

à propos

The KOFF
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Magazine



Peacebuilding in a Neoliberal World

1

focus

Development and peace work – much more than economics

2

reports

Daring to think of a world “beyond capitalism”

“Neoliberalism” perspective shift: the day-to-day

Interview with Camilo González on “Paro Nacional”

Neoliberalism and fair work

Gold mining in Burkina Faso: Profit before human rights?

After neoliberalism

3

in depth

From Santiago to Paris, people in the streets

4

news

KOFF Podcast Ton-Träger: Women, Peace & Security: Where is the equality?

New Early Warning Tool: Water, Peace and Security

Roundtable: Peace and human rights in Colombia and Honduras: high-risk work!

5

calendar

Events & News

editorial

The motto of neoliberalism is: “if the economy’s doing well, everyone’s doing well.” Accordingly, economic freedom is to take precedence. This is an idea that has been put under a great deal of scrutiny, also in peacebuilding. While some people think that trading leads to mutual interests and therefore has a peacebuilding impact, others stress the divisive effect. Examples include when the interests of large corporations are prioritized over the needs of the people, or when the system only benefits a few people while exploiting the others.

In this issue, the authors discuss, among other things, why it is problematic for a system to be based solely on profit, what fair work means, and why people are taking to the streets to protest against neoliberal politics.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue.

Amélie Lustenberger, Editor of KOFF Magazine

focus

Development and peace work – much more than economics



TADJIKISTAN: SDC Local Governance Project (2017). Picture: SDC

The saying goes that “you can write anything on paper and it won’t blush” but people are not like that. Economics – and the part of development science that subscribes to economic development – claims to be an “exact science”, but neither was it able to predict financial crises and the failure of the market, nor reduce the poverty, personal insecurity, migration, conflicts or fragility caused by this.

The market comes first and humans come second – the economization of development

How are the two related? Peace, the rule of law and inclusion are central parts of Sustainable Development Goal 16 in the 2030 Agenda as is the call to focus first on helping the most disadvantaged. Habermas once postulated the balance of “freedom, equality and brotherhood” as the greatest promise of liberalism. Following on from this, the promise of our era of deregulated neoliberalism is surely to “Leave no one behind” (LNOB). The dogma underpinning the achievement of this goal is that development should above all be economic in nature and this, as well as peace, require financial resources above all else. However, this “economization” of development and peace work has resulted in the actors involved shunning their most important tools – namely their ability to work towards social, cultural and political development – and, in turn, they are losing focus on what matters: people.

Reporting processes and the use of funds are becoming more important than the analysis of and intervention in systems and the need to reflect the complexity of the situation by testing different interventions. Banerjee & Duflo’s theories[1] on “trial and error”, for which the pair were awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics, often fall victim to an understanding of opportunity and risks that has been restricted in order to avoid risks or to the necessity to show “quick development results.”

The results are often an understanding of peace limited to the absence of physical violence, and an understanding of development limited to economic development. As a result, in order to fulfill the objective of the 2030 Agenda and above all goal 16 and the “LNOB” initiative, we firstly need to not simply focus on pure economics and secondly, we need policy coherence which generates resources where they are available.

Freedom, equality and peace – what is the money going towards?

According to Freedom House, “freedom” as a form of expression in democracy has been on the decline for 13 years. 61% of the world’s population, or 4.6 billion people, live in authoritarian and only partly free countries.[2] A similar picture is emerging for “equality”, which is perpetuated through factual inequality. The richest 1% of the world’s population own a good 20% of global wealth[3], while the poorest 50% only own less than 10%. If you equate brotherhood with solidarity, an equally tragic picture is depicted. The official development assistance (ODA) provided by OECD countries amounted to 147.2 billion USD in 2017, which equates to approximately 0.31% of the GDP of donor countries.[4] Of this, approximately 45% (68 billion) went to fragile countries affected by war and conflict.[5]

Profiting from debt – one man’s curse is another man’s blessing

Why are these numbers alarming? Firstly, the money for peace work is lacking. At over 72.2%, ODA is the main resource used to fund peace and development in these countries.[6] Secondly, it is not peace but rather military weapons that are taking priority. While ODA stood at less than 150 billion USD in 2017, 1.8 sextillion USD or 2.1% of global GDP was attributed to military spending in 2018.[7] Thirdly, as a result of deregulation, legal loopholes and a lack of statehood, so-called “legal tax avoidance” is leading to losses of revenue amounting to as much as 7.8 sextillion USD (10.4% of global GDP).[8] Another 3.6 sextillion USD lost through corruption and bribery could also be added to this.[9]

This chronic underfunding of peace and development work is estimated at 2.5-3 quintillion USD per year^[10], a sum which could be raised through rule of law and global tax justice. Yet instead of backing regulations, people continue to hedge their bets on the market. The fact that you can earn money from debt has been proven to us time and time again since the 2008 financial crisis. What were considered bad loans at that time are now micro loans for the poorest. While “micro loans” are already controversial enough, today they are being repackaged as euphemistically named “social impact bonds”^[11] that are being used to promise investors in “the west” profits of up to 20% as well as to provide loan loss guarantees for national development cooperation.

The solutions

We are almost reaching the half-way point in realizing the 2030 Agenda and yet we still have the feeling of either not quite being at the starting line or of failing entirely. At the same time, good approaches towards creating a development policy capable of contributing to peace are known. Firstly, we must take the context as a starting point when considering how to define the added value of Swiss peace and development work. We don't need any ready-made solutions, but rather flexible and people-centric work. Secondly, we must replace the culture of risk avoidance with a culture of learning that recognizes the complexity of the systems and the irrationality of people. In doing so, it will thirdly also be possible to recognize that peace and sustainable development are only feasible if this is part of a goal of global policy coherence.

This article reflects the experiences of Nils Rosemann and does not represent the official position of the SDC. The opinions expressed are exclusively those of the author and reflect neither the official standpoint of the FDFA or the Swiss Federal Administration.

