

# HOW TO INVESTIGATE A TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATION

## Decide what it is you want to know about this Transnational Corporation

In your investigation of a TNC, you may like to get information about some of the following questions and/or any others of your own:

- Who owns this Corporation? Where else is it to be found?
- Does this TNC adversely affect people and/or the environment in our country?
- In what way are any harmful effects connected with the TNC?
- Who does this TNC employ and how do they get treated? What are the conditions of work? What is the range of payment from the top executives to the person on the lowest wage?
- How does the TNC portray itself to people and how factual this is?
- How much profit does the TNC makes and where do the profits go?
- To what extent do we use the services and/or products that this TNC markets? Is this essential for us? Are there any alternatives?

## THERE ARE MANY SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT ANY TNC

To find out about labour relations, the environment, consumer protection and human rights , sources of information fit into three broadly defined groups:

1. The Corporation and its executives;
2. Written sources, including the Internet
3. Other human sources.

### 1. *The Corporation and its executives*

- Larger corporations with *public relations departments* will generally answer enquiries regarding strategies or products and factual matters that are public record such as the outcome of any litigation if asked diplomatically.
- Ask for an *annual report* (or some kind of substitute), the primary document used by corporations to communicate with shareholders. Endnotes and annexes to these reports may have information about liabilities for environmental damage as well as ongoing litigation. Annual reports also tell you who are the managing officers, who is on the Board and some provide an historical background on the corporation. The main body of the report usually provides insight into corporate perspectives, arguments and strategies.
- Look for *promotional literature* put out by the corporation with claims of environmental and health safety records and practices and so on. Identify the language that has been co-opted from those who are working for change in the ways TNCs operate.

### 2. *Written Resources*

- **Corporate Directories** - the information on any one corporation is limited and you may have to consult several to get a complete picture. You may be able to find some directories in public or university libraries. They are rather expensive to purchase.

- **Court Records** - if the TNC you are researching has been involved in litigation and you, or someone else, can get access to Court records they can provide valuable information on the TNC's operations and attitudes. They may also contain useful background information.
- **Newspapers and Business Magazines** - National newspapers usually carry stories about leading corporations every day. Regional and city newspapers may give more detailed and consistent coverage of a locally based TNC in the business and financial sections. There are many business magazines produced throughout the world that can be found in bookshops and libraries. If you know someone with a business PO Box, business magazines and papers are often put into these free of charge.

To get articles that you want, you may be able to contact someone at the publisher and ask if the publication has an index of issues that may help you to find those about a particular issue or corporation. Libraries sometimes have such indexes.

- **The Internet** - It can be very time consuming searching the Internet for information. In some cases one has to pay for the data and it is necessary to have Bank Card of some kind. Fees vary from site to site. Some of the information below may be useful.
- ❖ In countries where computer data base services have put back issues of papers and magazines online, conducting a search on a TNC using such a service can be a very efficient method. *NEXIS* is or *Lexis-Nexis*, covers a wide range of information, as does *Hoover's Online*. The cost can be rather expensive. There are numerous sites. The URLs include:

<http://www.lexis-nexis.com/business/>

<http://www.lexis-nexis-canada.com>

[http://www.hoovers.com/hoov/join/sample\\_officers.html](http://www.hoovers.com/hoov/join/sample_officers.html)

- ❖ Use search engines such as *Google* and *Alta Vista* to find information about the particular TNC that you are investigating. Another site that has information about business, companies, finance, industries and jobs is *Dogpile*. This site links with other sites such as *Access Global Business Intelligence*. The cost of a search is much less expensive (about US\$6) than Nexis, or are free. The URLs are:

<http://www.dogpile.com/index.gsp>

<http://www.dfg-vk.de/english/book90e.htm>

[www.rrojasdatabank.org/dev0027.htm](http://www.rrojasdatabank.org/dev0027.htm)

- ❖ Two other free directories of TNCs with varying degrees of information about each are to be found at:

<http://www.endgame.org/dtc/directory.html>

[http://dir.yahoo.com/Business\\_and\\_Economy/Directories/Companies](http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Directories/Companies)

- ❖ The URLs below give information about researching TNCs and have links to each other and many other sites:

<http://www.oneworld.org/guides/TNCs/front.shtml>

<http://www.igc.org/trac/resrch/invest.html>

<http://www.corpwatch.org/>

<http://www.essential.org/>

Sisters in "global south" countries can go to the following page and find information about getting free resources sent to you:

<http://www.essential.org/mrc/index.html>

A site that looks at the relationship between Transnationals, privatisation and structural adjustment in general and in relation to women in particular, is:

<http://www.inti.be/cesep/isc/phase2/2s2en.htm>

- ❖ At the following URL there is a database of world problems. From the site one is able search the web for information about the *Domination of countries by TNCs* and *Intimidation of countries by TNCs*.

[http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Controlling\\_Corporations/ControllingCorporations.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Controlling_Corporations/ControllingCorporations.html)

[http://www.foei.org/activist\\_guide/tradeweb/tncs.htm](http://www.foei.org/activist_guide/tradeweb/tncs.htm)

<http://www.corpwatch.org/corner/glob/guardian/>

- ❖ A list of websites used by companies to report on their environmental performance is at:

<http://cei.sund.ac.uk/envrep/corprepS.htm>

and a kit for exposing the reality behind corporate environmentalism is at:

<http://www.corpwatch.org/trac/climate/kit/index.html>

**3. Other Human Resources** - These people may be among your best sources of information.

- Journalists
- Trade Association Representatives
- Academics
- Lawyers
- Former Employees
- Investment Analysts
- Industry Consultants
- Business Competitors and customers
- Government Industry Analysts
- Local Government
- Other citizens and activists

***Non-Governmental Resources on TNCs Around the World -***

Around the world there are numerous organisations studying, monitoring and campaigning on particular TNCs. Try to find out if any NGO is studying the same TNC as you, in your country. Many are based in the USA and Western Europe, some are spread throughout the world and others are to be found in any one or more of other countries in which we are based. For those who have access to the Internet, a list of NGOs is to be found at:

<http://www.igc.org/trac/resrch/invest.html>