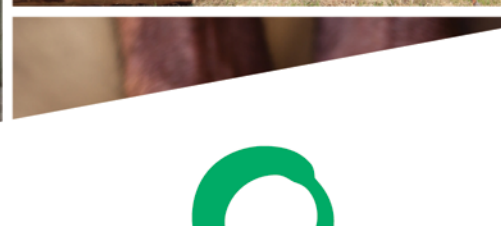


# TRANSFORMING ASIA

## SCALING UP THE SOLUTIONS



**Friends of the Earth**  
Asia Pacific





# TRANSFORMING ASIA

## SCALING UP THE SOLUTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Friends of the Earth groups are building a more just and sustainable Asia. This report highlights some of the innovative and transformational solutions underway; from community forest management in Indonesia to building solar cooperatives in South Korea, and winning the legal right to food in Nepal.

Home to 4 billion people and 55 percent of the world's population, the Asia Pacific region is unique in its vast cultural, economic and ecological diversity. Some of the world's most powerful economies and poorest countries are in the region, as are stunning tropical rainforests and endangered species.

Today, Asia face faces two destructive and entwined crises – growing inequality and climate change. The Asian Development Bank calculates that 1.75 billion Asians live in extreme poverty and lack the basic necessities of a dignified life. This is based on the average of national poverty lines for less developed economies in the region, effects of vulnerability to risks and food insecurity.<sup>1</sup>

Climate change is already happening – wreaking devastation on communities and ecosystems throughout the region. Without urgent action to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions there will be greater hunger, drought, floods, and weather extremes, as well as mass extinctions and the forced migration of millions of people.

The sustainable future of our planet will depend on whether Asia can rise to these challenges, and transform its economic and political system. Business as usual will no longer suffice.

Thousands of practical solutions for a more just and sustainable Asia are being implemented everyday across the region. Solutions that put people and the planet at the centre of economic systems and expand the role of cooperation, community management, workers' control, public services and sustainable planning in all aspects of life.

Friends of the Earth (FoE) Asia Pacific hopes to inspire action. The ground-breaking projects in this report are improving the lives of millions of people; from revolving community funds in Sri Lanka, to land rights in PNG and building a cooperative movement in Australia. Some of these solutions are small and local, others large and national. They are models and projects that can be replicated and expanded throughout the region.

Friends of the Earth Asia Pacific calls for the 'scaling up' of these solutions to transform Asia. To do this we need an enabling policy environment. Governments in the region must support, develop and adopt measures and programs to rapidly increase the impact of these peoples' solutions.



As the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other Asian leaders meet in 2016, Friends of the Earth Asia Pacific calls on the states and regional institutions to:

- 1 Ensure universal access and sustainable delivery of essential public services in health, education, transport, water, housing, and energy to the people of the region.
- 2 Support the Social and Solidarity Economy, by creating new national ministries and or an intergovernmental body, and developing targeted financial assistance programs.
- 3 Ensure the Right to Adequate Food for every citizen within national and regional legislative frameworks and guarantee that these rights are upheld through government intervention. This includes ensuring that every citizen has the right to food sovereignty as provided by law.
- 4 Ensure corporations are held accountable for human rights abuses and environmental destruction, by supporting the proposed UN Treaty on binding rules for multinational businesses and other national legally binding measures.
- 5 End fossil fuel subsidies and redirect funding to community and socially controlled renewable energy.
- 6 Support the development of Community Forest Management in ways that promote community autonomy, secure and clarify land tenure, protect communities' rights and their access to land and resources, and respect and recover traditional knowledge.
- 7 End trade deals that undermine attempts to build just, sustainable and local economies, particularly by removing the harmful Investor State Dispute Settlement system.
- 8 Develop national community-based tourism strategies that prioritize sustainability and community control of tourism in a proactive way, in full partnership, cooperation and consultation with vulnerable people.
- 9 Respect and recognise the rights of customary and community land owners, including communities' right to free, prior and informed consent regarding any developments that affect their lands, lives or livelihoods.
- 10 Develop regional and national plans for an energy transformation, which prioritizes access to energy for all, community or social control, 100% renewable energy and no new dirty energy projects.