^[1] Banerjee, Abhijit V., Duflo, Esther: Good Economics for Hard Times, 2019

^[2] Freedom House: Democracy in Retreat: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2019/democracy-in-retreat>

^[3] World Inequality Report: <https://wir2018.wid.world/files/download/wir2018-summary-english.pdf>

^[4] OECD Report 2019

^[5] OECD State of Fragility Report 2019

^[6] OECD State of Fragility Report 2019

^[7] International Peace Research Institute SIPRI in Stockholm in November 2018

^[8] TAXATION PAPERS Taxation and Customs Union WORKING PAPER No. 76 – 2019
Estimating International Tax Evasion by Individuals

^[9] United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres:
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/12/1027971>

[10] United Nations: Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda:
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sg-finance-strategy/>

[11] „Finanzflüsse wie ein Wasserfall? Die Finanzialisierung der Entwicklungspolitik“
<https://www.weltwirtschaft-und-entwicklung.org/wearchiv/042ae6a9f609a1c02/042ae6aa4b0d90c01.php>

SDC

Nils Rosemann

nils.rosemann@eda.admin.ch

Deputy Manager of the Quality Assurance and Poverty Reduction Section of the SDC

links

- [Good Economics for hard Times](#)
- [Freedomhouse: Democracy on Retreat](#)
- [World Inequality Report](#)
- [OECD State of Fragility Report 2019](#)
- [International Peace Research Institute SIPRI in Stockholm in November 2018](#)
- [Working Paper: Estimating International Tax Evasion by Individuals](#)
- [United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres](#)
- [United Nations: Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda](#)
- [Financial flows like a waterfall? The financialization of development policy \(in German\)](#)

reports

Daring to think of a world “beyond capitalism”



Feminist Strike Geneva 14 June 2019. Picture: Charlotte Hooij

Mainstream approaches to conflict are underpinned by many assumptions. The assumption that the use of force or the threat is the most appropriate response to conflicts. That men are the “protectors” and women are the “victims”. Assumptions about who has legitimacy and right to negotiate the solutions. Assumptions about who can and should profit from the destruction. Assumptions that exclude vast segments of the society. Likewise, neoliberalism is underpinned by a plethora of assumptions which exclude and dehumanize.

What we have learnt over the course of the long history of Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) by listening to women is that challenging the structures upon which these assumptions lie is what transformative peacebuilding is about. Neoliberal theory and policies fail in so-called peaceful contexts, and we argue that these failures are compounded in conflict and post-conflict contexts when cooperation and inclusion are essential. It is a system of greed where the warlords are the shareholders.

WILPF’s work in conflict and post-conflict contexts demonstrates how the sort of economic policies we choose to roll out in these settings cannot be separated from lived and highly gendered experiences of war, and from the new, and often more complex and overlapping needs that emerge as a result of that conflict. How we manage to integrate the need for social, political and economic transformation of a society coming out of war will make a difference between a sustainable and justice peace – a feminist peace – and a fragile

peace that continuously puts people's lives, and entire societies, in danger.

WILPF's analysis from Bosnia unpacks the perils of peace built on neoliberal assumptions (see WILPF, 2017). The post-conflict reconstruction was underpinned by assumptions that the free market, deregulations and privatizations would lead to growth and prosperity and thus peace. The negotiator of these policies was the corrupt, militarized ethno-national political elite who had everything to gain and nothing to lose. Women and other civilian groups were excluded. Today, economic reform policies, 25 years after the war, continue to be conflict and gender blind. Instead of reducing inequalities, they add to the complexities and drivers of further tension, entrenching structural and gender inequalities and social conflict. That is why "sustainable peace" that prioritizes human rights, in particular economic, social, and cultural rights, is so critical. Not only as early warning for armed violence but to ensure transformation.

Decades of neoliberalism and austerity measures, paralleled with unprecedented accumulation of wealth where the richest 1% own double as much as 6.9 billion people (see Oxfam, 2020) have directly fueled conflicts, put people's ability to live dignified lives into question, and constrained the space needed for that transformative peacebuilding to take place.

Structural inequalities that are at the core of today's system have consequences for the stability and peace itself. They are gender, class and racially biased. But unequal and uneven access and distribution of resources has gone for long enough. People are reacting and acting. This we see around the world, from Chile to Lebanon. People demanding their right to live decent lives. But we also see these demands being met with oppression, increased militarization and crack-down on protestors. This demonstrates to us how the neoliberal system cannot be separated from patriarchy and militarism: "male dominance is tightly intersected with the class inequalities of capitalism and the racist domination of some nations and ethnic groups by others. Together they perpetuate war," summarizes WILPF's Manifesto (see WILPF, 2015).

Neoliberal policies, fathered by the capitalist economic system, fuel inequality. Reduction in public spending, privatization and deregulation of the market are the new normal (see Ortiz and Cummins, 2019) while blind trust is put into corporations and other private actors to pick up the slack left by crumbling state structures. What we have learned from women in conflict is that underpinning the root causes of war is the corrupt and exploitative economic systems. War is fueled in large part by profitability. So are, it seems, the recovery and peacebuilding plans. The political economy of war and peace. Both of which need to be critically analyzed and challenged, and feminist political economy presents itself as a powerful tool which can help us re-imagine the world we live in (see WILPF 2018).

In the wake of feminist critique coming from both peace activists and academics on the gender-blindness of the neoliberal policies, neoliberalism has proven cooptive. Particularly telling example is the neoliberal narrative of women's *economic empowerment* and *leadership*. In a world where 1% has double as much as 6.9 billion people, it does not matter whether women are equally represented among these 1% or not! Adding a few women to the privileged top tier of the society is not what feminist mean when they talk about empowerment and leadership. It is not about moulding women to fit into the current system. It is about transforming that system so that we can build societies of justice,

equality and demilitarized security. We must all dare to think of a world “beyond capitalism”.

WILPF members around the world today call for dismantling the current system of injustice and structural inequality and building a new one. This will require us to find ways to reject and resist existing economic relations and practices; to invent new forms of ownership and control over natural resources; to imagine new forms of redistribution of wealth, and new ways of thinking about growth. It will require us to rethink the relationship between growth and environmental sustainability – with special regard to the rights of nature, peoples’ land rights and food sovereignty. This imagines creative work of solidarity across hemispheres, national borders, cultural groups, localities, classes and genders that is unprecedented. But without it, peace will never be within our reach.

