

# Mutual capacity development

***A modern and effective approach for fair, green and global change***

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Fair, Green & Global Alliance:  
ActionAid, Both ENDS, Clean Clothes Campaign,  
Milieudefensie/Friends of the Earth Netherlands,  
SOMO and the Transnational Institute



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*A modern and effective approach  
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## colophon

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## INTRODUCTION

The Fair, Green and Global (FGG) programme involves nearly 300 civil society organisations worldwide and key national, regional and international networks and their members, including those hosted or represented by FGG Alliance members – ActionAid, Both ENDS, Clean Clothes Campaign, Milieudefensie, SOMO and Transnational Institute (TNI). The FGG Alliance is a Strategic Partner of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs within its ‘Dialogue and Dissent’ policy framework. The framework aims to support inclusive, sustainable development by strengthening civil society organisations (CSOs) in low and lower-middle income countries (LLMICs) to effectively voice their views and to hold policymakers and companies to account.

FGG specifically focuses on improving corporate conduct, trade and investment, and financial and tax systems – key areas where change is vitally needed in order to achieve inclusive societies in which human rights are respected and global public goods managed sustainably. The many problems we observe – including poverty, hunger, inequality, financial instability, climate change, biodiversity loss, and systematic violations of human rights – manifest themselves most visibly and tangibly in low and lower-middle income countries. But they are often rooted in global structures and systems. Solving these problems thus requires global cooperation – a concerted effort by strong civil society actors<sup>1</sup> located in many different places using different types of leverage to influence different decision-makers.

In the words of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘strong civil society organisations make it easier to hear the voice of the people’. FGG believes this is true both within a country’s borders and beyond them. A remote voice can best be heard when the signal is transmitted loud and clear, received loud and clear, and relayed loud and clear. Global cooperation is all the more important given the current context of ‘shrinking space’ for civil society engagement. In many countries, including democratic ones, civil society actors are facing an increasingly hostile environment. The ability to organise, assemble, operate, raise and secure funds, not to mention express dissent, is increasingly limited by repressive policies, laws and practices, including intimidation and violence perpetrated by both non-state and state actors against human rights defenders. This is especially true for groups at the frontlines of the struggle for inclusive, sustainable development: grassroots, community-based, social, economic, political, environmental and gender justice movements. Now more than ever, strong, well-networked civil society actors are needed everywhere around the world to resist this trend.

FGG works to strengthen civil society actors to advocate and lobby for socially just, inclusive and environmentally sustainable societies using what we call a mutual capacity development approach. This publication, which was inspired by stimulating discussions with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, describes in detail what we mean by mutual capacity development and why we believe it is the most effective approach for fair, green and global change.

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<sup>1</sup> We prefer the broad term ‘civil society actors’ which includes, for example, women and men, local communities, community-based organisations, grassroots social movements, trade unions, women’s groups, human rights defenders, and many other not-for-profit and non-governmental organisations that represent the interests and will of social sectors, and which are independent of the state and private business.

## THE 'MUTUAL' IN MUTUAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

FGG defines mutual capacity development as a process of strengthening skills, knowledge and network contacts in which all actors, regardless of their country of origin, participate as equal partners. Mutual describes both how we embark on capacity development (trust and respect) and what we expect from it (mutually strengthened capacities).

Mutual capacity development takes into account different perspectives and contexts. It recognises and harnesses different expertise, knowledge and skills to develop effective, collective and complementary strategies. The mutuality of capacity development in the FGG programme can be seen in FGG's extensive engagement in networks, where relationships are defined by equality, trust

**“** When strategic partners join forces and coordinate their lobbying and advocacy instruments and methods, their overall effectiveness may be enhanced... That is why the Minister wants to enter into strategic partnerships with CSOs. These strategic partnerships must be based on mutual trust and respect for each other's identity, expertise, experience and networks, as well as respect for each other's independent roles and responsibilities. But they will also identify opportunities for joint, complementary action to effectively advocate change and influence policy.”

### • DIALOGUE AND DISSENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

and long-term commitment. By joining and participating in networks, organisations agree to combine forces – to contribute and use their complementary roles, knowledge, locations, expertise and capacities to strengthen their collective power. In the same spirit as the Ministry's strategic partnership framework, investing in sustained, long-term relationships is a fundamental part of the mutual in FGG's mutual capacity development approach.

