



# 2019: Year in Review

**CORE** PUTTING PEOPLE  
& THE PLANET AT THE  
CORE OF BUSINESS



## Director's introduction

CORE's mission is to end corporate practices that harm people and the environment.

Several significant developments over the last year have brought that goal closer. The UK Supreme Court ruled that companies can arguably owe a duty of care to people harmed by their subsidiaries' activities. Campaigns are springing up across Europe for new laws to require businesses to prevent human rights abuses and environmental damage. And the debate about the purpose of companies - beyond profit - is gaining real traction. The challenge now is to move from discussion to action.

In 2020, I will be stepping down from CORE after eight years as Director. I want to say a huge thank you to all our staff, interns and board members past and present, and to our partners for their invaluable support for our work. I'm incredibly proud of everything we've achieved together, and I look forward to watching CORE go from strength to strength in the future.

Marilyn Croser  
January 2020

## CORE IN NUMBERS

49

partners, some of the UK's leading organisations on human rights, international development and the environment

25

organisations are supporting our new campaign for better corporate accountability legislation

20

years since CORE was founded as an informal network campaigning on corporate responsibility

3

we represented civil society on 3 UK Government expert groups in 2019

1

intervention in a case before the UK Supreme Court

# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



Zambia, Barotse Floodplain,  
November 2012.  
Image credit Felix Clay via  
WorldFish Flickr (CC).

## Intervention in UK Supreme Court case against Vedanta

In a [historic ruling](#), the UK Supreme Court allowed 1,800 Zambian villagers to continue their case against mining giant Vedanta. The communities are seeking compensation for serious health and environmental impacts linked to pollution from a mine owned by Vedanta's Zambian subsidiary.

CORE intervened in the case with the ICJ, arguing that Vedanta

owes a duty of care to people affected by its subsidiaries' operations – and the Court agreed.

This huge [victory](#) sets a legal precedent which could have wider implications for companies who make public commitments relating to their responsibilities to communities and the environment, and then fail to put them into practice.

## Persuaded the Government to review the Modern Slavery Act

Almost five years on from the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act, our sustained advocacy has successfully highlighted the shortcomings of the 'Transparency in Supply Chains' (TISC) provision. Only a minority of companies are disclosing meaningful information, and many are yet to publish a statement.

When the Independent Review of the Act was published, we [briefed](#) MPs on the findings, emphasising that robust sanctions and enforcement are necessary to improve corporate compliance.

In response to the review, the Government announced a consultation on changes to the TISC provision. CORE made a [joint submission](#) with 13 organisations calling for mandated reporting areas, a central registry and an annual deadline for company statements, effective enforcement measures, and an extension of the Act to cover public sector procurement. The Government's response is expected in 2020.

## Political parties back calls for corporate accountability laws

In April, we launched a campaign with 24 partner organisations for a new law to require companies to prevent human rights abuses and environmental damage throughout their supply chains and operations, and to be held accountable when they fail to do so.

Inquiries conducted by Parliament's Human Rights and [Environmental Audit](#) committees have recognised the significant limitations of current UK policy in this area. Before the 2019 general election, we asked all major political parties to support our call for change.

Following our advocacy efforts, Labour and the Liberal Democrats committed to introducing legislation to protect human rights and the environment from corporate harm. We'll be working with our partners over the coming year to build further support for change.



## In the UK...

### A regulator with teeth?

Following parliamentary criticism of its lacklustre response to corporate scandals such as the Carillion collapse, regulator the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) is due to be replaced by the Auditing, Reporting, and Governance Authority (ARGA).

A series of [citizens' juries](#) organised by BritainThinks revealed support for a much tougher regulator to hold individuals as well as companies to account, including being able to permanently disqualify directors. In the Queen's Speech in December 2019, the Government committed to strengthening the UK's corporate governance regime, although at present there is no timetable for legislation.

### Government considers strengthening UK's supply chain regulation

As well as a response to its consultation on the Modern Slavery Act's Transparency in Supply Chains provision, the Government is expected to publish its own modern slavery statement in 2020. Meanwhile in the House of Lords, a new Private Members Bill to stop public contracts going to companies who do not meet anti-slavery obligations is set to be introduced in February.

The Government's Director of Labour Market Enforcement is also currently consulting on opportunities to improve labour market conditions and to protect vulnerable workers. We're arguing that [changes](#) are needed to ensure that law and enforcement approaches keep pace with the structures and dynamics of global supply chains.

### Corporate liability: Government mulls criminal law reform, and Nigerian communities head to the Supreme Court

Going into 2020, we are still awaiting the Government's response to the Ministry of Justice's 2016 call for evidence on corporate liability for economic crime. CORE has long called for an [overhaul](#) of the UK's corporate liability regime, to make it easier for large companies to be prosecuted for global corruption and serious human rights abuses.

In June, 40,000 Nigerian farmers and fishermen who are seeking compensation from Shell for catastrophic oil spills in the Niger Delta will take their case to the UK Supreme Court. They are challenging the Court of Appeal's ruling that UK-based Royal Dutch Shell cannot be held responsible for oil pollution caused by its Nigerian subsidiary. By the end of the year we will know whether the case can proceed in the UK.



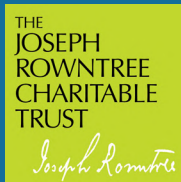
## And further afield...

Our allies in the European Coalition for Corporate Justice are working with MEPs to press for a new [EU law](#) on human rights due diligence and corporate liability. The [European Trades Union Congress](#) and several businesses have added their support to the call for legislation.

At international level, civil society groups are continuing to advocate for a [UN Treaty](#) on Business and Human Rights. CORE and our partners are calling for the UK to take a more positive and proactive role in the negotiations. Consultations on the latest version of the draft are open until the end of February 2020.

## A big thank you to...

Thank you to our core funders, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Sigrid Rausing Trust, and to the partner organisations that have contributed towards our work and funding in 2019.



SIGRID RAUSING TRUST

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