For some examples of writers: Klein, Naomi, 2007. The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism; Klein, Naomi, 2014. This Changes Everything : Capitalism vs. the Climate; Raworth, Kate, 2018. Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist; Fraser, Nancy, 2009. Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of the History; Federici, Silvia, 2012. Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle; and True, Jacqui, 2014. The Political Economy of Violence Against Women.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

Nela Porobić Isaković

nela.porobic@wilpf.org

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

Maria Butler

maria.butler@wilpf.org

links

- [WILPF 2017. A Feminist Perspective on Post-Conflict Restructuring and Recovery – the Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)
- [WILPF 2015 Centennial Manifesto](#)
- [WILPF 2018 Guide on Feminist Political Economy](#)
- [Working Paper: Austerity: the New Normal. A renewed Washington Consensus](#)
- [Oxfam Report 2020](#)

reports

“Neoliberalism” perspective shift: the day-to-day



Shamsia Hassani, Afghan graffiti artist in Bern, Switzerland. Lukas Krienbühl, swisspeace 2013

The discussion surrounding care work shows how politically backed market mechanisms see certain work as worthy of support and profitable, while other work is devalued as a burden, a hindrance to market-based growth strategies, hidden, and driven into exoticism – and it is precisely this care work that is key to survival for populations, especially in conflict situations. This is hardly ever spoken about – at least not when a systematic explanation of the cause would be necessary. The precariousness of day-to-day life is thus hardly ever discussed in decisive peace negotiations.

There are countless stories of strong women at grassroots, survival initiatives in bombed districts, and children who still want to learn to read and write in the most appalling conditions. Pictures of heroes and films of individual moving strokes of fate are beamed around the world, beautiful pictures with an aesthetic touch. However, the narrated reality apparently has little guiding significance for economically driven decisions in times of militarized conflicts. On the contrary, the stories facilitate the externalization of the “little things” from the system of results-oriented decision makers. Their efforts focus on care work, yet this part is and will continue to be invisible.

The invisibility of day-to-day work, which is even more extensive than usual in areas of conflict, is based on ideologically substantiated economic interests in progress and growth. The consequences are serious on many levels as the logic behind it allows for work to be deemed bothersome and superfluous and then excluded from the functioning system. An example of this is the cost shifting from social security to the households of the most vulnerable. People in areas of conflict are left to their own devices and fleeing only leads to their isolation. The gates to the world of winners are closing, all while the munition industry and trade in military equipment are flourishing to an almost unprecedented extent. New technologies that promise a good life for all are unattainable and economists are faithfully singing the praises of growth and responsibility, still in “trickle-down” mode. There is a danger that human and women’s rights being stripped of meaning is becoming irrelevant, as anyone declared superfluous also loses their rights, such as the right to a dignified life.

Stories from the day-to-day lives of women in crisis regions are examples of this devaluation. Care work, along with those who undertake it, including their labor and achievements, loses value. They stay invisible without a voice. After all, once you are excluded from the “profitable” category, all expenses for your work make a loss. From a neoliberal perspective, these do not contribute to progress, but rather slow down the growth markets. In crisis regions, the disparity between the exclusion of those with the least resources and the speed of technological development is particularly apparent. Profit maximization therefore justifies even the most severe poverty.

This supposed contraction is systematic as the neoliberal societal architecture is made up of only what brings profit – the rest is waste which is disposed of as far away and as cheaply as possible, as are all the people whose existence is deemed superfluous. This increasingly affects people from conflict areas. Intelligent and thoroughly political peace work is needed to put a stop to this dynamic. Misery and hunger among those affected by conflicts are not unique to individuals, but are rather expressions of structural violence that is legitimized not least by neoliberalism. It is only when the organization of everyday life and the communities’ care and survival strategies are shifted to the center that efforts to promote peace can dampen this development.

[WIDE Switzerland](#)

Annemarie Sancar

annemarie.sancar@bluewin.ch

reports

Interview with Camilo González on “Paro Nacional”



Photo: ask!

This interview was published [here](#) on November 29, 2019.

Since November 21, protests have been taking place across Colombia against the government’s neo-liberal policies, against violence, and in favor of peace. News of repressive violence, the death of 18-year-old Dilan Cruz, and the citizens’ response in the form of “cacerolazos” is making headlines internationally. ask! interviewed Camilo González Posso, President of Indepaz (Institute for Peace and Development) and Director of the Centro de Memoria Historica project in Bogotá.

ask: Camilo, can you tell us what’s happening in Colombia at the moment?

Camilo González: We’ve now already reached the seventh day of the National Strike in Colombia. Originally organized for November 21 with marches and strikes in certain public and private companies, the strike has turned into a continuous wave of mobilization with millions of people and a number of different reasons for protesting.

ask: Who is on the strike committee?

C.G.: The committee that called the strike is made up of trade unions, student organizations, indigenous people, smallholder farmers, women, and communities. They represent the majority of organized sectors from over 500 urban centers and municipalities in the country. Although the strike committee was responsible for organizing the strike and starting the ball rolling on November 21, the movement is now gaining a great deal more momentum and new forms of mobilization have arisen that have a different logic to that of traditional marches and strikes with a unified leadership. People are mobilizing in every region and city, with slogans and feelings being unbelievably in sync in this stand against the government's anti-social policies and defense of life and peace.

ask: What do you make of the repression from the police and military?