The mutuality in FGG's capacity development can also be seen in the role of local communities and grassroots movements within the FGG programme: they are the legitimate experts in the problems they face and the solutions they need. The FGG programme recognises and addresses power imbalances, supporting people and organisations to speak for themselves,

actively claim and defend their rights, and participate in decision-making at all levels. Equally important, FGG ensures that the knowledge of local experts – whether a group of rural women in Kenya or union members at a garment factory in Sri Lanka – is harnessed to develop the capacity of others. Only with accurate understanding of local problems and solutions can CSOs work effectively to do their part to help bring about positive change. In this way, FGG members, no less than FGG partners, continually develop their capacities within the FGG programme.

Mutuality is evident not just in the principle but also the practice. Mutual capacity development is a comprehensive process of actively learning together. Using a participatory approach, FGG partners and members regularly organise and take part in trainings, workshops and seminars where power analyses are conducted and knowledge, strategies, operational advice, communication and advocacy skills are exchanged. These types of activities are easily recognised as capacity development, but mutual capacity development in the FGG programme goes further. It includes intense 'on-the-job' learning. In FGG, organisations learn from each other by participating in joint projects and joint research, where technical or legal expertise is united with on-the-ground expertise to generate powerful, holistic insights that would not otherwise be possible. Organisations also learn and grow as they lobby and advocate side-by-side, telling the whole story, drawing the link between abstract policies on paper and the very real impact on people's lives.

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In the FGG programme, civil society actors also develop mutual capacities by campaigning together, coordinating their strategies, and mobilising their own constituencies to create leverage for mutual benefit. Indeed, this is a key feature of mutual capacity development: mutuality occurs when organisations intervene at the request of and on behalf of an ally to advocate for changes in policies, rules and regulations which in turn strengthens that ally's capacity to lobby and advocate. When FGG members push for an improved policy in the Netherlands (or in Europe or internationally), they are doing so at the request of FGG partners who expect the result to strengthen their *own* capacity to lobby and advocate, both in their local contexts and beyond. For example, better enforcement by Dutch stakeholders of free, prior and informed consent would increase the capacity and create more space for project-affected communities to have their say. Such changes in policies, rules and regulations often have far-reaching implications: the impact of a policy change related to one particular case often has a ripple effect that strengthens civil society actors in many countries and on multiple continents.

#### KEY FEATURES OF MUTUAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

- Based on mutual respect and the belief that civil society actors and their constituents can best speak for themselves
- Organisations participate as equal partners, invest in long-term relationships
- Recognises and harnesses different expertise, knowledge and skills to develop effective, collective strategies (e.g. network-level strategies)
- Involves actively learning together, both through participatory one-off activities (e.g. trainings, workshops, seminars) and through collaborative processes (e.g. joint research, joint lobbying and advocacy, joint campaigning)
- Includes advocating for positive changes in policy, rules and regulations (in NL, Europe, internationally) to guarantee space for civic actors to engage in decision-making processes and to conduct their own lobbying and advocacy.

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## THE CAPACITIES NEEDED TO MAKE THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE HEARD

For civil society actors to make the voice of the people heard and to hold policymakers and companies to account, they need a special mix of capacities. To begin with, they need to be able to muscle a seat at the table when that table is often on the other side of the mountain range, or the country, or the continent, or the world. They need to bring to the table accurate information and evidence – often collected from fragments dispersed across the globe – so that recommendations or demands are clear, credible and realistic.

They need a broad constituency, so that if others attempt to dominate the table, the speaker in the room can summon a louder collective voice coming from outside the room – communities or social movements or grassroots organisations that are part of and legitimately represented by the voice *in* the room.

And if that's still not loud enough, the speaker in the room may need to summon the voices of far-flung friends and allies around the world, those who can strengthen her resolve or back her up or give her a place to rest when the tension in the room is too much or the physical risks of being at the table too great.

It also matters who is seated at the table. More often than not, there are many tables and many actors who need to be seated at them. The voice speaking in a language that can effectively communicate with one set of decision-makers at one table in one corner of the world is stronger when she – or her allies – can also speak another language to effectively reach another set of decision-makers in another corner of the world.

In sum, for civil society actors to effectively voice their views and hold policymakers and companies to account they need:

- Access – The capacity to muscle a seat at the table
- Constituency – The capacity to speak with a loud, collective voice
- Knowledge – The capacity to build a solid case
- Advocacy skills – The capacity to communicate effectively
- Leverage – The capacity to exert influence
- An enabling environment – The capacity to undertake action freely and safely

In the pages that follow, we describe how the FGG Alliance's mutual capacity development approach works in practice to strengthen capacities of FGG partners in LLMIC countries, as well as *all* civil society actors involved in the FGG programme, including FGG members.