# INDONESIA

## COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW

For over five years Friends of the Earth Indonesia/WALHI has been developing a community-led model to protect the country's forests. It is based on recognising the Land Rights of subsistence farmers, collective management of non-timber forest products and traditional knowledge.

Indonesia has one of the highest deforestation rates in the world. 15.8 million hectares of forest were lost between 2000 and 2012.<sup>2</sup> Deforestation is primarily caused by big businesses, that clear land for palm oil and other plantations, log for timber unsustainably and carry out major mining projects. This destroys the livelihoods of subsistence farmers who are forcibly removed from their lands.

FoE Indonesia is currently working with farmers and peasant unions in 13 regions across the country to defend lands rights and promote community control of natural resources. In the Province of Riau, smallholder Sagu farmers are fighting to protect their lands and forests from industrial plantations. FoE Indonesia supports their struggle by providing free legal services, training on community organising and connects local producers directly to consumers. By developing land rights together with sustainable forest management FoE Indonesia aims to secure people's livelihoods and the environment at the same time.

Their approach is working. Not only have individual communities won land rights in the courts but families have benefited from improved sales of vegetables. This model is already being massively scaled up due to its success. The government has promised 12.7 million hectares of forest area for Community based Forestry by 2019.<sup>3</sup> This will secure the livelihoods of more than 10 million people and protect forest from destructive industrial practices.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION

FoE Indonesia recommends transparent and rigorous oversight of the implementation of Community Based Forestry programs to ensure good outcomes for people and the environment. FoE Indonesia recommends that 40 million hectares of forest should be allocated for Community Based Forest management by 2019.

**12.7  
MILLION  
HECTARES  
FOR  
COMMUNITY  
FOREST  
MANAGEMENT  
BY 2019**



**FOE INDONESIA AIMS TO SECURE  
PEOPLE'S LIVELIHOODS AND THE  
ENVIRONMENT AT THE SAME TIME.**



*Community Forest Management, Indonesia*

# AUSTRALIA

## THE COOPERATIVE WAY FORWARD

Established in 1975, Friends of the Earth Melbourne's Food Co-operative addresses sustainability at a fundamental level – fulfilling our basic needs in a way that's healthy, fair and affordable for people and the environment. As one of the first food co-operatives in Australia, it is a pioneer of the 'Social and Solidarity economy' and has served as a model for others to replicate. By empowering workers to control their workplaces, cooperatives provide a democratic alternative to the corporate business model that often exploits people for profit.

The FoE Food Co-op is an ethical trader that serves over 10,000 delicious meals per year and provides fruit, vegetables, grains and eco-cleaning products. The emphasis is on providing natural, organic and packaging-free produce that is grown and produced as locally as possible – preferably by small companies and producers. It is also a community hub that has been bringing people together to collaborate and campaign on environmental and social justice issues for over 40 years. In 2014, the Food Co-op received the City of Yarra Sustainable Business award.

Rather than profits for shareholders, the solidarity economy seeks to create positive social and environmental benefits from their activities. The income generated by the Co-op supports Friends of the Earth's environmental campaigns and a

hospitality training program for the disadvantaged. Because cooperatives are owned by those who use their services, their decisions must take into account the wider interests of the community. 'Reduce, reuse and recycle' is the foundation of FoE Australia's work.

