

# TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD

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Source: Aljazeera

## Towards serving justice for the Philippine drug war's dead

By Paoloregel Samonte (UNU-IAS)

"Jail him, but please don't kill him," was Teresa's (fictional name) plea to their village chairman when she surrendered Danilo Dacillio to their hands. The chairman reassured that her 36-year old nephew would be alright.

A few days later, however, Danilo was brought by the police to a sidecar—his face covered with cloth, his hands in shackles—and was shot to death in a murky street in Tondo, Manila.

Teresa had just unknowingly delivered her beloved nephew to his killers.

### Poverty, not drugs

Danilo is only one of the estimated 20,000 executed at the height of President Rodrigo Duterte Jr.'s ruthless war on drugs.

From the moment he took oath in June 2016, the President went full rampage on the war that killed an average of 34 suspects per day, staying true to his campaign promise of combating illegal drugs through violence and bloodshed. (cont'd to page 2)

**The Peace and Governance Issue.** For each issue, **Transforming Our World**, the UNU Peace and Progress (UPP) newsletter, will feature one of the three thematic clusters highlighted at UNU's Strategic Plan for 2015-2019. This issue will focus on the topic **peace and governance.**

The state-sponsored killings, however, were selective and tended to target small-time suspects, later urging critics to label the phenomenon a “war against the poor.”

While rich households were peacefully investigated for possible drug use, Danilo and other citizens like him were executed almost instantaneously, without regard to due process.

The irony lies in the fact that, instead of targeting poor drug suspects, President Duterte ought to have focused his actions on poverty reduction in order to alleviate drug abuse. “This drug problem only occurs due to poverty... Some of the [victims] sold drugs because they do not have other means of livelihood,” Teresa argued.

### Change not coming

Teresa laments the fact that Danilo, along with other extra-judicial killings (EJK) victims, were not given their chance at rehabilitation. As some drug users who turned themselves in for fear of being killed are now under the drug war’s “second phase”—which involves the rehabilitation of around 700,000 drug users and is a rather positive outcome of the campaign—her nephew was not as lucky.

While the Duterte regime prided itself with the slogan “change is coming,” change for Danilo is no more.

“He [Pres. Duterte] promised change. I hope [the victims] were given the chance to change. They [the police] have no right to take someone else’s life,” Teresa said. (cont’d to page 3)



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## Justice not served

In a late 2017 statement, President Duterte has pulled out the Philippine police from his brutal drug war, signaling a slow demise for the bloody crackdown operations. But for Danilo, who was executed in December 2016—more than two years ago—justice is still nowhere to be found.

“There is no way he could be given justice,” Teresa said, forcing a weak laugh. “At this point in time, I am not anymore hoping that he could be given justice.”

As if resigned to their fate, Teresa said she does not have any plans to file a case against the officers who murdered her nephew. “[The police] told me they killed [Danilo]... that he is already dead. At first, I even thought they were kidding,” Teresa recalled.

“I don’t have any more hope, and besides, they might also murder me,” she added.

## Fight, not fear

Teresa still calls for the summary executions to be put to a halt.

“Stop the EJKs. Stop the merciless killings... It hurts. I can see it all over our community... that [the police] are killing people with families and kids.”

With thousands of lives lost, a clear international regime condemning the killings has yet to come to action. Sooner or later, all these deaths would be forgotten, and the phenomenon would simply go down in history as yet another failed attempt at an anti-drug campaign—as if lessons were never learned from the case of Thailand, where a similar operation in the early 2000s resulted in about 2,500 deaths.

But as the crackdown mellows down, and as President Duterte’s apparent addiction to mitigating drug addiction reach its final moments, may the international community continue to flame the hope that has already escaped Teresa and the thousands of other families whose loved ones have been taken away.

If world leaders are turning a blind eye towards these heinous crimes, may civilians beg to differ. Along with the thousands of human rights advocates, youth groups, and religious communities in the Philippines who rallied against the drug war, may the international community’s call for government accountability continue to reverberate until justice is finally served. ■

**Note:** Special thanks go to Mr. Ralph Uyan Alayon Obina, who granted the author rights to use his audio interview with Teresa (not her real name) for this article.