We are convinced that a mutual capacity development approach is the most appropriate and effective way to bring about lasting, structural change – to create socially just, inclusive and environmentally sustainable societies – in today's dynamic, globalised world.

## ACCESS – THE CAPACITY TO MUSCLE A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Who would know more about the tangible, direct impacts of climate change on local communities in the global South? The World Bank or civil society organisations rooted in the global South?

For Aksi! (Indonesia), AIDA (Latin America), Micronesia Conservation Trust (Micronesia), DIVA for Equality (Fiji), Samdhana (Indonesia) and Both ENDS, the answer is obvious. As part of the FGG programme, these organisations are working together with other CSOs around the world to improve the policies of the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Their goal is to **create more engagement and space for CSOs and local communities in the GCF decision-making process and in distribution of GCF financial resources**. FGG is strengthening the lobbying and advocacy capacity of these six organisations, and, in turn, local CSOs around the world, in the most fundamental way – by securing them a (figurative) seat at the GCF table.

The Green Climate Fund, part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

(UNFCCC), is a mechanism to assist developing countries in adaptation and mitigation practices to counter climate change. Based in Incheon, South Korea, it is governed by a Board of 24 members and supported by a Secretariat. The FGG partners insist that the GCF cannot be effective without Southern expertise. Local CSOs in the South are providing vital assistance to their communities, helping them address the effects of climate change and to use land and water more sustainably. Their knowledge and practice needs to be conveyed to GCF decision-makers, who must ensure that local people – those most affected by climate change – will actually benefit from the fund.

“ With support from Both ENDS, we attended several GCF board meetings. We learned more about various conceptual and technical issues being negotiated and decided by the Board, including accreditation, the environmental and social management system, the redress mechanism and gender. Enhanced understanding on those issues has helped a lot in improving CSO interventions (be it written or oral), in better articulating the needs of local affected people in the South, as well as scrutinizing the accreditation process and project approval.”

• TITI SOENTORO, AKSI! (INDONESIA)

Aksi!, AIDA, Micronesia Conservation Trust, DIVA, Samdhana and Both ENDS attend the GCF meetings to advocate

collectively toward national governments for local access of civil society to the GCF. The groups convene prior to GCF Board meetings to strategise, assess policy decisions and develop joint inputs to the Board. This is a crucial moment for mutual capacity development: **the groups exchange knowledge and (local and national) intelligence about GCF projects and accreditations, specific knowledge on policy gaps, and work together to formulate and bring the right messages to the right decision-makers.**

Because the Netherlands has a seat on the GCF Board, Both ENDS plays a key role in facilitating access for Southern partners to the Dutch GCF Board member. Both ENDS has helped ensure direct contact and communication between the Southern groups and the Dutch Board member. It has also facilitated indirect access: giving voice to Southern partners by relaying partners' knowledge and experiences about local practice to the Dutch Board member when direct communication between Southern partners and the Dutch Board member is not possible or practical. That Both ENDS is informed about and has the capacity to relay these experiences is thanks to the lessons learned from partners in the process of mutual capacity development.

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## CONSTITUENCY – THE CAPACITY TO SPEAK WITH A LOUD, COLLECTIVE VOICE

In 2012, a group of rural women attended a meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The women were dismayed by the fact that the 2009 African Union declaration on land rights, adopted by heads of states, had not changed things on the ground. At the time, there was no movement of African rural women – across regions, nations and borders – capable of ensuring that the declaration’s promises would become reality. The women came up with an idea to ensure that their voices would be heard all over the continent: they would carry their message to the highest mountain of Africa. The Women2Kilimanjaro Initiative was conceived.

As part of the FGG programme, ActionAid and its CSO partners across Africa<sup>2</sup> are **supporting the rural African women to create a movement, to organise and increase the volume of their voices. The goal is to strengthen rural women’s claims to and defence of land and natural resource rights.**

The Women2Kilimanjaro Initiative formally took off in March 2016. The initiative began with ‘Mini Kilimanjaros’ across Africa where rural women came together to learn from each other and articulate their demands for ensuring women’s land rights. From the start, ActionAid and other CSOs supporting the initiative used **a mutual capacity development approach that respected the rural women as the leaders of the initiative and the legitimate experts** on land and natural rights and relevant power dynamics. The CSOs facilitated contact between the rural women from various African countries. But it was **the rural women who developed the strategy, devised and implemented the plan, empowered each other and learned from each other’s experiences.**

At the ‘Mini Kilimanjaro’ in Kitui County in Kenya, for example, 400 women convened to develop a Land Charter of Demands which was carried to the peak of Ulonzo Hill. The Charter was then handed over to the county’s Deputy Governor who publicly committed to working with the women on its implementation and to following up on prior commitments made by the National Land Commission. **ActionAid and CSO partners used their skills and contacts to facilitate the rural women’s access to decision-makers. But the rural women led the lobbying and advocacy efforts themselves.** Individuals gain power when they come together, speak for themselves, organise and mobilise in social movements, grassroots organisations and networks. They are stronger when their demands are spoken with a loud, collective voice.