In 2012 the non-for-profit sector contributed AUS\$55 billion (US\$ 40 billion) to the Australian economy and the number of cooperatives and non-for-profit businesses continues to grow.<sup>4</sup> Yet for the Social and Solidarity economy to have a truly transformational impact we need effective public policy to foster, strengthen and support the scaling up of cooperatives across the country. In order to scale up the social sector of the economy FoE Australia calls for a new collaborative partnership with government.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION

FoE Australia calls on national and state governments to establish a new Ministry for Social and Solidarity Economy and or an intergovernmental body. FoE Australia calls on all levels of government to establish and increase specific targeted programs that support the Social and Solidarity economy. These should include providing proper access to financing, comprehensive granting, free training opportunities and preferential treatment or the inclusion of social outcomes in contracts for public procurement.



**1 BILLION PEOPLE  
ARE MEMBERS OF  
COOPERATIVES**

**COOPERATIVES PROVIDE A  
DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE  
CORPORATE BUSINESS MODEL.**



*Organic vegetables at FoE's Food Cooperative, Australia*

## SRI LANKA

# REVOLVING FUNDS

## BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

### AN ALTERNATIVE FINANCIAL MODEL THAT MAKES PEOPLE'S LIVES BETTER WHILE SUPPORTING THE ENVIRONMENT.

Life for local communities in Nilgala is highly dependent on nature. Rain is their god. They live with wild animals and elephants. Road access is not good. There are no bridges across the streams. But their simple life is moving. Without the sympathy of the deities and spirits living in the Nilgala forest, their life is not easy. Without rain they face extreme poverty.

Nilgala Forest and the adjoining Gal Oya National Park are protected forests. But Aralu, Bulu, Nelli, the medicinal plants abundant in these medicinal forests are a source of income during the season. At other times they grow paddy, maize, banana and other crops. This seasonal income is not adequate for over 500 families who live in just 10 villages located adjoining the Nilgala Forest. They have restricted access to the forest because it is protected.

Conservation and community forest governance is a must. Local communities want to manage the forest as a source of livelihood. Their beliefs enshrine a need to protect the forest, for that is where the souls of their ancestors go in the afterlife.

Yet income in the Nilgala communities is uncertain. Half of the year they have to borrow money for health emergencies, cultivation and house construction from moneylenders at high interest rates. Even the microcredit programmes have prohibitively high interest rates.

Thus the concept of a revolving fund was born to assist communities in troubled times and with the aim of mobilizing the Nilgala communities for better forest governance. CEJ/FoE Sri Lanka created this revolving fund with the financial support of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Sri Lanka. Nilgala Protection committees were created in



*Women's revolving fund meeting, Sri Lanka*

10 villages in the area with more than 500 beneficiary families who received 800,000 Sri Lankan Rupees (US\$5,500).

Now local people can borrow at a 1% interest rate. The total fund remains in the village under collective control. The money helps the communities to improve local income assisting in hard times and has improved forest management. The total fund has now grown to almost double the original. Villagers are now less dependent on the money markets, especially the black market moneylenders.

Economic transformation of the less privileged communities and alternative financial models like the revolving funds make people's lives better while supporting the environment. This revolving fund is an alternative model which can be replicated in other communities who are willing to transform their lives and be less dependent on the corporate economy.





## TIMOR LESTE

# COMMUNITY BASED ECO-CULTURAL TOURISM

FoE Timor Leste/Haburas in partnership with the community in Tutuala, at the eastern end of the island, work on new models of community based tourism that benefit people and the planet. In 2014, international tourism generated US\$1,245 billion<sup>5</sup>, yet often the financial benefits are not shared by local communities. Tourism also increases pressure for destructive development. FoE Timor Leste clearly demonstrated that ethical, equitable and ecologically sustainable tourism is possible for local communities and the nation as a whole.

The fundamental aims of the community tourism project is to ensure that remote rural communities have access to an economic development activity that utilises their own strength, distributes the benefits fairly, helps develop new skills and gain knowledge in ways that are empowering to the people as well as to strengthen the preservation of their cultural heritage and natural environment. Ecologically Timor Leste is a Wallacea Biodiversity hotspot where visitors can enjoy the sun from the white fine sandy beach overlooking crystal clear sea, swim and snorkel in the warm tropical water, rich in healthy coral reefs. Oil and gas are the country's main sources of revenue, but they have a short lifespan and yet the Government has largely failed to invest and diversify its economic activities. Poverty remains an ongoing problem.