## Corporations and mass exploitation: Where does corporate social responsibility fit in?

By Femke Laauwen (UNU-MERIT)



Source: PA

The increased prominence of human rights in a range of discourses has led to a shift from these rights being discussed solely in political and academic circles to them experiencing more and more importance in the corporate realm. The emergence of corporate social responsibility can be observed as the clear manifestation of this shift towards a broader diameter of discourses surrounding human rights. This gives rise to a variety of new questions we need to ask. Does this have an impact on the prevalence of human rights violations? Do corporations really have a responsibility to impact human rights in the states within which they operate? Perhaps the most important question to ask is whether corporations, all of whom operate within the global economic framework of capitalism, are equipped to tackle these issues in the first place. We have all heard the criticism of this economic framework and how it stimulates human rights violations through profit maximization. I believe that we as a society need to take a critical stance in answering these questions and exploring this topic. I particularly feel that we should pay a greater amount of attention to the façade that is ‘corporate social responsibility’.

A troubling myth that human rights stand in the way of law and order, as well as economic growth, continues to prevail in many regions around the world. State or government oppression in the name of national security is not a new concept... (cont’d to page 4)





Source: Reuters

It has been used for centuries and in many countries across the world. Although Western states currently aim to hide any elements of oppression and coercion, Eastern states, including China and, more recently, the Philippines, spend less time doing so, as human rights do not play an important role in their political agendas. Such countries see no use for these values socially, as their political power does not rely on the consent of citizens and instead on a sense of social stability. There is no 'social contract' in these states that binds the government to its citizens, and vice versa. Thus, the question arises, are human rights, and more broadly, corporate social responsibility, a Western concept? Or has this region simply taken a pragmatic approach to frame them in this way so as to excuse their own violations? I believe in the latter, as Nobel-prize-winning Amartya Sen has found that there is no support whatsoever to the claim that there is an inherent conflict between political rights and economic performance. Of course, this claim was made in relation to a state's economic performance, so it is important to explore whether the truth in this statement changes once its referent object becomes a corporation.

Asia has seen massive economic growth in recent decades, owing largely to the expansion of both domestic and international corporations. As a result of the expanding economic power of these corporations, they also hold more political power. Therefore, we see parallel growth between this political power and corporate social responsibility as a framework from within which companies operate. But to what extent should this be perceived as a 'good' thing? Famed economist Milton Friedman once remarked that 'the acceptance by corporate officials of a social responsibility' could 'thoroughly undermine the very foundations of our free society'. He comments that it is impossible for a corporation to know what their social responsibility is, or what the needs of society are. I am by no means a capitalist, but Friedman seems to have a point here. If we allow corporations to attempt to impact political processes in the countries within which they operate, we are simultaneously allowing for the convergence of political and economic interests, which is a dangerous progression. All corporations, no matter how small or large, seek to earn a profit. Therefore, they will likely not engage in activities which will impede their abilities to do so. Following this line of thought, if businesses perceive that fighting for the improvement of human rights, perhaps through promoting freedom of speech or expression, will improve their profit, then they will engage in such acts. This motivation is questionable, however, as these corporations thereby see human rights as profitable; they are profiting from rights that should be universal.

Even if we assume for a minute that corporate social responsibility is a good thing, and that it is able to impact human rights, there is no way to ignore the fact that, in Asia in particular, we often see a dangerous trend involving the convergence of political and economic interests. Furthermore, we also see a difference in how corporations utilize their corporate social responsibility depending on the political interest of the country in which they operate. In East and Southeast Asia, the dangers of the convergence of these interests become clear. Countries like Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, and especially China have rolled back protections for workers in various industries aiming to attract external investments. In this sense, we see how the lack of regulations regarding human rights is profitable for these corporations: they are able to maximize their profits through minimizing investment in, for instance, worker salaries and the creation of a safe work environment.