The ‘Mini Kilimanjaro’ on Ulonzo Hill, was just one of many across Kenya co-organised by nine CSOs, including ActionAid Kenya, Groots Kenya, Daughters of Mumbi, Kenya Human Rights Commission, Reconcile, Kenya Land Alliance, KELIN, Pamoja Trust and FIDA Kenya. In total, 5,000 Kenyan women were mobilised in ‘Mini-Kilimanjaro’ events in 24 counties. The events culminated in development of a Kenyan Charter of Demands presented by 300 rural women to the Lands and Housing Cabinet Secretary and the Chairperson of the National Land Commission, among others.

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to ActionAid, the initiative is supported by PROPAC; OXFAM; International Land Coalition; Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies; Tanzania Gender Networking Program; Kenya Land Alliance; Uganda Land Alliance; Zambia Land Alliance; and Women in Law and Development in Africa.

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Similar local and national mobilisations took place in 13 African countries, leading up to a Mass Assembly in October 2016. Some 400 women convened in Arusha, at the foot of Kilimanjaro, to agree on an African Women Charter of Demands on Land Rights. Twenty-nine women from 13 African countries carried their demands on a five-day journey to the top of the mountain where they proclaimed them for all to hear.

The African Women Charter of Demands, drafted by the rural women who took part in the Women2Kilimanjaro Initiative, is that powerful voice on paper. The women presented the Charter at a side event of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. And in response to the initiative, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission invited the women to present the African Women Charter of Demands at the 'Gender is My Agenda Campaign' Pre-meeting of the African Union Summit (January, 2017). The influence of the initiative on African policymakers has been significant: the governments of Sierra Leone, Kenya and Mozambique have already pledged their support to the rural women and promised to implement the Charter.

“ What I am seeing now, after the convergence in Arusha, is that a lot of these women now come together, for instance through whatsapp groups, and they continue to share their stories, their struggles and their efforts. And they give each other morale to push on and share successes. This is so significant, because the women who have succeeded in securing their house and land encourage others to push on. They strengthen each other in this process.”

• CATHERINE GATUNDU, INTERNATIONAL POLICY MANAGER/LIVELIHOODS & LANDFOR CAMPAIGN MANAGER, ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL

The Women2Kilimanjaro Initiative and the Charter have also strengthened the sound of African women's voices in Northern Countries. ActionAid has increased its capacity, credibility and legitimacy to lobby the Dutch government and the international community to increase support for rural women-led land rights movements and for policies that protect and defend women's land rights. ActionAid helped build a movement of solidarity with the African women in events across Europe, including a photo booth at a large World Food Day (16 October) event in Rotterdam. Nearly 100 people sent messages of support along with a photo taken on top of ActionAid's own 'mini-Kilimanjaro'. In response to the Women2Kilimanjaro Initiative, the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Lilianne

Ploumen, announced in December 2016 that the government would make an additional investment of €500,000 to promote women's land rights.

## KNOWLEDGE – THE CAPACITY TO BUILD A SOLID CASE

The Foundation for the Development of Sustainable Policies (FUNDEPS), based in Argentina, promotes the empowerment of community stakeholders in economic development processes. A key aim of the organisation is to ensure transparency, civil society participation and protection of human rights and the environment in local and international decision-making. Among other things, FUNDEPS seeks to improve access to justice for people adversely affected by projects funded by development banks (also known as Development Finance Institutions or DFIs).

FUNDEPS is not alone. Many organisations around the world – including SOMO and Both ENDS – are advocating for greater accountability of development banks, including increased access to remedy via the banks' complaint mechanisms, known as Independent Accountability Mechanisms (IAMs). Yet with 11 different complaint mechanisms (and an even greater number of banks active around the world), no one organisation has the complete picture.