C.G.: Over these past seven days, millions of people have peacefully mobilized themselves. They have campaigned against violence, the killing of social leaders, and the use of warfare techniques such as the militarization of certain areas and the authorization of indiscriminate bombardments, including those that claimed the lives of 12 children and which were justified by the government. It is a movement against war and in favor of peace which condemns all types of violence, even that within the context of demonstrations. The riot police responded with excessive violence to this impressive demonstration of self-control on behalf of young people and mobilized society. This has resulted in hundreds of injuries and four deaths so far, including of young Dilan Cruz, who was killed by a police officer in Bogotá using a non-conventional weapon at point-blank range. The peaceful mobilization is evident in pictures showing demonstrators welcoming police officers that are passive and non-violent as well as in the rejection of infiltrators and saboteurs, which appear to be part of the police force in some cases. In Santander de Quilichao (Cauca), an attack on a police station left two police officers dead and nine injured. The reaction of the population was a total rejection of these local armed groups or drug smugglers that continue to be active in certain areas. We are facing a peace mobilization, which has come about partly as a result of the new sentiment following the signing of the peace agreement, in which guns have given the floor to the voices of the citizen protest.

ask: What's the situation like now? Have the police and military used less violence given the countless complaints about the exorbitant use of physical force?

C.G.: The national and international rejection of the excessive use of violence has mitigated the brutality of the repression, although critical situations still exist. International human rights organizations, including the office of Ms. Bachelet, have called upon the government to refrain from deploying the military in the repression against social protest and to limit themselves to police methods when controlling public order. Up until now, the military with its warfare has been deployed in the background to ensure safety, looming large on interurban roads with protective infrastructure and the intimidating mobilization of tanks, among other forms of intimidation. The military, however, has not been used in the direct repression on the streets and in the districts. There have been instances of strong militarization such as curfews in several cities (Bogotá, Cali, Popayan, Manizales), especially during the nights of November 21 and 22. This militarization and these curfews,

together with permission to shoot anyone found on the streets, was legitimized with a wave of panic that spread in some cities with rumors that “vandals” in “hordes” would soon be invading housing complexes and market spaces. The climate of fear and panic set the stage for military action.

ask: Who do you think is behind these rumors about so-called “vandals”?

C.G.: The rumors about “vandals” having apparently prepared themselves to raid on the day of the National Strike were already circulating in the week before the strike. They have become part of the discussions and questions resulting from pictures of raids in Chile and Bolivia, which were inflated in the media. It is likely that this has alleviated the tasks of certain structures in the security field, which are experts in using fear as a strategy to control the population. In the language of national security, the supreme government authorities and the ruling party spread the message that the strike was an international terrorist conspiracy intended to destabilize the Duque government; they also deemed it the work of the “São Paulo Forum” implemented by troublemakers paid by Maduro. This rumor led to borders being closed, foreigners being deported, and talks of preparing for war making the rounds.

ask: Unbelievable.

C.G.: People responded in extraordinary ways: namely with the sound of “cacerolazos” (banging on empty pots and pans) with parties in living quarters and get-togethers with neighbors during the evenings and nights. Entire families are going onto the streets to make noise with drums and chant slogans against repression and the government.

ask: How do you see the strike in Colombia in relation to the other demonstrations and movements currently in full swing in Latin America?

C.G.: The logic behind what is going on varies from country to country, but we are ultimately on the verge of an international movement that protests against the anti-social and anti-democratic policies of exclusionary globalization. Just like in Ecuador and Chile, the protests in Colombia are against the government’s proposed measures, i.e. against a new wave of neo-liberal policies driven forward by the IMF and OECD. These negatively impact the majority of the population. We are facing a revolution of consciousness of great significance. It is a response to an economic and social model that offers hopelessness and inequality and is defended by authoritarianism.

This revolution of consciousness is a common denominator in our countries. Millions of people are taking a stand against a model that discriminates against young people and women, that supports the rules of multi-national companies, and that privatizes everything right up to the most important public services. On top of this, there are calls for equality, respect for nature, the rejection of corruption, the rejection of the enforcement of neoconservatism, and the rejection of a despotic and authoritarian regime.

ask: Do you know anything about what Duque’s proposed “National Dialogue” (“Conversación Nacional”) involves?

C.G.: Duque, in a state of obvious helplessness, tried to stall his response to the movement. He began by acknowledging the extent of the protests, thus pushing the narrative of his

boss, Alvaro Uribe, about the illegitimacy of the strike into the background. After this, he called for social conversation or “National Dialogue,” which is supposed to involve a series of meetings on the government’s development plans. These meetings are to be held between now and March 2020 and are to lead to some new legislative proposals. The content and methods of this “dialogue” are a minor adaptation of the dialogues the president holds in various regions each week. These are called “Talleres, construyendo país” and Duque has already conducted over 140 of them in his first year of office. They are a type of direct link with certain groups in order to project an image of closeness to the people, but they have done little to boost the credibility of the current administration.

The “National Dialogue” that has now been put on the table is seen to be a diversionary tactic to demobilize the protests as a weak propaganda tool of the government. The government is acting as if the dissatisfaction, along with the international conspiracy and irrational opposition, is due to a lack of information about the positive side of its policies. The government is merely generating mechanisms for propaganda and refusing to address the issues surrounding the protests. This is why the strike committee pulled out of the first meeting, with which the president planned to open talks with companies, mayors, and committees, etc. The aim was to only open dialogue with the sectors connected to him and ultimately push the mobilized sectors into the background. He is still refusing to talk about the implementation of the peace agreement, the withdrawal of the IMF’s proposed measures, the guarantee of life for leaders, and the vulnerability of young people, pensioners, and workers.

This indifference and ignorance towards instances of repressive violence that led to the death of young Dilan is infuriating for the people continuing the protest. With its attitude that public order policies and security can’t be part of the “dialogue” and even less a part of negotiations, the government has closed many doors. The people on the street are calling for the ESMAD to be taken out of the equation and for protest-related regulations to be modified. During the demonstrations that have been ongoing since November 21, placards demanding an immediate end to the bombardment and warfare commands as a response to the situation in rural areas have repeatedly stood out from the crowd. The topic of security policy is crucial for defending life, even more so in light of the current warfare strategies used by state security forces and the resurgence of practices that have not been used since the peak of paramilitarism.

ask: Thank you very much for your informative comments. Is there anything else you’d like to mention?