FoE Timor Leste worked with the community over the long term to establish the project. They set up several simple eco-lodges based on traditional architecture using bush building materials and constructed the facilities in accordance with their own timeline and standard. The road to Valu Sere was in disrepair and the community mobilised to repair it.

Today, despite several challenges and lack of experience, the community tourism venture has thrived. The community group has accumulated a good reserve of funds. Income from the eco-lodge has helped improve the standard of living in Tutuala and pay for children's education. The tourism group

has learned to work together and resolve conflicts effectively. They have hosted over 4,000 tourists from over 140 countries.

Learning from the first eco tourism project, FoE Timor Leste has replicated the model, assisting another community group in the highlands of Maubisse and at the coastal Laloran to set up their own tourism operation. The two newer groups are still getting training and support, but they are functional, proving that communities can make decisions for themselves and be part of the national development agenda.

It has helped generate regular income. Community members, some of whom have missed out on schooling have also acquired a wide range of skills – from budgeting and financial management, catering, hospitality, tour guiding, languages, environmental management to conflict management - all of which are crucial for Timor's development. FoE Timor Leste is now sometimes consulted by the Government and international development agencies on tourism matters. Community-based tourism is now recognized and promoted as an important sector to be supported for Timor Leste.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATION

FoE Timor Leste calls on the government to make community-based eco-tourism a priority non-fossil fuel sector in the national strategic development plan to be supported and developed for Timor Leste.

**DEMONSTRATING THAT ETHICAL, EQUITABLE AND ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IS POSSIBLE.**



*Community eco-tourism lodges Maubisse highland, Timor-Leste*

## NEPAL

# RIGHT TO FOOD

Food is essential for human life. Governments have an obligation to ensure the fundamental rights of their people. Since 2007 FoE Nepal/Pro Public has fought and won a number of landmark legal cases on the Right to Food. This has led the courts to mandate the Nepalese government to provide food to the country's poorest.

In Nepal, approximately 5 million people are undernourished. The World Food Program stated that 32 of Nepal's districts face food deficits, among which 16 face acute scarcity.<sup>6</sup>

In 2007 FoE Nepal launched a legal case to hold the government accountable for hunger. This was the beginning of a long legal fight to uphold the Right to Food that included years of research, legal expertise and working with affected peoples. In 2011 the Supreme Court of Nepal upheld earlier interim orders and confirmed a universal legal right to adequate food, further reinforcing this directive and with some vital new specifications made.<sup>7</sup>

Following the Supreme Court's order, the Home Ministry instructed the Nepal Food Corporation to supply food to districts affected by food scarcity, this included increasing the budget spent on food distribution, reducing rice prices, introducing a quota system and including other government departments in food delivery and planning.

While hunger has not yet been eradicated, another important step was taken in 2015; Nepal's new constitution included explicit recognition of the Right to Food. This shows that effective legal and political action can scale up solutions. The new constitution will be instrumental in addressing food insecurity in the mid-hill and mountain areas of Nepal.

The Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) representative in Nepal Somsak Pipoppinyo said "Enshrining the right to food in the new constitution of Nepal is a moment of paradigm importance".

Right to Food and Food Sovereignty movements continue to grow around the world, and FoE Nepal is proud to be an active part of ending hunger. Major legislative reform and upholding human rights is an important pathway to transforming Asia.

**NEPAL'S NEW CONSTITUTION INCLUDED EXPLICIT RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHT TO FOOD. THIS SHOWS THAT EFFECTIVE LEGAL AND POLITICAL ACTION CAN SCALE UP SOLUTIONS.**



### **POLICY RECOMMENDATION**

FoE Nepal calls on governments across the region to include the Right to adequate Food for every citizen within their legislative framework and ensure that these rights are upheld through government intervention. This includes ensuring that every citizen has the right to food sovereignty as provided by law.