FUNDEPS, SOMO and Both ENDS teamed up with eight organisations across three continents to research the policies and practices of the IAMs and their corresponding banks. The co-authors agreed that a **systematic, comparative analysis of the IAMs from the perspective of affected communities and complainants would strengthen the case for change**. The groups tackled the project using a mutual capacity development approach. They collectively developed the research methodology and the content and structure of the subsequent report, *Glass Half Full? The State of Accountability in Development Finance (2016)*. The co-authors divided up the tasks, contributing their unique knowledge and expertise to the report, while simultaneously learning from their peers. For example, FUNDEPS brought indispensable knowledge about the Independent Consultation and Investigation Mechanism of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). At the same time, the group developed its research and analytical skills through exposure to co-authors' research methodologies. FUNDEPS learned by conducting key elements of the research, including interviews of complainants, and by serving as a member of the core drafting group.

**Dividing the work enabled the groups to build the strongest case possible, based on an analysis of 758 complaints submitted to 11 IAMs over 21 years.** It's no secret that collective processes often progress more slowly than unilateral ones. But efficiency and effectiveness must ultimately be judged by the quality of the final result. When the co-authors presented their research during the annual meeting of IAMs in Paris in December 2015, their case was powerful.

Their conclusions could not be written off as the limited opinion of one stakeholder, nor could the legitimacy of the results be denied.

“ The opportunity to carry out personal interviews with complainants from IAM cases and the chance to collectively discuss findings with experts from all over the world has been a really useful and enriching experience. It has given us better practical and theoretical tools for our future work on IAMs and accountability agendas. We believe that the outputs and results of the project and the doors it has opened to us in different working agendas will highly contribute to strengthening our advocacy capacity.”

• JUAN CARBALLO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FUNDEPS

**What's more, the mutual approach to knowledge development helped to enhance the effectiveness of follow-up advocacy.** Cooperation in the collective research and report helped SOMO and Both ENDS make the case for change among European development banks, while FUNDEPS strengthened its position as an internationally-acknowledged specialist on IAMs. Through the report, FUNDEPS was able to deepen contact and institutional relations with staff of the Inter-American Development

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Bank's IAM (known as MICI). In 2016, FUNDEPS followed up on a specific recommendation made in *Glass Half Full*, advocating for establishment of an official external stakeholder advisory group for the MICI. FUNDEPS took the lead in organising other Latin American NGOs working on IAMs to submit written input into the MICI's consultation process for an External Consultative Group (GCE). Later, FUNDEPS applied and was selected to serve as a member on the new GCE (in January 2017).

Participation in the GCE makes FUNDEPS all the stronger, enhancing the group's ability to engage with MICI and IDB staff and to influence MICI's work and policies. **A solid case, based on a mutual capacity development approach, was critical to creation of the stakeholder advisory group and to helping FUNDEPS secure a seat at the table.**

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## ADVOCACY SKILLS – THE CAPACITY TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

When the case at hand is highly technical, it is all the more critical to ensure that you come to the table prepared. Many civil society organisations are experts in on-the-ground impacts of policies, but lack the skills to communicate and advocate effectively in the language spoken by decision-makers, or to translate that language for their constituents. Trade and investment agreements provide a perfect example. They have a profound impact on all members of society, yet such agreements are conceived, negotiated and written in an arcane language that few civil society actors can speak. Worse yet, civil society actors are often denied the right to even learn the language: trade negotiation texts are kept secret.

It was for this reason that a group of Asian CSOs saw the need for a regional workshop focused on investment protection and the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) system. Investment protection is a major topic in on-going trade and investment negotiations between several Asian countries and the EU, and between members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and their existing trade partners, including China and India, around a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Investment protection and ISDS give corporations the right to sue states for measures, such as public interest legislation, that could affect profits. Based on experiences like that of Indonesia, where a job- and revenue-generating mining law was challenged by foreign investors, the Asian groups were keenly aware of the societal threats posed by the system.

**The CSOs joined up with their European counterparts to develop knowledge and skills to communicate effectively with trade negotiators.** As part of the FGG programme, Focus on the Global South (Thailand and the Philippines), Paung Ku (Myanmar), Indonesia for Global Justice, Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) and TNI organised a participatory workshop on investment protection in November 2016 in Manila. Forty-five representatives from social movements, NGOs and trade unions from across Asia – including ASEAN countries Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, as well as India and Korea – brought their respective expertise to the workshop.