In contrast, these same corporations, when operating in developed countries, often align their own economic interests, including their stance on corporate social responsibility, with the political interests of the state. Therefore, we increasingly see that in countries like the United States, the Netherlands, and Germany, corporations promote any and all activities they participate in that aim to improve society at large. Not only because this is more in-line with the political views of these nations, but also because it attracts more customers. Citizens within these countries are increasingly becoming aware of the power they have as consumers, and corporations are therefore following this trend. (cont'd to page 5)

The dichotomy between these two worlds demonstrates the dangers of corporate social responsibility, the convergence of political and economic interests, and the inclusion of human rights within business interests. I have said it before, and I will say it again: corporations seek to maximize profit. As a result, corporations will move their operations to countries with lax policies, in order to improve their commercial success. The inconsistent behaviour of these corporations in countries with differing levels of development illustrates this fact. I would like to end this article with a question to you: is corporate social responsibility a façade that we use to justify the convergence of political and economic interests? ■

## Chhaupadi and women: Tradition vs. reality?

### *Women and Menstruation in Nepal*

By Anuska Joshi (UNU-IAS)

**F**or a process as natural as menstruation, women in some rural areas in Nepal are still losing their lives today, not because of health complications but because of a timeless tradition that shuns them as 'impure' and requires them to segregate themselves and live in a "Period Hut" during the entirety of their menstruation. This is the tradition called 'Chhaupadi'.

The 'Period Hut' is usually a shack or a shed like dwelling, and cattle sheds are often used for this purpose. The prevalence of this practice is usually reported in the western part of Nepal. The houses have at least one such hut, where the girl is required to stay when she has her periods. These huts lack basic amenities and sanitation needs but are also dangerous since they are in secluded areas near forests and fields, and prone to wildlife attacks. Various research (Amatya, P. et al; Kadariya; S. et al, Parajuli et al, Parker, S., & Standing, K; Ranabhat C. et al) have pointed out prevalence of such tradition and the dangers of not only lack of personal hygiene, but also the threat of snake bites, suffocation during winter, as well as rape. Making things worse is another tradition of regarding water as pure and banning the women from touching community water sources, making it harder for the women to maintain their hygiene. The researchers mention the need for an appropriate strategy against the Chhaupadi Tradition.

As recent as this month, February 2019, there have been reported cases of young girls dying in the small windowless huts due to suffocation after lighting fires to keep themselves warm (The Himalayan Times, My Republica, The Guardian). Following the tragic incidences, a parliamentary team visited Bajura, one of the districts of Nepal, where some of the recent deaths occurred, and suggested the use of police administration to monitor and take action on people practicing the tradition as well as forcing it on the community. But while even the government has already put a ban on the tradition since 2005, the prevalence is still shown with the recent incidences of death... (cont'd to page 6)





So, the big question is why is it not working? Is it the mindset? Is it that the news of ban is not reaching the people? Incidences like these questions the relevance of existing policies and their capability of uprooting a deeply rooted value set. In some particular cases, girls who rebelled against the practice have been pressurized and shunned by their community by blaming them for every natural disaster and unfortunate situation as a misfortune brought on by their disobedience, forcing them to go back to the period hut again.

A survey conducted by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor in 2010 showed that one in five women follow the Chhaupadi tradition. Since the tradition has been followed since centuries, there is still the deep-seated belief that they would anger the gods bringing in misfortunes to the community if they fight against the tradition. This comes from the superstition that women and girls during their menstrual cycle are impure. That they would offend the gods if they stayed at home. That they would be making the home impure. The superstition goes as far as claiming that water would dry up if menstruating girl touched it, crop would fail if the girl touched it and someone would fall sick if they touched them. In some areas where the authorities have demolished the 'huts', the menstruating women have been shifted to be secluded in another room or another floor. An article from Independent also mentioned that demolishing the 'period huts' has sometimes made things worse as people shifted the girls to caves or jungles. The authors also highlight the fact that this tradition is not just about the segregation, but the psychological stigma a girl has to go through to believe she is impure, that the normal process of menstruation is a curse (Parker & Standing, 2019). Add to it the trauma before the period itself, of the prospect of spending cold, uncomfortable nights in an unsafe place. For it seems that her touch that would bring misfortune does not count when she is raped, which is often the case when she is isolated and vulnerable.

