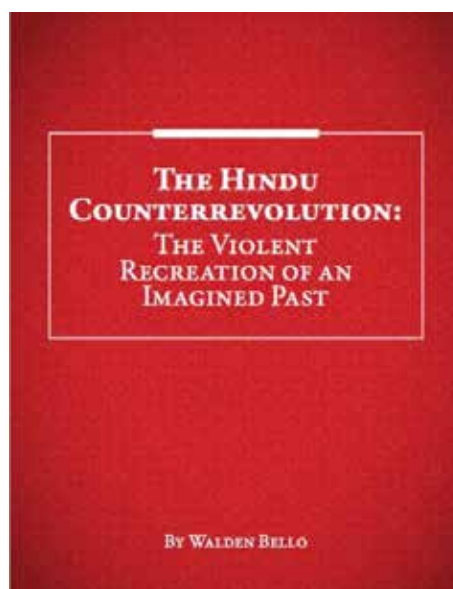
Case studies on the situation of garment/textile industry, the workers and their struggles.



POWER AND DEMOCRACY



The Rise of Populist Authoritarianisms in Asia - a paper examining the economic underpinnings of the current political trends across the region, and summarizing Fcous' 2017 conference.

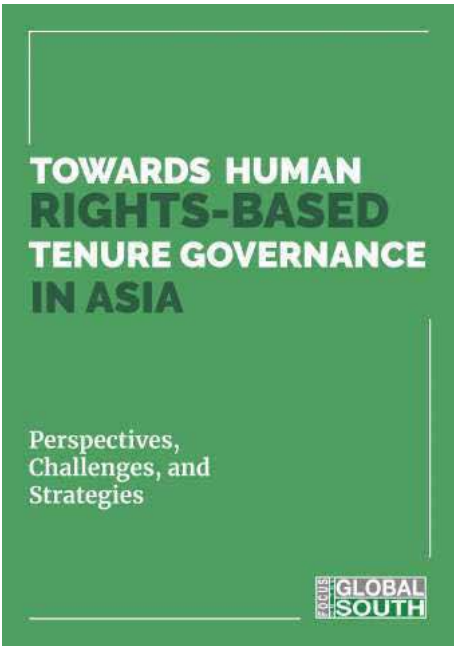


The Hindu Counterrevolution: The Violent Recreation of an Imagined Past - reprint of a chapter of a Walden Bello's book on the rise of the global Right

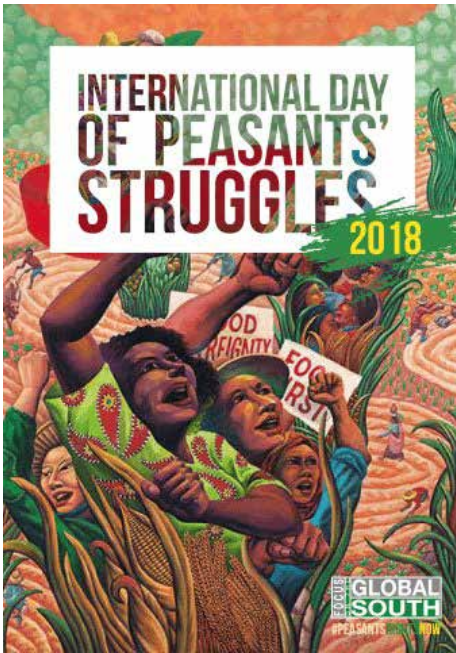


"The Shifting Ground of Democracy" Focus on the Global South Newsletter Volume 4 Number 4, August 2018 - our 2018 newsletter issue on democratic spaces in Cambodia, India, Philippines, and Thailand

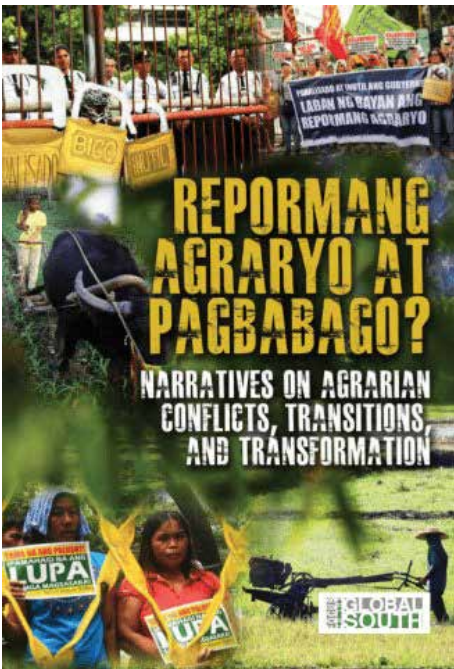
PEOPLE’S ALTERNATIVES



Towards Human Rights-Based Tenure Governance in Asia: Perspectives, Challenges, and Strategies - a report from our September 2017 Conference