The workshop was based on a mutual capacity development approach. CSOs from Asia and Europe together developed the objectives and content. Facilitators ensured the active sharing of knowledge and experiences, cross-fertilisation of ideas and enrichment of everyone attending. The groups exchanged information about advocacy strategies and the impact of investment regimes on particular sectors and issues, including food, labour rights, health, taxes, intellectual property rights and environmental protection. European participants contributed vital information and analysis of the EU's new Investment Court System (ICS). **The workshop's interactive format, which involved role playing and argumentation practice, prepared participants to directly articulate a robust case against ISDS to policymakers. It also built their confidence to take part in debates about ISDS and to communicate with the media.** Finally, participants developed national and regional level advocacy and campaign plans, and consolidated the EU-ASEAN FTA campaign network.

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The workshop included representatives of Paung Ku, the Myanmar Alliance on Transparency and Accountability (MATA) and the Lands in Our Hand network. Together they comprise more than 550 civil society actors who are advocating for a transparent Myanmar-EU Investment Protection Agreement (IPA) negotiation process in which civil society concerns are taken seriously.

“ Taking lessons from other neighbouring countries, I think ISDS would have dire implications for my country, which is undergoing significant legal reform under the new government led by Aung San Suu Kyi and is still involved in peace negotiations with armed organisations in many regions.

Not long after the workshop in the Philippines, I had the opportunity to attend consultation meetings with the Secretary General of ICSID [International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes - World Bank] and representatives from the European Commission. The workshop prepared me well for those kind of meetings – through the role play sessions, case studies and reference materials. I was able to present concerns surrounding ISDS to Ms. Meg Kinnear [of ICSID] based on lessons-learnt from the workshop and to explain how it could stall the country’s democratisation process. With EU delegates, I was able to provide counter-arguments when they brought up ICS as the ‘improved’ dispute resolution system to be introduced in EU-Myanmar IPA.”

• DOI RA, PAUNG KU

and ability to ‘translate’ the concerns and demands of its Asian allies into a language spoken by European audiences – ensuring that the voices of Asian people are communicated effectively in European debates.

Following the workshop, the Myanmar participants were immediately put to the test. When the EU delegation hosted a consultation on the occasion of the fourth round of negotiations in December 2016, **the groups came to the consultation well-prepared and ready to present the EU negotiators with a cogent argument against an ISDS-like system.**

The workshop also improved participants’ abilities to communicate effectively to the public. While groups in Myanmar were busy with the EU, 12 CSOs in Indonesia were holding public events and conducting advocacy in relation to RCEP negotiations. The Indonesian groups were able to explain in clear, accessible language what investment protection means for ordinary people – its impact on living wages, land distribution, access to free, accessible medicines, public healthcare and education.

Meanwhile, TNI returned from the workshop with a better understanding

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## LEVERAGE – THE CAPACITY TO EXERT INFLUENCE

Sri Lankan workers have recently been hit with a wave of union-busting. Back in 2013, workers at two glove factories – manufacturers of ATG gloves – in Sri Lanka’s Katunayake Free Trade Zone successfully organised a branch of the Free Trade Zone & General Services Union (FTZ&GSEU). But the workers’ struggle for their union had only just begun. Among other things, management concocted a bogus ‘disciplinary committee’ to systematically dismiss union members, who had been speaking out about problems like gender-based violence, sexual harassment and the unsafe use of toxic chemicals.

The union members took their case to the Labour Commission, hoping to gain leverage against management and put an end to repression of the union. The Assistant Commissioner of Labour duly urged the factories to suspend the disciplinary inquiries against the workers, including the union president and union organiser. Management did not budge.

So what next? An effective civil society advocate and lobbyist must always **consider who holds the power and how they can be influenced**. In our complex and globally interconnected world, the matter is rarely simple. That’s where global networks come in. **Networks are critical for identifying multiple leverage points and developing the capacity to exert influence wherever and whenever it’s needed.**

To help make their voices heard, the factories’ union members turned to their union affiliate and to the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) network. In 2016, as part of the FGG programme, FTZ&GSEU, a women’s rights organisation, and several other Sri Lankan unions teamed up with the CCC International Office to organise two participatory workshops. The aim was to develop the capacities of all participants to collectively address urgent cases of violations of Sri Lankan garment workers’ rights.

