

## **RETHINKING VALUE CHAINS NETWORK - STUDENT COLLABORATION PROJECT 2018/2019**

RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS ON THE NEED FOR BINDING CORPORATE REGULATION – CASE STUDIES FROM THE AGRICULTURAL, TEXTILES, ELECTRONICS AND MINERALS SECTORS.

### **Aim and background:**

To gather wider public<sup>1</sup> support and active engagement on an international level for the various binding corporate regulatory initiatives aimed at protecting human rights and the environment along value chains, such as the UN Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights, the ILO Global Value Chains convention and other national initiatives along the lines of the French law on Duty of Care and the UK Modern Slavery Act.

In preparation for a public awareness raising campaign<sup>2</sup> a need has been highlighted to document examples from various industry sectors / value chains **on the nature of human rights and environmental abuses and why binding regulation is needed**. Banana Link have specific expertise, resources and case studies from the international tropical fruit sector and other partners from the re-thinking value chains network have equivalent expertise from other sectors such as textiles (Clean Clothes Campaigns, Women Working Worldwide and Montpellier University), electronics and mining industries (ISF Systext, Good Electronics, Amis de la Terre, Global Witness), coffee and chocolate (LeBASIC, Commerce Equitable France) among others.

We would like student support to gather, document and analyse this expertise from our partner organisations working in each sector to help develop four sectoral case studies, as well as contribute towards a transversal analysis, drawing global conclusions across sectors on how value chains function and are used by corporations to evade their legal responsibilities, with recommendations on how these problems could be addressed through regulatory and other (in particular worker-driven) initiatives.

The information for these case studies (including partner websites, reports, interviews and testimonies, films and other resources) would be gathered in close collaboration with the partner organisations working in each sector, with facilitation by Banana Link and Action Aid France Peuples Solidaires<sup>3</sup>. We would also support any translation, communication, design and additional research as required to complete the development of each study (to be available in both English and French).

The research outputs, including info-graphics, would be made available via an online platform, with links to relevant external resources, reports and audio-visual materials for further information. We (the network) aim to develop an « interactive map » to easily communicate relevant information on a global value chain / multi-sector level to a public audience. We also aim to produce a 'tool kit for change', including information on key leverage points for lobbying and advocacy for use during the public campaign in late 2019 and beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> In particular citizens, consumers, students and trade union members in Europe via the networks of our various partner organisations, with the possibility to extend to other countries where we have partners including Canada and the USA, Latin America and Australia.

<sup>2</sup> To be launched in late 2019, potentially in collaboration with the [Seattle to Brussels Network](#), and other Rethinking Value Chain network partners

<sup>3</sup> In addition to those partners mentioned above, we would suggest contacts at Sherpa, Share Action, the Ethical Trading Initiative, Business and Human Rights Resources Centre, Re-Act, the CGT and the ITUC.

## **A. Draft content for each case study**

(this structure will be further developed in collaboration with students and our network partners)

1. a brief introduction to the key problems and challenges in each sector in terms of human rights and environmental impacts (also linked to community land and water rights) and the underlying causes.

- gender perspective is key
- Where available, we should include information on links between pricing and working conditions.
- It is useful to highlight any 'emerging trends' in the industry that are having an impact, e.g. technological developments (reducing labour needs), precarious work, supplier contracts, price issues (higher costs of production vs lower market price), climate change etc
- Any information available on the challenges faced in the transport and logistics part of the chain would also be very useful.
- This is an opportunity to draw out some key underlying causes / issues faced by all sectors and industries. The aim would be to help us (the network partners) to develop a common agenda on issues that could be addressed at a global / multi-sector level to improve the respect of human and worker rights.

2. an overview and analysis to the barriers to human rights protection including: access to justice, lack of accountability / transparency, questions of jurisdiction and lack of enforcement mechanisms

- We should also consider here the barriers to worker agency / organisation and the importance of local worker-driven initiatives to implement regulations and rights
- The analysis in this section could make some initial conclusions on where the loop holes are and what is therefore needed in terms of binding regulation to overcome these barriers and improve legislation towards the respect of human right (again, any information and analysis related to the transport and logistics part of the chain would be useful, if available)
- This is an area where it is particularly useful for us to have the input and analysis from SciencesPo students, as NGO and trade union representatives often lack the expertise for this legal and human rights focused analysis.