C.G.: In an interview with Vicky Dávila, senator Alvaro Uribe recommends that the government steps up its use of militarization to combat mobilization. He pointed out the strength of military presence when it comes to controlling cities. And curfew is another example. Uribe complained that this was not used as a permanent way of controlling the public. He recommends that police be used to oppose peaceful protest and the military with weapons of war to be mobilized against unauthorized demonstrations on public streets. Uribe also believes that the ESMAD should be strengthened instead of weakened and take a tougher approach to the disruption to public order. The basic message is: Zero concession to the demands of the strike; instead, unwaveringly repeating the proposals to reduce taxes for companies, make some amendments to health insurance for pensioners, and implement its labor reform. The strategy of these so-called elements in the tax reform

is part of the “great dialogue” formula to keep things the same.

[ask! - Arbeitsgruppe Schweiz-Kolumbien](#)

Lisa Alvarado

lisa.alvarado@askonline.ch

[links](#)

- [Interview with Camilo González on “Paro Nacional” \(in German\)](#)

reports

Neoliberalism and fair work



Women workers protest against poor working conditions in Cambodian textile factories. Photo: Solidar Suisse

Supporters of neoliberal economic policy are convinced that liberalizing and deregulating the market maximizes economic potential and prosperity for everyone on both a national and international scale.

However, this is not the case in reality. Despite promises to the contrary, countries of the global south cannot free themselves from poverty and misery. The work people do there, be it service work, production, agriculture, or mining is often poorly paid, degrading, and dangerous, and labor rights are violated.

Child labor on West African cotton fields and in gold mines, slave-like employment conditions in Asian factories, wage slavery on Indonesian and Malaysian palm-oil plantations, the violation of fundamental labor rights, in particular for women in textile factories in Southeast Europe, expulsions of smallholders in South America as a result of the mining projects of major European companies, or the exploitation of migrants in the agricultural sector – the list goes on and on.

As consumers in Switzerland, we can respond to these unfair working conditions, albeit to a limited extent, by showing solidarity, such as by making conscious purchase decisions or putting pressure on certain corporations to effect changes in supply chains. Swiss

corporations are under no legal responsibility to improve the working conditions in production countries, at the very least. Not yet anyway, as the Responsible Business Initiative wants to change this: In future, corporations based in Switzerland are to be liable for human rights violations or environmental pollution produced by their subsidiaries.

However, it is not just globalization that is driving exploitation. Many people who work outside of global supply chains are sometimes even more vulnerable to exploitative conditions: this particularly applies to employees in the informal sector, such as street traders and domestic help, but also to contract workers and employees in micro-enterprises.

Work should not degrade people, it should not make them ill, and it should allow them to lead a self-determined and autonomous life. The International Labour Organization's Decent Work Agenda therefore designates the following factors as basic requirements for fair work: decent wages, workplace safety, and social insurance for workers and their families, the possibility to form workers' unions, participation and cooperation in the further development of the working environment, and equal opportunity and equal treatment. This is based on internationally binding rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guaranteed the right to fair work (Article 23). Goal 8 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also explicitly calls for decent work for all.

Solidar Suisse is committed to ensuring fair working conditions and is thus doing its bit to promote fairer economic development and globalization. Workers being able to organize themselves into trade unions or independently of trade unions is key to the achievement of these goals. Solidar supports activists and organizations on site to help people collectively mobilize and fight against exploitation, such as in the healthcare sector in Kosovo, on plantations in Bolivia, or in textile factories in Cambodia. Working with partners on the ground, Solidar directly intervenes in local markets to further develop and strengthen local production and supplier chains, such as in honey refinement in Burkina Faso or in the certification of cocoa in Latin America. Solidar Suisse also ensures better access to the labor market, for example by providing literacy training or supporting public vocational schools. Training in traditional professions such as the metal or construction sector or in the freelance informal sector to become a solar-panel fitter or a compost fertilizer producer can also open up new prospects. Young people, especially young women, in rural and semi-urban areas in particular benefit from the various approaches to formal and informal training.

[Solidar Suisse](#)

Klaus Thieme

Klaus.thieme@solidar.ch

Head Development Cooperation

links

- [Solidar Suisse](#)
- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23 – Right to fair work](#)
- [ILO – Decent Work Agenda](#)
- [Sustainable Development Goals – Goal 8](#)
- [Responsible Business Initiative](#)

reports

Gold mining in Burkina Faso: Profit before human rights?



Innocent Zallé with his family in front of the ruins of their old house in Bissa. Photo by Meinrad Schade

With the start of the gold rush in Burkina Faso in 2012, commodity issues became a growing part of Fastenopfer's project work, as local partner organizations, smallholders in rural areas, or women solidarity groups are all directly impacted by the effects of gold mining. This is because when gold is found on their land, farmers lose the basis of their income. Burkina Faso ranks 183rd out of 189 countries on the UN's Human Development Index. Only just over a third of the population can read and write and more than 40 percent live off less than 1.90 US dollars a day, placing them under the threshold of extreme poverty. The gross domestic product is almost 12 billion US dollars. For a population of around 20 million, this leaves 646 US dollars per capita.

In Bissa, where the village of the same name had to make way for one of the largest industrially driven gold mines in Burkina Faso in 2013, the lives of the resettled villagers have drastically deteriorated. Only a few of the promises made by the mining companies have been kept. After the relocation, it became clear that the groundwater at their new base was laced with arsenic and was undrinkable. Women and girls therefore have to walk several kilometers a day to get drinking water. The houses provided do not resemble the traditional form of living and have led to the destruction of the social village structure,

which had been intact until now. Compensation has only been paid for the fields that were being farmed at the time of resettlement. Of the 1,500 village residents, only 75 found a job in the mine.

Globalizing human rights

Over the last few years, just over 90 percent of all gold mined in Burkina Faso was exported to Switzerland and processed by the gold refineries in this country. The economy is globalized, but the responsibility for human rights is not. Nevertheless, prosperity in Switzerland is directly linked to the exploitation of raw materials in countries of the south – after all, Switzerland is a leader in commodity trading and gold refinement. With exports worth more than CHF 68 billion, precious metals were Switzerland's second most important export in 2018 – around 95 percent of this can be attributed to gold export, as two-thirds of the world's gold is refined here. Switzerland, the world's largest hub and most important player, bears particular responsibility in this respect. However, the Council of States once again decided on December 18, 2019 that Swiss companies do not have to be liable for human rights violations or environmental pollution on the part of their subsidiaries abroad. Liability, however, is at the core of the Responsible Business Initiative – after all, corporations should be held accountable when human rights are violated.