*For more details on the legal case and strategy please contact Senior Advocate Prakash Mani Sharma of Pro Public, at [propublic@gmail.com](mailto:propublic@gmail.com)*



## SOUTH KOREA

# POWERING OURSELVES WITH COMMUNITY SOLAR

Friends of the Earth South Korea/KFEM is building a citizen-owned solar movement. It has supported the establishment of a 'Solar Cooperative' on the roof of Samgaksan high school and a further 50 kW on the roof of Hanshin University. 180 million Korean Won (180,000 USD dollars) was raised by the community. The clean electricity generated is used to power these new 'Solar schools'. The cooperative educates members, students and visitors about solar energy and plans to expand to generate 500kW by 2017.

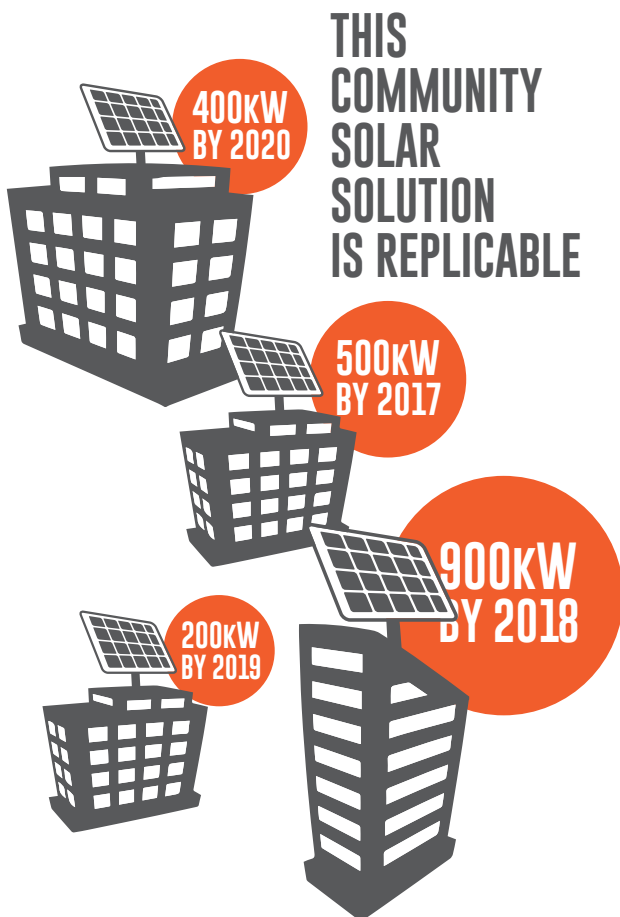
In light of the Fukushima disaster in Japan and a series of nuclear energy crises in Korea, many communities realized that they should not just leave their future to the government or power companies.

Citizen-owned solar power is spreading now in Korea and 'Community Solar Cooperative' just began to generate solar electricity in the capital city, Seoul.

Jeong-eun Son is in 3rd grade at Samgaksan high school in Seoul. She became a member of the Community Solar Cooperative last year when she heard citizen-owned solar power was to be installed at her school.

"I have learnt the importance of the environment, and saw this as an opportunity to take action" she said. "If solar power increases more and more, we can rely less on nuclear power plants. It's wonderful to generate and consume electricity from the school's own solar power."

Cooperatively owned solar power is an exciting exchange between school and community. Solar cooperatives have influenced policy on solar energy, so that local government can support small solar power initiatives more effectively.



COOPERATIVELY OWNED SOLAR POWER IS AN EXCITING EXCHANGE BETWEEN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY.

