Resisting Corporate Power

STRUGGLES FOR WOMEN’S RIGHTS, ECONOMIC AND GENDER JUSTICE

Prepared by Rachel Moussié for the Cross-Movement Dialogue co-convened by the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) and the Solidarity Center, with the facilitation of Just Associates (JASS)
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Understanding corporate power

- Mix of national corporations and transnational corporations that dominate markets
- Colonial and imperial roots in exploitation and expropriation of labour and natural resources
- Emergence of new corporate powers from North Korea, China, India, South Africa, Brazil and other middle income countries
- Corporations are more empowered than ever due to government policies over the past 30 years to break union power, privatise basic services and encourage large scale natural resource extraction
ITUC estimates that only six percent of the workforce of 50 of the world’s largest transnational corporations are directly employed; the remaining 94 percent remain hidden making it more difficult for them to organise and claim better working conditions from transnational corporations. – January 2016
“58 percent of countries exclude groups of workers from the labour law, 70 percent of countries have workers who have no right to strike, 60 percent of countries deny or restrict workers collective bargaining and 52 percent of countries deny workers access to the rule of law.”

- *International Trade Union Confederation, 2016*
GlaxoSmithKline – the world’s 6th largest pharmaceutical company – patented drugs for antiretroviral treatments

Drug patents made antiretroviral treatments too expensive for people living with HIV & AIDS to access
Gas flaring in the Niger Delta leads to ecological damage and pollution.

The collapse of the dam in the iron ore mine in Brazil last year was an ecological catastrophe and led to the displacement of hundreds of communities.
Most of the greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture are attributable to industrial agriculture and not small scale agriculture.
Militarised violence at the hands of the oil companies and the state in the Niger Delta

A woman in Nigeria votes in the national election
Walmart runs a public relations campaign to show it does not discriminate against LGBT persons.

1.5 million Walmart women employees file a class action lawsuit against Walmart for gender discrimination on salaries, bonuses and training.
Size and scale of corporate power today
A comparison between World Bank GDP estimations in 2011 and Forbes Magazine’s data on the top 175 global economic entities shows that 111 (63 percent) were transnational corporations, and the remaining were countries.

The revenues of the three largest corporations, Royal Dutch Shell, Exxon Mobil and Wal-Mart, were higher than the GDP of 110 countries, 55 percent of nation states.

110 countries = Shell + Exxon Mobil + Walmart
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>GDP 2011</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BRAZIL</td>
<td>$2.5 trillion</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHINA</td>
<td>$10.3 trillion</td>
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<tr>
<td>INDIA</td>
<td>$1.8 trillion</td>
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<tr>
<td>INDONESIA</td>
<td>$846 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEXICO</td>
<td>$1.2 trillion</td>
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<td>NETHERLANDS</td>
<td>$836 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIGERIA</td>
<td>$235 billion</td>
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<td>SOUTH AFRICA</td>
<td>$408 billion</td>
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<td>USA</td>
<td>$15 trillion</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>$2.4 billion</td>
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Who controls the transnational corporations?

43,060 transnational corporations exist in the world in 2011.

147 transnational corporations own 40% of all transnational corporations.

Most of the 147 transnational corporations are banks from the North.

The largest of these include:

- Barclays
- UBS
- JPMorgan Chase
- Walmart
- Goldman Sachs
- Sinopec
Bill Gates = $79.2 billion
Microsoft

Carlos Slim Helu = $77.1 billion
Telecom

Warren Buffet $72.7 billion
Financial investments

THE WORLD'S
62
RICHEST PEOPLE OWN
THE SAME WEALTH
AS THE 3.6 BILLION
POOREST PEOPLE
Corporate capture – UN and civil society

- Corporations are increasingly providing funds for the UN and compromising its independence
- Global Goals and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda give corporations a key role in financing and delivering on these targets by 2030
- Corporations are carving up the political space for women’s rights, trade unions and social movements at the UN
- Private foundations interest in women’s and girls empowerment is taking away space and influence from women’s rights organisations

“Notably, only around 27 percent of the 170 initiatives supporting women and girls actually engaged women’s organizations as partners, and only 9 percent directly funded them.”

- AWID, ‘New money, new actors, new conversations.’ 2014
Corporate capture – UN and civil society

The World Economic Forum proposed the ‘Global Redesign Initiative’ as a system of multi-stakeholder governance that would in part replace the UN system:

• Multi-stakeholder engagements between transnational corporations, governments, and civil society groups would identify and address global problems like climate change, infectious diseases, unemployment

• Inter-governmental bodies, like the UN, would have no oversight or decision-making power