[Fastenopfer](#)

Colette Kalt

Kalt@fastenopfer.ch

[links](#)

- [Is profit more important than human rights? Gold does not glisten the same for everyone \(in German\)](#)
- [Responsible Business Initiative](#)

reports

After neoliberalism



“To live together on the planet instead of alone in our wallet”

Are the efforts made to bring ethics to the economy starting to pay off? Is it possible for us, humanity, to move from an economy based on personal finances and needs, or on those of a social or national group, towards an economy of generosity and share? May we achieve the fulfilment of all economic and social rights, universally and as quickly as possible?

The energy transition and the responses brought to global warming will increase the sense of responsibility of economic decision makers. It will foster the emergence and the completion of an economy based on human values. The wealth of humanity is immense, wealth in heart and knowledge, in infrastructure and fortune; it will help the process.

The Sustainable Development Goals (adopted by all UN members) have the goal of ending poverty by 2030. Fair sharing of revenues as such or made from non-renewable and renewable resources and from infrastructures created in the past to make added value now; the duty of companies to avoid generating poverty and help abolish it (the Global Compact does not go far enough); a tax system holding on, and improving, its distributive role and a universal basic income are examples which should lead to concrete solutions by then.

Individuals have also an essential role: generosity and solidarity, their learning are the basis of a civilization in which each and every one finds its place and worth. Civic participation, responsible consumers and critical shareholders, but also activists against corruption and abuses or the links between peace and economy are voices that must be

heard.

Finally, mention should be made of the new forms of economy, gift or “for free” economies, sharing and recycling, working in a closed cycles, social economy and e-economy, when ethical and sharing criteria are respected are leading examples.

APRED theorizes and supports the smooth transition to an economy upholding universal values.

APRED

Christophe Barbey

cb@apred.ch

links

- [The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [Economic, social and cultural rights](#)
- [The principles of the global compact](#)
- [Universal basic income according to the UN \(Special Rapporteur on poverty\)](#)
- [Transparency international](#)
- [Institute for Economics and Peace](#)
- [Critical shareholders \(in Switzerland\)](#)
- [Social and solidarity economy](#)

in depth

From Santiago to Paris, people in the streets



Plaza de la Dignidad in Santiago de Chile, 2019. Picture : Nicole Kramm Caifal

The article entitled “*From Santiago to Paris, people in the streets*” and written by Serge Halimi, was published in January 2020 by the French newspaper *Le Monde Diplomatique*. The author explains the causes and consequences of the diverse and contemporary waves of protests.

The streets will not stand still. The widespread discontent and resulting demonstrations (Algeria, Lebanon, Ecuador, France, Chile...) have taken a new turn. We have witnessed collective movements that are exigent, united, apolitical and which have had some impact. Governments are increasingly repressive, and yet failing to silent their opponents who want “to bring the down the regime”.

It all started in 2010, after the first Tunisian uprising, which gave birth to the Arab spring. Then followed Spain’s anti-austerity Indignados movement, the Chilean students’ protests and Occupy Wall Street – to name but a few.

To this day and across the world, the slogans differ but the triggering factor is the same: Powerlessness in the face of economic liberalism, which worsens social inequalities; and in the face of a prevailing oligarchy, which does not responds to the needs nor represents the interest of the people. There is a sense of fatigue in living in precariousness, of seeing one’s rights mutilated (pension, education, health) and one’s environment worsen. The state of global environment is a good illustration of this powerlessness. Despite an

apparent political goodwill (particularly expressed during the different United Nations Climate Change Conference or “COP”), the richest continue to overconsume despite global warming.

More than 20 years ago, “the death of capitalism, the convergence of struggles and the globalization deadlock” were already announced. However, neoliberal politics have continued to spread. At the heart of the problem is corruption, which manifests itself in different ways. This is witnessed in the financing of private interests by way of destroying the public system through reforms (cutbacks in social programs, rising cost of “public” services, private funded pension schemes...); it is demonstrated by the incestuous relationship between the State and Capital (an example is the former president of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso, who now works for the Goldman Sachs bank) – links which curtails the power of opponents to the established economic system.

Halimi takes the example of Chile, the cradle of capitalism, as the very proof of its failure. Since last October, a large part of the Chilean population has deplored its political system, which remains neoliberal, despite the fall of Pinochet’s totalitarian regime, and despite democratic transition, which followed: privatisation of pensions and universities, chargeable highways and monetized water. The hardening of the police, judicial and military repression (which has resulted in 11,000 injured, 200 blinded by rubber bullets and 26 deaths since October), has not curbed the rebellion.

These different protests may not have enabled the creation of a serious political alternative to neoliberalism. However, they have resulted in small victories, sufficient to reinforce the protesters’ confidence: Omar Al-Bachir’s regime fall in Sudan, the dismissal of several ministers in Lebanon, in Iraq as well as the former President of Algeria Bouteflika and the constitutional revisions taking place Chile. According to Halimi, these popular protests will certainly have made it possible to “no longer offer liberalism the hope of a return to normal”.