A law that criminalized the practice was introduced again in August 2017, after the ban that took place in 2005. Since January 2019, the government has decided to cut off governmental facilities to the people practicing the Chhaupadi tradition, and also introduced subsequent awareness raising programs to aware the people of the reality of the natural process taking place in their bodies. Awareness campaigns and activities are also conducted by other national and international organizations. As it is local influencers who can work towards changing mindset, it is important for these activities to include them as key personnel. Now the question is the efficiency of the implemented changes and programs. Chhaupadi is not the only practice shunning menstruation. Most women and girls in the country are denied access to temples and functions while menstruating. While Chhaupadi now is a seen issue, some discriminations remain unseen. ■

## Long lasting peace includes nature

By Maria Alejandra Aguilar (UNU-IAS)



In the front line of armed conflicts, human rights violations often coalesce with the destruction of nature, a silent victim. Air, water and soil are polluted, and wilderness is disrupted as different scenarios of war are more likely to take stage in rural areas, non-excluding urban terrorism, as is a common modality, but many internal conflicts have been confined to places far from the controlled urban centers.

This has been the case in Colombia, and other countries in the region with similar history. The recent peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia People's Army (FARC), one of the oldest guerilla groups in the world which origins date back to 1950's, leave some important lessons when it comes to including nature as a direct victim of conflict, because to some level it acknowledged liability in the damage of nature as result of the war.

The approach of nature as a victim, refreshes the traditional position of what is conceived as transitional justice. Reparation efforts are directed to restore nature and recognize it as a victim, in similar ways as reparation is deliver to human victims. Most importantly, where compensation is relegated to a small part of the reparation, and instead, rehabilitation and the guarantee of no repetition within material and symbolic reparation, come to play an outstanding role in justice pursue for peace building. (cont'd to page 7)

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Even though, Colombia's case is complex and rumbles in dichotomy, the country is doing an effort to move in the right direction. In one hand there is the fact that some areas of the Amazonia were kept mostly pristine, such is the case of Chiribiquete. Due to the phenomenon of imposed conservation, as FARC forced restrictions of land use and transit, moreover the general desolation that war leaves behind. On the other hand, mass destruction related to indiscriminate attacks, such as oil pipelines, bombings, illegal mining and illegal coca monocrops.

Beyond these issues, Colombia peace agreement in the chapter for a "Rural Integral Reform", advances in the inclusion of nature as an important pillar for peace. This chapter opens a variety of possibilities where nature is part of the reparation process and to some extent recognized as a victim itself.

The Integral Rural Reform is an important first step for sustainable development after conflict, where humans and nature coexist in harmony. Among the highlights reside the opportunity of former guerilla rebels are able to participate in different activities that include nature-based solutions, illegal economy reconversion based on new productive projects which includes changing coca crops for ecofriendly bioproduction of a range variety of products, like cacao beans, pineapple, organic fertilizers, among other; to help transition the ex-combatants to civil life. In the same lines, other programs of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) can be found, these directly linked to reforestation and restoration efforts, where victims of the conflict and perpetrator work together for the conservation of nature. Moreover, it also brings the chance of ex-combatants to be formed as new park rangers committed to safeguard protected areas.

Notwithstanding Colombia's Peace Agreement is in its first stages of implementation with a long road ahead, is no doubts that including nature as priority is a promise for a better future; and this approach has been proved to be successful in other latitudes, so it's the case of Mozambique, where ex-rebels have followed a path as conservationist and park rangers, a practice also replicated in the Philippines .

These initiatives are sign that the recognition of environmental damages caused by war where nature is another victim in need of reparation. Reparation is key to ensure peace within people and the land; which ultimately, promote the evolution of transitional justice, redressing the systematic violation of nature rights as human rights. ■



Source: IFAD