Tax justice regional workshop of CSOs and Members of Parliament convened

The Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD) together with the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) and Earth Rights International held a **Regional Workshop On Tax Justice, Business And Investment And Human Rights** in Jakarta, Indonesia from 5-7 October 2015.

The workshop brought together thirteen members of parliament and their technical staff from six ASEAN country members -- Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Singapore; and almost 50 CSOs working on various public finance and development issues, including tax.

During the workshop, the role of parliamentarians working in collaboration with civil society was highlighted in creating and improving tax legislation in developing countries and instituting effective enforcement mechanisms.

This was found important.

APMDD adds its voice to “Many Voices, One Purpose” at the 6th Financial Transparency Coalition Conference

APMDD was invited to the **6th Financial Transparency Conference** in Jakarta, Indonesia on 20-21 October, organized by Financial Transparency Coalition, Perkumpulan Prakarsa and Transparency International Indonesia. Mae spoke at the opening panel “What You Need to Know About Illicit Financial Flows, the Scale of the Problem and What Can Be Done”. The panel aimed to set the tone and context for the conference through the presentation of global and regional overviews, help frame illicit financial flows in the Asia-Pacific region. She contributed to applying the global issues to more localized levels, bringing an Asia-Pacific context to the conversation by sharing her experiences within a regional network.

The panellists included Alex Cobham (Tax Justice Network); Sugeng Bahagijo.
Global Week of Action for #TaxJustice

The Global Alliance for Tax Justice (GATJ) of which APMDD is part of, held the Global Week of Action for Tax Justice during the first week of November. It was also occasion to commemorate the first anniversary of LuxLeaks (Luxemburg Leaks) which exposed the tax avoidance practices of global companies were exposed. APMDD members and leaders share their thoughts below:

Stop corporate abuse of our economies and environment!
End corporate tax secrecy now!
Make multinationals pay their share of taxes!
Increase public spending for essential services!
No to collusion between governments and corporations!
Stop tax holidays and public subsidies to corporations!
Increase public spending for essential services!

"While least developed countries (LDCs) confront ever more challenges to their economy post-2015, nations scramble to offer all sorts of tax incentives for multinational corporations (MNCs). Reducing corporate tax will only create more poverty and ensure that LDC countries get stuck in that category."
- Reuvel Karim Chowdhury

"Tax evasion by Multi-National Corporations is rampant in South Asia. A fair and just tax system needs to be in place and spending for quality public services needs to be increased and prioritized to address poverty and inequality in the region."
- Sujita Shukla

Secretary, All Indian Women’s Association (AIWA)
Member, Asia People’s Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD) and the Coordinating Committee of the Asian Fiscal and Tax Justice Alliance (AFTA)

"USS 35 billion flows out of India illegally every year while at least 250 million Indians fall below the poverty line. The government has to stop this illicit financial practice and such schemes that favor the global companies and some of India’s rich and further oppress the poor."
- Rahul Ahir
Member, Indian Social Action Forum (ISAF), the Asia People’s Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD) and the Coordinating Committee of the Asian Fiscal and Tax Justice Alliance (AFTA)
APMDD in Oxfam Novib Learning Event — Helping shape tax justice programs in the Mekong

APMDD through Mae Buena-ventura was enjoined to input into four-country learning and programme development workshop on the Mekong region in Laos. We conceptualized and led the four-hour session on gender-sensitive budget work before local Oxfam staff and partners. The activity was part of a larger learning and programme development workshop with a focus on civil society space and fiscal accountability and this can be made more gender sensitive in practice.

We were able to highlight the tax justice work being done by APMDD, and more importantly connect with country teams and their partners who are about to develop programs in the region on this topic. Since the workshop is a springboard for country level development of programs, there are possibly future national and cross-country opportunities for collaboration.

We specifically convened a session under the theme “Tax and Budget Experience Sharing Clinics – new experiences, new insights, opportunities to share challenges and get support”. The main parts were levelling off on concepts (gender/equality and equity, tax/fiscal justice); input on regional and country tax issues from a tax justice perspective; analysis of tax justice issues using concrete cases.