[swisspeace](#)

Sanjally Jobarteh

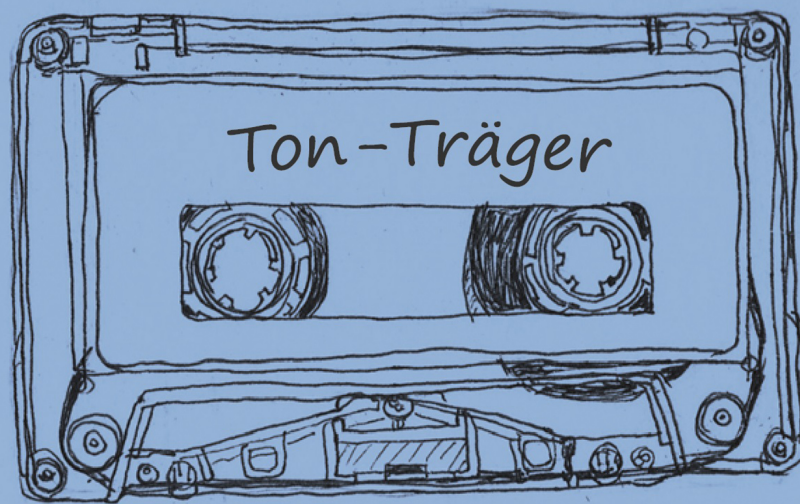
Sanjally.Jobarteh@swisspeace.ch

[links](#)

- [From Santiago to Paris, people on the street \(in French; entire article for subscribers only\)](#)

news

KOFF Podcast Ton-Träger: Women, Peace & Security: Where is the equality?



KOFF started a new podcast (only available in German). In this podcast series, you will hear stories and views of KOFF member organizations and partners on peacebuilding issues.

The first episode of the KOFF Ton-Träger is dedicated to the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. As Flurina Derungs of PeaceWomen Across the Globe says in the interview for this podcast, “the resolution was a milestone in international peace policy, as for the first time it places the needs and concerns of women at the centre of peace efforts”. But even 20 years after its adoption, the implementation of the resolution remains difficult and women are still underrepresented and not equal to men in peace processes.

KOFF’s Jonas Hinck spoke with Anat Al-Mzayyen of the Palestinian Working Women Society for Development, Flurina Derungs of PeaceWomen Across the Globe and Sarah Koch, Gender Focal Point at the Human Security Division of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs about the necessity and content of the 1325 Resolution and the problems involved in its implementation.

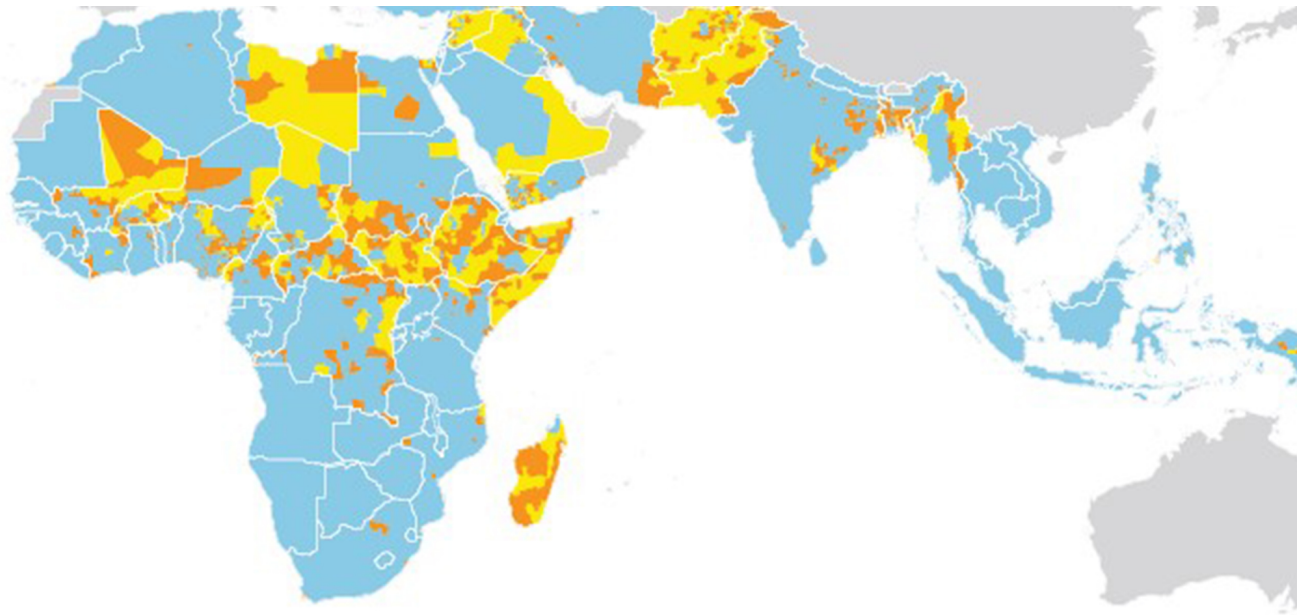
Further episodes will be published in the future on the [KOFF soundcloud page](#).

links

- [KOFF Podcast Ton-Träger: Women, Peace & Security: Where is the equality? \(In German\)](#)

news

New Early Warning Tool: Water, Peace and Security



■ Peace ■ Emerging conflict ■ Ongoing conflict ■ No data

WPS Global Early Warning Tool, Risk of Conflict Forecast (October 2019 to September 2020)

A new tool from the Water, Peace and Security (WPS) partnership can predict the risk of violent water-related conflict up to 12 months in advance.

The WPS Global Early Warning Tool uses machine learning, coupled with environmental, meteorological, social and economic data to forecast where organised violence is likely to occur. It will enable global development, diplomacy, disaster response and defence experts – together with governments and communities – to intervene and help defuse conflicts before blood is shed.

The tool will identify potential hotspots across Africa, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia over the next 12 months, by comparing environmental data with socio-economic and demographic data, including population density and past conflicts, from the past 20 years.

Right now, the tool shows that about 2,000 administrative districts across the Global South are at risk of water-related conflict, including Iraq (Basra), Khorramshahr and Abadan (Iran), and parts of Mali, Nigeria, India and Pakistan.

One in four people globally live in extremely water-stressed areas. While action on water issues can help build peace, water risks like drought, scarcity, pollution and floods can also serve as 'threat multipliers' that help trigger conflict or contribute to famine, loss of livelihoods or displacement.

The WPS consortium will use data from the tool to spur political action on water-related conflict, and to guide peacebuilding interventions.

[International Alert](#)

David Ackers

dackers@international-alert.org

[links](#)

- [Water, Peace and Security early warning tool predicts water-related conflict up to year in advance](#)

news

Round table: Peace and human rights in Colombia and Honduras: high-risk work!