**The workshops began with a context analysis and mapping of power** that included both local actors, such as factory management and local arbitration bodies, and distant actors like European buyers (brands and retailers), consumers and institutions. The groups made **an inventory of knowledge, expertise, skills, contacts and leverage points among themselves and across the CCC network**. The Sri Lankan participants, although faced with similar problems, brought to the workshop diverse strategies for influencing local institutions and unique pathways to decision-makers. When one group discussed a specific urgent appeal case, the others suggested helpful alternative tactics and approaches. CCC’s two European-based participants informed the others about possible steps the network can take in responding to urgent appeals. At the same time, they gained critical insight into the Sri Lankan context and a better understanding of the priorities and demands of workers in specific urgent appeal cases, including the on-going case at the two glove factories. **Northern CSOs have more leverage with European and international brands and institutions when it is clear they are relaying the voice of the workers whose rights have been violated.**

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Following the September workshop, FTZ&GSEU and CCC coordinated diverse local and international actions to exert influence over ATG. CCC and allied labour rights organisations repeatedly contacted ATG's buyers in Europe and North America to inform them about the management's union-busting conduct and push for their intervention to address the violations. Meanwhile, CCC, IndustriALL and the International Trade Union Confederation highlighted the ATG case in coordinated lobbying toward the EU as it considered re-granting Sri Lanka preferential trade status. CCC and the global unions urged the EU to address concerted efforts by Sri Lankan manufacturer associations to create 'union-free' trade zones, robbing workers of their fundamental rights.

“ We believe this long battle for worker rights provides many lessons... For the workers and unions, this proves in [the] present Sri Lankan context – where political power plays a crucial role in promoting investment and promising lenient and relaxed application of guidelines, regulations and laws for the benefit of investors – unions will have to seek redress through international complaint mechanisms and international worker solidarity in safeguarding worker rights. It was such international lobbying...that eventually led the ATG management to ensure to conduct a peaceful referendum... This is also a lesson for the employer ... [In] a global economy it is not only investment and profits that travel across geographical boundaries, but also worker solidarity.”

• GENERAL SECRETARY ANTON MARCUS, FTZ&GSEU

In response to the local and international pressure, ATG tried a new tactic. The management hoped to undermine the eligibility of FTZ&GSEU as a legitimate bargaining partner by insisting on a new referendum, despite the fact that the union was already recognised in 2013. Following an intense period of intimidation of union members, the ATG factory workers once again made their voices heard loud and clear, casting their ballots for the union. **Critical to the workers' victory was the international scrutiny of ATG, created through the application of pressure on multiple leverage points.** This was vital for helping ensure that ATG management conduct the referendum peacefully.

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## AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT – THE CAPACITY TO UNDERTAKE ACTION FREELY AND SAFELY

Strong civil society actors make it easier to hear the voice of the people. But violence can lead to silence. Across the globe, activists and organisations defending human rights are facing great risks – dismissal, harassment, prison, even murder. In 2016 FGG Alliance partners, members and allies worldwide responded with well-organised outrage to the murder of Berta Cáceres, an indigenous woman activist who had been leading the collective struggle of the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras and the indigenous Lenca People in defence of their lands, rivers and forest from the threat of the Agua Zarca dam.

**The FGG programme works to ensure an environment in which people, communities and civil society actors can freely and safely organise, voice their opinions, express their grievances, claim and defend their rights, and secure remedy. In response to the murder, FGG organised mutually reinforcing actions.** SOMO and Both ENDS focused on pressing the Dutch Development Bank (FMO), an investor in the dam, to divest from the project. The groups have long advocated for FMO to put affected communities at the centre of their decision-making processes and to ensure that their rights are respected, especially in light of poor governance, weak rule of law and high levels of violence in many countries where it invests.

Meanwhile, Milieudefensie, TNI and allies in the Friends of the Earth network helped organise a delegation of Lenca activists from Honduras to **bring their demands directly to decision-makers in the Netherlands and other European countries.** From 19 April to 5 May, FGG arranged for joint meetings of the delegation – which included Berta Cáceres’ daughter – with representatives of FMO, the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Lilianne Ploumen, and with parliamentarians in Brussels and the Hague. While Both ENDS and SOMO joined members of the delegation at the table with FMO, Milieudefensie focused on raising public awareness – including through a full page advertisement in the Volkskrant – and mobilising public pressure on FMO to withdraw from Agua Zarca.

FMO ultimately stated that it will divest from Agua Zarca. **But securing an enabling environment – guaranteeing that people have the capacity to freely and safely make their voices heard – requires more sweeping, fundamental change.** FGG members called on the Dutch government to act more boldly and to urge the EU to constructively participate in UN discussions around legally-binding rules (a UN treaty) that would make transnational corporations accountable for human rights violations and provide victims of abuse with access to justice. A petition signed by 90,000 EU citizens was presented to decision-makers across Europe in support of EU participation in the treaty talks. In the Netherlands, Milieudefensie presented Dutch signatures to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bert Koenders.