“Illicit financial flows is a fairly new term here in Indonesia, but the problems created by the unchecked flow of money have been plaguing our country for years. We’ve seen corruption, we’ve seen stolen funds, and we’ve see how corporations avoid taxes, but this conference has allowed us to share similar experiences with allies from around the world, letting us come up with a plan of action for the future.”

Setyo Budiantoro, PRAKARSA

“I’m inspired by what has transpired the past few days, but we must continue to push for further equity in the decision making process. It’s quite stark that we had more than 25 countries represented here in Jakarta, but more than half of these countries have no voice and no vote in tax standards being set by the Paris-led OECD, despite being some of the most affected by tax dodging and illicit flows.”

Alvin Mosioma, Financial Transparency Coalition

Source: https://financialtransparency.org/closing-statement-on-6th-financial-transparency-conference/

“...[Illicit financial flows from the LDCs have increased from US$9.7 billion in 1990 to US$26.3 billion in 2008 implying an inflation-adjusted rate of increase of 6.2 percent per annum. Conservative (lower-bound) estimates indicate that illicit flows have increased from US$7.9 billion in 1990 to US$20.2 billion in 2008. The top ten exporters of illicit capital account for 63 percent of total outflows from the LDCs while the top 20 account for nearly 83 percent. Trade mispricing accounts for the bulk (65-70 percent) of illicit outflows from the LDCs, and the propensity for mispricing has increased along with increasing external trade. Empirical research on illicit flows indicates that there are three types of factors driving illicit flows — macroeconomic, structural, and governance-related.”

APMDD adds its voice to “Many Voices, One Purpose”... Con’t’d from page 1

(International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development or INFID); and Joe Stead (Christian Aid).

The conference as a whole discussed a wide array of issues in illicit financial flows, including the Financing for Development and Post-2015 processes, raising revenue in an age of tax incentives, whistle-blowers and the state of press freedom after Lux Leaks and Swiss Leaks, open data and making financial information public, and what we know about gender and illicit flows.

Prior to the conference, a CSO meeting was held to present the IFF country research content and methodologies. The Philippine case including research challenges was presented together with panelists from Afghanistan, China and Indonesia.
“The role of parliamentarians working in collaboration with civil society in creating and improving tax legislation in developing countries and instituting effective enforcement mechanisms is crucial. Experiences in tax and budget advocacy in other countries have shown that policymakers’ support and political will, and collaborative efforts with an active, informed civil society involvement, especially gender equality and women’s rights advocates, are critical ingredients for success.”

From the Keynote Address of Hon. Charles Sanago
Member of Parliament
Malaysia
Chair, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) & APMDD Regional Committee member

(Tax Justice Regional Workshop...Cont’d from page 1)

particularly in the light of investing in post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

The objectives of the seminar were as follows:

• Share and exchange knowledge and experiences between parliamentarians and civil society on fiscal justice issues

• Enable and strengthen dialogue between parliamentarians and civil society on shaping fiscal policy based on human rights and social justice.

• Surface and address the gender dimensions of fiscal justice.

• Provide a space for strategizing around concrete issues and actions within and across countries.

Both MPs and CSOs committed to working on the following joint initiatives in the ASEAN region:

• Conduct a CSO-Parliamentarians Review of Double Taxation Agreements of selected ASEAN countries with the purpose of learning from various experiences; identify issues and problems, exploring possibilities and plans for national parliamentary reviews of DTAs.

• Undertake comparative study of FTAs and ASEAN BITS entered into by ASEAN with the purpose of looking at implications for domestic revenue mobilization.

• Conduct a seminar CSO-Parliamentarians Seminar on Gender and Tax Justice aimed at developing legislative agendas for gender responsive tax and fiscal policies.

• Conduct a CSO-Parliamentarians Seminar on “Race to the Bottom” phenomena and the Effectiveness of Tax Incentives for Corporations.

• Hold Tax Justice Forums as a side event to the ASEAN Summit towards developing an ASEAN Tax Agenda.

Panel on Gender and Tax: Eva Kusuma Sunardi, Indonesian Member of Parliament; Lidy Nacpil, APMDD Coordinator; and Titi Soentoro, Executive Director of AKSI!