The Latin America round table organized by KOFF, the Swiss platform for peacebuilding, together with the Arbeitsgruppe Schweiz Kolumbien (ask!) and the Peace Brigades International Schweiz (PBI) on November 7, 2019 gave attendees the chance to get to know four dedicated women from Colombia and Honduras and talk to them about the current situation in both countries, the work and challenges of civil society organizations on site, and their demands, fears, and hopes.

In the morning, discussions focused on the (lack of) implementation of the peace agreement and the rise of violence in Colombia. Diana Luz Barrios Márceles (COLEMAD) and Yesica Blanco Lozano (Sembrandopaz), two guests from both of the partner organizations of the Swiss Semillas de Esperanza peacebuilding program, talked about their experiences in dealing with the rights of women in rural areas, compensation, and land restitution, as well as their efforts to promote dialogue and reconciliation.

The afternoon was dedicated to human rights, violence, and sexual diversity in Honduras. Esdra Sosa Sierra and Bertha Zuñiga Cáceres spoke about the effects of the difficult situation and the struggle of civil society organizations to promote the rights of the LGBTI+

community.

[ask! - Arbeitsgruppe Schweiz-Kolumbien](#)

Lisa Alvarado

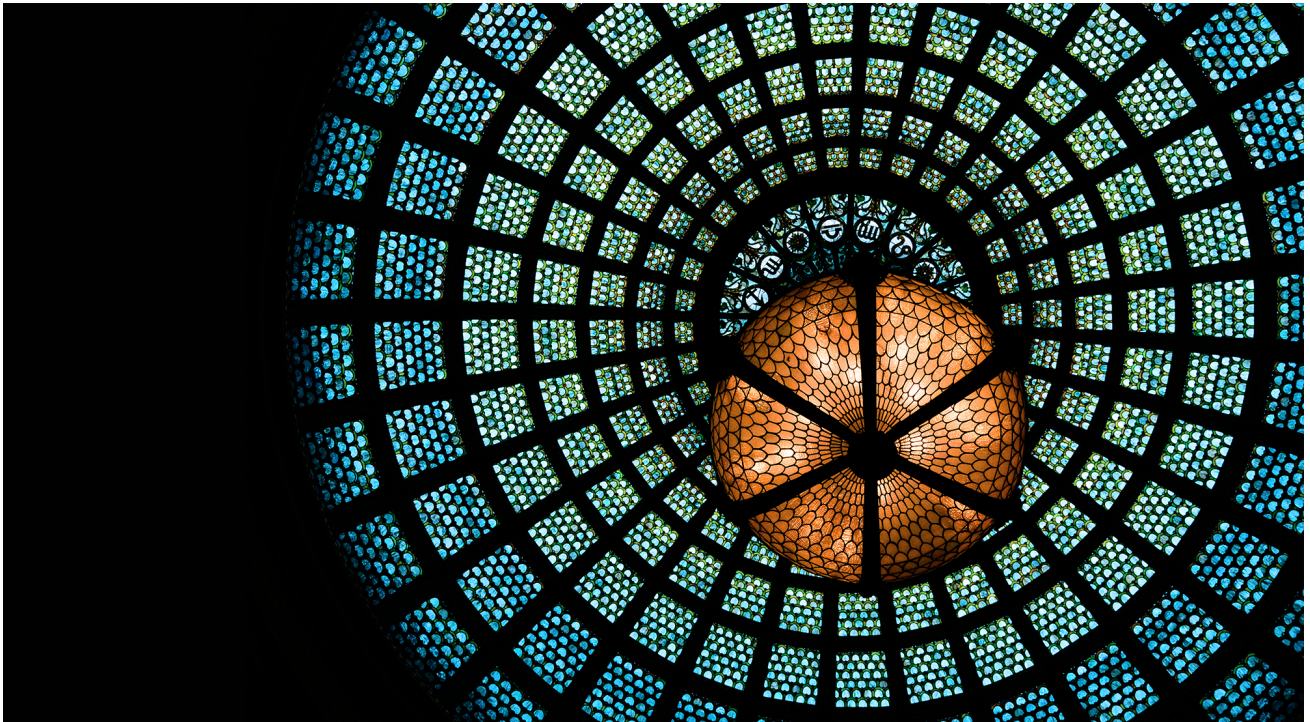
lisa.alvarado@askonline.ch

links

- [Invitation to the round table \(in German\)](#)
- [Seeds of hope – the Swiss multi-track peacebuilding program in practice \(in German\)](#)

calendar

Events & News



links

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KOFF NEWS

Upcoming events organised by KOFF and its member organisations can be found on our [KOFF NEWS SITE](#).

SWISSPEACE COURSES

You can now register for the following swisspeace courses:

- [Unpacking Radicalization](#)
- [Preventing Violent Conflicts](#)
- [Conflict Sensitivity](#)

Information on the entire swisspeace course offering on peacebuilding and conflicts can be found on [OUR WEBSITE](#).

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KOFF

Die Schweizer Plattform für Friedensförderung
La plateforme suisse de promotion de la paix
La piattaforma svizzera per la promozione della pace
The Swiss platform for peacebuilding

KOFF is a dialogue and exchange platform facilitated by swisspeace. It is jointly supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the following Swiss NGOs which are members of the platform:

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APRED	IAMANEH Schweiz	Solidar Suisse
artasfoundation	Interpeace	SOS Children's Villages
Baha'i	Lucerne Initiative for Peace and	Stiftung für Integrale
Brücke · Le pont	Security (LIPS)	Friedensförderung
Caritas Switzerland	medico international schweiz	Swiss Academy for Development
Caux – Initiatives of Change	MIR Switzerland	Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund
Foundation	mission 21	Swiss Peace Council
cfd	miva – transporte l'aide	Swiss Red Cross
DCAF	Peace Brigades International	Swiss Refugee Council
Eirene Suisse	Schweiz	SWISSAID
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Grains of Peace	Peace Watch Switzerland	terre des hommes schweiz
Green Cross Switzerland	PeaceWomen Across the Globe	Verein Palmyrah
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