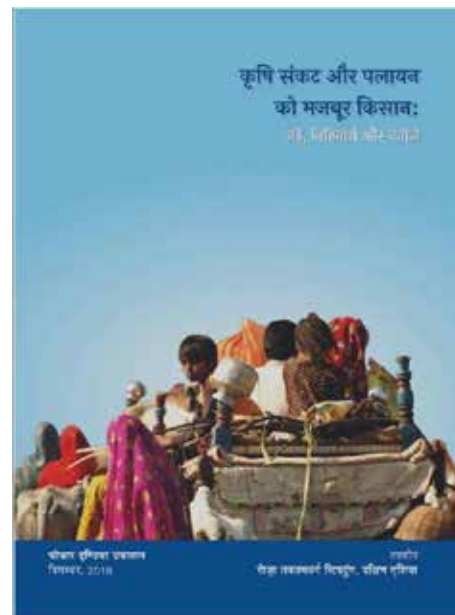
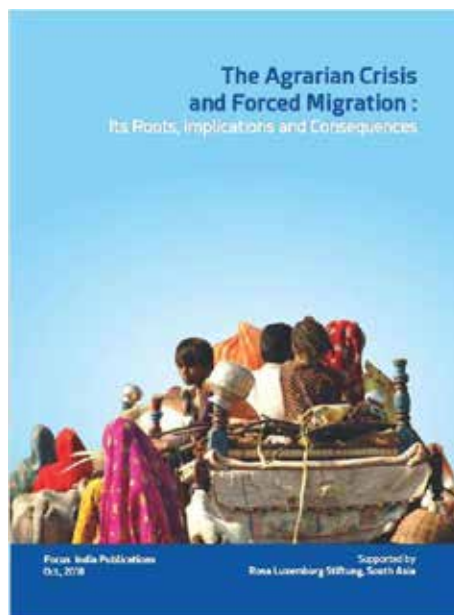
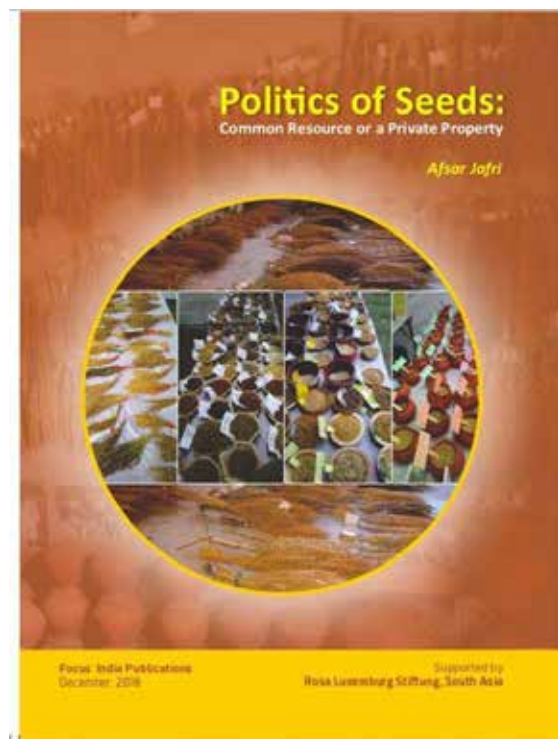


International Day of Peasants' Struggles - a special publication compiling articles, songs and other materials for the April 17 commemoration



Repormang Agraryo at Pagbabago: Narratives on Agrarian Conflicts, Transitions, and Transformation - a book assessing the impact of various agrarian reform programs in the Philippines

Politics of Seeds: Common Resource or a Private Property
- a booklet on the role of international financial institutions in the market for hybrid seeds



The Agrarian Crisis and Forced Migration: Its Roots, Implications and Consequences - a booklet on the role of the Indian government policies in the current agrarian crisis

Outreach: Multimedia



The Hands that Feed Us - an online photo exhibition on the role of women in food provision

Two infographics included in the International Day of Peasant Struggles publication

STATE OBLIGATIONS



UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF PEASANTS and other people working in Rural Areas

STATE OBLIGATIONS (as defined by UN OHCHR): By becoming parties to international treaties, States assume obligations and duties under international law to respect, to protect and to fulfil human rights. To fulfil means that States must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights.

