Tax, Trade and Transparency: Some Resources for Prayer, Study and Action

Transparency

Praying and Preaching

Time for thanksgivings! If you use audiovisual materials, you might want to show the Tearfund “Unearth the Truth” video – which explains why transparency in extractive industries is so important – and then give thanks for the recent passage of the EU Transparency and Accounting directives. Pray that similar measures will be passed by other countries, so that all companies will be covered by the new rules.

Micah Challenge International is joining with other Christian organisations worldwide to campaign on corruption through the Exposed! Campaign. Their tweets @exposed2013 are a good source of prayer points, and their background document offers guidance that can help with preaching.

Look at Development Matters for ideas and sermon examples for preaching.

For a Home Group:

You might want to look at “Corruption: How Should Christians Respond?” an article by South African professors of theology Dr P.M. Theron and Professor G. A. Lotter at North-West University (the university in our link diocese of Kimberley and Kuruman). The article combines theological exploration with practical suggestions.

Another interesting piece is the Lausanne Movement’s “Salt and Light: Christians’ Role in Combating Corruption,” which takes a broad definition of corruption in both developing and developed countries and explores possible responses.

If you use either of these, you might want to read them in conjunction with something like the sections on transparency and land grabs in the Enough Food for Everyone IF report. How do the theology and the policy suggestions from the IF campaign relate to each other?

Taking Action

You might wish to:

- Find out more about how the companies from which you buy products or in which you hold shares do their reporting on social and environmental impacts ... and ask questions if you have concerns. Both ECCR and Share Action (see below) can offer guidance on engagement.
- Write to your MP, expressing the hope that the Government will strengthen the reporting requirements in the 2006 UK Companies Act and will include clear requirements for companies to report on the full range of their social and environmental impacts.
- Press the Government to take action on tax havens related to the UK and follow the conversations around tax and transparency happening at the G8 and G20.
- Offer prayer support for organisations and people working on transparency here and in other countries (contact maranda@ccow.org.uk if you’d like suggestions) Such work can be difficult and dangerous, and prayer support is much needed!
- Find out more about guidelines on transparency around land acquisitions and campaign for people to have the right to know what’s happening with their land.
Further Background

Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR), http://www.eccr.org.uk
Works on a range of issues relating to corporate responsibility, including corporate reporting. Materials include “Investing and Engaging with Companies: A Guide for Faith Communities.”

Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), http://www.eiti.org/
Major global standard working for transparency and better governance around resources.

“Campaigns against natural resource-related conflict and corruption and associated environmental and human rights abuses.”

Javier Perez, Myriam Gistlinck, Dima Karbala, “Sleeping Lions: International investment treaties, state-investor disputes, and access to food, land and water” (Oxfam, 2011)
Discusses impact of secrecy and lack of transparency in transactions that affect poor people’s access to natural resources.

“new multilateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption and harness new technologies to strengthen governance”

ONE Campaign, http://www.one.org/c/international/issues/4321/
Open Development campaign works on natural resource governance, budget transparency and aid transparency.

Works for transparency in aid to help fight against corruption and for greater aid effectiveness

“a global network f civil society organisations united in their call for an open and accountable extractive sector”

Share Action (formerly Fair Pensions), http://www.shareaction.org.uk
Works on responsible investment, including increasing corporate transparency, and helps individuals to become shareholder activists

Tearfund, http://www.tearfund.org/Research/Governance+and+Corruption/
In addition to the “Unearth the Truth” campaign, Tearfund has a strong body of work surrounding wider governance and corruption issues.

(See also sheets on tax and trade for links to Christian Aid and Tax Justice Network, working on transparency in financial regulation, and Traidcraft, working on transparency in investment treaties)