3. information on the key corporate stakeholders and the (unequal) distribution of power and value along the chain, for example inclusion of a «banana split» infographic for each sector where this information already exists. - Who holds the power? who makes the decisions? Where are the profits going? how is this inequality maintained? How can we tip the balance towards greater equality along value chains?

- Identify key levers in company decision making and access to capital (e.g., investors – Share Action)
- Find strategic points to address issues of equality and power - follow the whole chain and assess endemic challenges and systemic solutions
- Important not to focus analysis only on small producer's vs big multi nationals – need to try to address the complexities in between (and the role of local governments)

4. identification of the strategies used, and advances made, towards improvements in the respect of human rights and environmental standards in each sector - draw out some key lessons on strategy used by our various organisations.

- Worker agency and the importance of local worker-driven initiatives to implement regulations and rights is an important aspect for the network partners - With each case, we could identify how workers are involved and who is organising them. Champion worker driven initiatives and identify real life examples of different approaches to organising workers in challenging environments. For example those shared by Karin Siegman : Coalition of Immokalee workers and Italian citrus workers – the SOS Rosarno initiative.
- Identify / include issues that represent the unequal power within value chains and can be used as political pressure points, for example sexual harassment and gender-based violence, worker slavery etc = include in case studies as key issues and leverage points for the network that will enable us to speak to the public, governments etc
- Analyse strategies on how to communicate around labour issues to empower workers (rather than just denouncing MNC's) – it could be interesting here to include some company interviews on what strategies / campaigns led them to make real change in their practices
- Expose what doesn't work – e.g., social audits - See CCC 'beyond auditing' campaign

5. Conclusions on the current and future challenges (linked to any emerging trends) for each sector and any sector-specific recommendations, with a focus on how binding corporate regulation - at national, sector or European level - could play a role in improving the respect of human rights and environmental standards in that specific sector, in combination with other non-regulatory strategies.

## **B. Transversal / cross sectoral conclusions**

In collaboration with network partners, and when the four sectoral case studies have been completed, we will aim to develop a set of global conclusions and trends across sectors on how value chains function and are used by corporations to escape from their legal responsibilities. Recommendations will be developed, with a focus on how binding corporate regulation - at national, sector or European level - could play a role in improving the respect of human rights and environmental standards in that specific sector, in combination with other non-regulatory strategies.

- We will need a sophisticated strategic analysis available for those working already on issues, but also infographics (to be produced by a consultant) to communicate these complex issues to a wider public.
- SciencesPo students could help us to define collectively what we want in terms of binding regulation and support our analysis of the current legal barriers and how we can overcome these / improve legislation towards the respect of human right (as civil society organisations we are generally lacking in this legal expertise)
- Transparency issues are key
- Any transversal analysis in transport and logistics is very useful (if the information gathered allows for this)

- We should include the corporate vision on regulation, e.g., select interviews / testimonies that support the need for binding corporate regulation (opinions could be shared by some ETI members, for example).
- BASIC have done significant research on these issues in various sectors (chocolate, coffee, adidas, grapes, wine, pineapples etc) so could make some important contributions to the research analysis and recommendations phases within this research

**What not to include:** There is no need to replicate the various other research and analysis done on the impact of different forms certification and standards (we know already that voluntary standards are not sufficient in terms of impact, which is why we have come together to mobilise for regulatory and worker driven alternatives.)

### **Similar initiatives with other university students / network members**

A student at the Institute of Social Studies in the Netherlands is currently working on a master student thesis on 'promoting labour rights in Global Supply Chains: How can recent government initiatives in Europe be used to promote effective change for workers?'. The final thesis can be shared for background information in late October 2018.

Montpellier University Management School is also working on a student collaborative project this year on management initiatives that can change practices along the value chain, mapping of decision making / levers for change within the chain, case analysis with activist networks. Potential focus on electronics with SOMO / Good Electronics and Electronics Watch – it could be useful to keep in touch during the research, particularly in the final analysis stage.

Oxford Brookes University will develop a proposal for student collaboration in March 2019 to share with students, work would start the project in September 2019. This could include follow up on SciencesPo / Montpellier findings with company actors (e.g. interviews) with input on the barriers and challenges they face to implementation of human rights along value chains, analysis of importance of regulatory initiatives and other potential solutions etc.