[1] STATES SHALL RESPECT, PROTECT AND FULFILL THE RIGHTS OF PEASANTS AND OTHER PEOPLE WORKING IN RURAL AREAS.

by taking legislative, administrative and other appropriate steps, to achieve progressively the full realization of the rights of the present declaration.

[2] THE RIGHTS AND SPECIAL NEEDS OF PEASANTS AND OTHER PEOPLE WORKING IN RURAL AREAS MUST BE GIVEN PARTICULAR ATTENTION.

including, children and persons with disabilities, taking into account the need to address multiple forms of discrimination.

[3] STATES SHALL CONSULT AND COOPERATE IN GOOD FAITH WITH PEASANTS AND OTHER PEOPLE WORKING IN RURAL AREAS.

by engaging with and seeking the support of peasants, responding to their contributions, and ensuring active, free, effective, meaningful and informed participation.

[4] STATES SHALL ELABORATE, INTERPRET AND APPLY INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND STANDARDS IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS.

[5] STATES SHALL TAKE ALL NECESSARY MEASURES TO PREVENT NON-STATE ACTORS THAT THEY ARE IN A POSITION TO REGULATE.

such as private individuals and organizations, and multinational corporations and other business enterprises, from undermining or weakening the enjoyment of the rights of peasants.

[6] STATES, RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, SHALL TAKE EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO:

facilitate and support capacity-building, cooperation in research and access to scientific knowledge, technical and economic assistance, and improve the functioning of markets at the global level.

#APRIL17
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEASANT'S STRUGGLES

SUPPORT the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other People Working in Rural Areas!

FOCUS ON THE GLOBAL SOUTH
#PEASANTSRIGHTSNOW

The Right to Seeds



UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF PEASANTS and other people working in Rural Areas

THE RIGHT TO SEEDS: A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT FOR SMALL FARMERS
Access to seeds and the ability to not only choose them but also to produce them, use, exchange, and sell them are therefore crucial issues for small farmers. Not a growing number of them are currently being deprived of these rights, which threaten seed multifunctionality benefits from the situation. - (UNHCR/FAO/WHO/IFAD)

[1] PEASANTS AND OTHER PEOPLE WORKING IN RURAL AREAS HAVE THE RIGHT TO SEEDS.

INCLUDING:

- [1.1] The right to the protection of traditional knowledge relevant to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.
- [1.2] The right to equitably participate in sharing the benefits arising from the collection of plant genetic resources.
- [1.3] The right to participate in the sharing of knowledge and resources relating to the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources.
- [1.4] The right to save, use, exchange and sell their farm saved seed or propagating material.

[2] PEASANTS AND OTHER PEOPLE WORKING IN RURAL AREAS HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAINTAIN, CONTROL, PROTECT AND DEVELOP THEIR OWN SEEDS AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE.

[3] STATES SHALL TAKE MEASURES TO RESPECT, PROTECT AND FULFILL THE RIGHT TO SEEDS OF PEASANTS AND OTHER PEOPLE WORKING IN RURAL AREAS.

[4] STATES SHALL ENSURE THAT SEEDS OF SUFFICIENT QUALITY AND QUANTITY ARE AVAILABLE TO PEASANTS AT THE MOST SUITABLE TIME FOR PLANTING, AND AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE.

[5] STATES SHALL SUPPORT PEASANT SEED SYSTEMS, AND PROMOTE THE USE OF PEASANT SEEDS AND AGROBIODIVERSITY.

[6] STATES SHALL ENSURE THAT SEED POLICIES, PLANT VARIETY PROTECTION AND OTHER INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAWS, CERTIFICATION SCHEMES AND SEED MARKETING LAWS RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF PEASANTS.

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Voices of Hope and Struggle - video messages from workers in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Philippines and Thailand to commemorate International Worker's Day



Lumad in the Bangsamoro, a video series featuring indigenous peoples' leaders claiming their rights within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.



Sulagad: Our Life, Our Future - a video on the Téduray and the Lambangian people's indigenous concept and practice on food sovereignty and agroecology



Testimonies on Farmer Suicides in India - a video from our Forum on the Agrarian Crisis in India in 2017