Regrettably, Cáceres’ murder occurred in the context of historic levels of violence and repression of activists in Latin America. **To do their work, Latin American activists and CSOs must be constantly attentive to their safety.** As part of the FGG programme, Latin American CSOs, including Friends of the Earth (FoE) member groups, organised two meetings in 2016 aimed at strengthening their protection strategies, protocols and mechanisms. In May, following the murder of Cáceres, Asociación Madre Tierra (FoE Honduras) brought together 12 local Honduran

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organisations and 8 CSOs from the region (FoE Uruguay, Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, Chile, Costa Rica, Brazil and Colombia). The participants analysed together the national and regional level trends around human rights defenders and the displacement of indigenous peoples from ancestral territories. **The participating organisations developed protocols and an emergency response system to connect the otherwise isolated local Honduran CSOs to networks at national, regional and international levels.**

Similarly, in November, CEIBA (FoE Guatemala) convened 11 local Guatemalan organisations and five CSOs from the region to strengthen capacities to carry out their work in the face of increasing risks. Participants were trained in the use of digital security and on tactics to better ensure

“ For me it is clear that when they want to murder us, they do it easily, they can do it. . . . We started to set up prevention and security processes in our organisation. We said ‘we are taking risks and this is our decision, but we can’t be naïve’. . . . How do we generate mechanisms to be safer as individuals? As an organisation, how do we create and maintain prevention mechanisms?

There are comrades and friends who carry a load of sadness and pain because they have one relative murdered or another is in jail. . . . We don’t realise that we need psycho-social support, support for the people who keep the struggle alive, who give us hope. Sometimes we forget that we are . . . suffering. How to walk with more happiness? How to walk and resist with more hope as well?

There are also moments of repression and this is when organisations collapse and disappear. We need to strengthen and enhance the cohesiveness of the groups at the forefront of resistance. . . . I think that the challenge is how in this resistance, despite the risks, how to walk happy . . . no matter how hard the situation is. And it is hard.”

• GUSTAVO CASTRO SOTO, OTROS MUNDOS MEXICO (FOE MEXICO)

personal safety of CSO staff and communities with whom they work. As in Honduras, security protocols and a rapid response system were developed with clear division of local and regional roles. The groups also agreed **on collective, country-specific strategies for bringing perpetrators to justice in both Guatemala and Honduras.**

**To remain optimistic, confident and strong in the face of such relentless risk, it also helps to know that you can rest your voice.** After witnessing Berta Cáceres’ murder, Gustavo Castro Soto of Otros Mundos Mexico (FoE Mexico) received support from Friends of the Earth International so that he and his family could temporarily leave the country. Such support is critical for helping to ensure that Castro Soto and Otros Mundos Mexico retain their capacity to continue their long-term struggle for human rights.

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## CONCLUSION

Mutual trust. Respect for each other's identity, expertise, experience and networks. Respect for each other's independent roles and responsibilities. Joint, complementary action to effectively advocate change and influence policy toward more inclusive, sustainable development. This is how the Ministry envisioned the 'Dialogue and Dissent' Strategic Partnership relationships.

It corresponds with how FGG sees the relationship between civil society actors engaged in the process of mutual capacity development. Mutual capacity development entails investing in sustainable relationships built on trust, equality and mutual respect. And it means engaging in an effective process of actively learning and doing together – strengthening each other's skills, knowledge and network contacts, and taking joint, complementary action to expand space for civil society actors everywhere to make the voice of the people heard.

Developing access, constituencies, knowledge, advocacy skills, leverage and an enabling environment is achieved by working and learning together, maximising each other's strengths and addressing each other's weaknesses. In Kenya. In Sri Lanka. In Honduras. And right here in the Netherlands. Each and every one of the cases described above can be linked to the lobbying and advocacy efforts of FGG members themselves. This is both logical and necessary. When FGG members address Dutch, European or international decision-makers, they are doing so *at the request* of partners and their constituencies, on the basis of knowledge, evidence and analyses *generated with* partners and their constituencies, to further goals that are *shared by* partners and their constituencies. And whenever possible, FGG members engage in such efforts *alongside of* partners and their constituencies, as they can speak best about the problems they face and the solutions they want.

Mutual trust and respect, learning by doing together, and a robust understanding of the capacities needed to hold policymakers and companies to account at all levels – local, national and international. This is the shift in paradigm required to bring about fair, green and global change. This is mutual capacity development.

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