

Field notes for transformation

“You are creating a world that can be governed democratically without interference by transnational corporations.”

KELLE LOUAILLIER
PRESIDENT

Global action feeds our visionary approach

Dear friend,

Some people might tell you it is impossible to change a system where transnational corporations have enormous impunity.

But partners like you know we succeed together because we strategize solutions that match the full scope of the issue. To truly transform the systems that drive the problems, we must develop solutions that transcend borders.

Our focus on international institutions is core to our visionary approach. And it makes us unique.

We combine global grassroots organizing with strategies that empower people to truly democratize institutions that represent them.

We know we will only achieve transformative change when international regulatory institutions like the United Nations (U.N.) can exercise their full authority over transnational corporations.

Transnational corporations vs. national laws

Today, transnational corporations have brought us to the brink of political, economic, and ecological disasters, putting our very future at risk.

Some of the most abusive corporations have larger annual revenues than the GDPs of the countries in which they operate. Local and

national governments alone can't take on these corporations. And for decades, the biggest U.S.-based transnationals have offshored their profits. Last year, with G.E. as a top offender, they hoarded more than \$2 trillion overseas to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

Not enough organizations or funders concerned with the effect of Big Money in politics are looking beyond U.S. borders. That is a mistake, a shortcoming that belongs to all of us.

Transnational corporations that abuse democracy in the U.S. maintain their economic and political power by perpetrating similar and worse abuses internationally. That's why our work with international regulatory institutions like the World Health Organization (WHO) and its parent, the U.N., is vital.

For example, tobacco control measures around the world today are remarkably different from a decade ago. Policies such as graphic health warnings and marketing restrictions in countries like Thailand, Australia, and Colombia were impossible before the global tobacco treaty.

The treaty exists because, for the first time, we built sufficient political will for the WHO to exercise its regulatory authority. We did so by organizing with allies and governments around the world. As a result, today's global tobacco treaty—filled with strong corporate accountability measures—is saving millions of lives and reining in the access and clout of Big Tobacco.



Associate Research Director Tamar Lawrence-Samuels at the U.N. climate treaty negotiations calling for the removal of the fossil fuel industry.



Empowering democracy

No wonder transnational corporations are infiltrating the U.N. and other international institutions. Corporate co-optation is everywhere: from the fossil fuel industry's destructive influence over the climate treaty to the U.N.'s CEO Water Mandate's attempts to force corporate interests into water policy.

But there is hope: At their core, these institutions are structured to be accountable to people. In the U.N., at the WHO, and in treaty talks, delegates are empowered to make decisions and take action. And they must answer to the people they represent.

When enough people are paying attention, taking action, and demanding truth and justice, they give delegates the political backing, the mandate, and the raw courage they need. That's when they stand up to transnational corporations. And in this forum, each country, no matter how wealthy, gets a single vote. When enough delegates stand together, they can create sweeping changes.

That is exactly how the world secured the global tobacco treaty. We mobilized massive numbers of people to move decision-makers to do what was right for the people they represent.

Imagine the world you can create

This is the organizing we do, and have done since 1977. And we are just getting started.

Imagine with me a world where transnational corporations are held fully accountable, no matter how many national borders they cross:

- A world where countries drastically reduce greenhouse gases and provide justice to those most affected by and least responsible

for climate change—without any interference from polluting industries.

- A world where everyone has access to clean, safe water; where water is protected in international law as a common good and ecological trust; and where transnational corporations are no longer allowed to exploit and profit from our most essential resource.
- A world where the money, power, and influence of corporations in electoral processes or democratic governance anywhere is forbidden by law.
- A world where transnational corporations are required to pay for the harms they cause.

We will only achieve this by ending the corporate co-optation of international institutions. We must ensure decisions are made publicly and accountably in this arena—without any corporate political interference.

It is not going to be easy. Transformational change never is.

But it is possible because of your commitment to this bold and beautiful vision of our global society at its finest. You are creating a world that can be governed democratically without interference by transnational corporations, a world where all people can reach their full human potential. Thank you.

In the name of true democracy and transformative vision,

KELLE LOUAILLIER | PRESIDENT