# PAPUA NEW GUINEA

## LEGAL ACTION FOR LAND RIGHTS

Friends of the Earth Papua New Guinea/CELCOR works to strengthen and defend customary land rights by challenging land grabbing directly in the courts, providing legal training to impacted communities and campaigning for law reform. In Papua New Guinea (PNG) 97% of the total land area of the country is under customary ownership, therefore by strengthening the legal framework on land rights we aim to transform the country to be more just and sustainable.<sup>8</sup>

FoE PNG focus their program on legal education and informing people of their customary rights and laws governing natural resources. Communities are often taken advantage of by multinational corporations because they are not made aware of their rights. FoE PNG's basic legal trainings have given thousands of people a better understanding of their rights, enabling them to make well informed decisions with regard to their land.



Illegal land grabbing is a massive problem in PNG and has a big impact on rural subsistence farmers. Once a company holds a lease title over the customary owned land, communities are displaced; and as a consequence, the forest dependent subsistence farmers, mothers and children are greatly affected as their movement is restricted. They lose access to gardening grounds, fishing, hunting and sacred sites.

FoE PNG uses the courts to directly challenge illegal land grabs and in doing so aims to set a precedent to stop future human rights abuses. In 2014, the local communities of Collingwood Bay, Oro Province won a court case supported by FoE PNG against a Malaysian Oil Palm giant KL, with the land given back to the customary landowners.

It has been estimated that a total of 5.2 million ha of customary land throughout the country have been alienated from customary landowners. This is acquired for Special Agriculture and Business Lease (SABL) under the lease-lease back scheme captured in the Land Act 1996. In 2011 a Commission of Inquiry (COI) was set up to investigate SABLs that had been issued. The inquiry is complete; however the recommendations are yet to be implemented. FoE PNG in collaboration with other NGOs is campaigning for the government to take appropriate action and reform the law to support landholders. FoE PNG is making its voice heard through the media, reports, public forums, advertising and court injunctions.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION

FoE PNG calls on the National Government to fully recognise and respect the rights of customary landholders, and implement the recommendations as per the COI. We call on the Lands Department to cancel all SABLs fraudulently acquired and that customary land be returned to the landowners. FoE PNG call for the revoking of Sections 11 and 102 of the Lands Act 1996.

**FOE PNG USES THE COURTS TO DIRECTLY CHALLENGE ILLEGAL LAND GRABS AND IN DOING SO AIMS TO SET A PRECEDENT TO STOP FUTURE HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES.**



*Community legal training, PNG*



## MALAYSIA AGROECOLOGY

In Malaysia the 'Green Revolution' introduced agriculture based on intensive cropping and chemicals. This has had detrimental health and environmental impacts such as degraded soil and water quality, increased risk of crop pests and diseases, chemical residues on food produce, and health risks to farm workers, their families, consumers and livestock. FoE Malaysia/SAM works to support farmers to use low-cost, chemical-free sustainable farming methods. This includes projects on composting, vegetable and herb gardening, nurseries to reintroduce native tree species and seed banks. Communities are growing native tree species along customary territories which has also helped to mark boundaries of villages.

One project worked with 3 villages in the Baram District of Sarawak to support them to grow gaharu saplings (a type of resin wood) for communal forest reserves and as cash crops. New saplings will also then be shared with surrounding villages. Their work has a particular focus on women through their home gardens project which supports women who have vegetable plots near paddy fields, plantations, commercial vegetable gardens and in the urban areas. It also supports women's traditional knowledge by working with communities to label medicinal plants and record their uses and benefits.

As a result there is increasing interest among indigenous communities to learn about natural farming methods to use these techniques in their farming of food products.

Degraded forests have been rehabilitated which has prompted the return of wildlife. Encroachers and trespassers have stayed away from customary territories with boundaries that are well marked with native species. At least 4 villages have nurseries of medicinal plants accessible to them near their longhouses and many are learning the uses and benefits of these medicinal plants in their daily lives from community elders.



**DEGRADED FORESTS HAVE BEEN REHABILITATED WHICH HAS PROMPTED THE RETURN OF WILDLIFE.**



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## PHOTOS

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