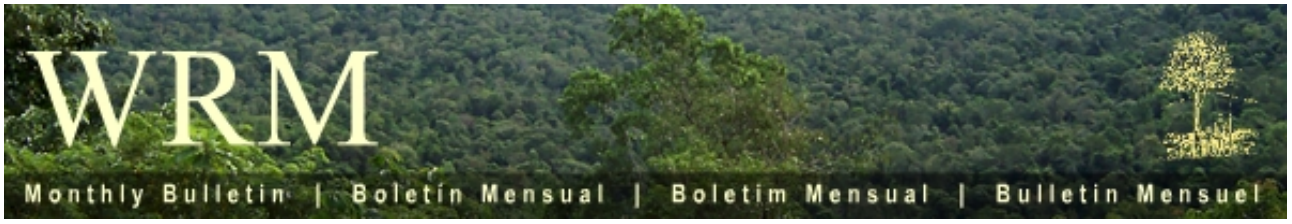

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OUR VIEWPOINT

- Good-bye Ricardo, welcome Winnie

Many years have passed since I had the great honour of being elected as the WRM International Coordinator. There are no words that could express my gratitude to those who gave me this opportunity. It has opened up horizons that I was barely aware existed, and allowed me to be, more than a coordinator of anything, a learner of everything.

Throughout all these years, the WRM team that I have had the pleasure of coordinating has always worked from the perspective of learning from people, and sharing that knowledge with those who need it to strengthen their own struggles. This has always been our central focus: the struggles of peoples to defend their rights, their livelihoods and ways of life, their dreams of a better future. The entire wealth of

knowledge accumulated by WRM in its quarter century of life has had its source in people, and has flowed back to people. This is probably our greatest strength and our greatest pride.

My “work” as coordinator has also given me the opportunity to interact with a vast and enormously diverse range of individuals around the world – South and North, East and West – united in a common goal: a society based on solidarity and respect between people and cultures, and between these and nature. Through this interaction, we have forged political and personal ties that have undoubtedly contributed to strengthening struggles at the local, regional and global level. At the same time, my duties as WRM coordinator have allowed me to meet some wonderful people who honour me with their friendship and with whom we have travelled many roads together.

By now, it should be obvious that this is more of a farewell than an editorial. It’s true: I am retiring. Not from the struggle, or from WRM, but from the position of WRM coordinator. I am stepping down “rich in beautiful riches” (1) among which are all of those people I have met and learned to love and respect over the course of these many years.

And among those many people, there is one person in particular I would like to mention here, simply because he has been chosen to take over from me as coordinator: Winnie Overbeek. Because of his well-known modesty, I will only say two things about him: I have known him for many years, and I have total confidence in him. I will now leave the editorial open so that he can introduce himself. Welcome Winnie!

Ricardo Carrere

To begin with, I should note how challenging I find this new role in my life, for different reasons: firstly, because I am taking on the coordination of an organization as important as WRM; and secondly, because I am taking over from Ricardo Carrere, a colleague who has relied on his countless strengths to devote himself to this organization for more than 20 years. His own efforts and those of his team have given rise to a vast network of links among individuals, activists and organizations who act on different levels. For many of them, WRM represents an organization worthy of respect and in which they can trust. It is an organization committed to the struggles of local communities for the preservation of their forests, for the defence of their rights, and against the destructive interventions, often promoted as “development”, that threaten their well-being and survival.

While on the one hand there are factors that worry me, there also others that give me a certain amount of peace of mind: the fact of knowing that I can count on numerous partners from different parts of the world in carrying out this work; and that the team that worked with Ricardo will continue working with me. They are a courageous, competent and hard-working group of people and I hope they will be patient with me. Together with this team, we will continue to advance the work that began in Malaysia so many years ago. And we hope that, together with all of you, we will continue to build WRM as a network of individuals, activists, movements and organizations committed to the defence of life, a network that respects and learns from forest

communities and collaborates in strengthening their struggles against the various threats to their territories and their ways of life.

I also hope that my experience during these last 15 years of supporting the struggles of indigenous and other communities in Brazil will help me somewhat with this new task. It was during my time with these communities that I first came into contact with WRM, and throughout that time we were also able to count on their important support. That was how I began to feel like a part of WRM and of this network that the organization has helped to build in many different countries.

Finally, another reason for feeling a bit more at ease is the fact that Ricardo has just announced that he is not retiring from WRM, or from the struggle, and so I hope we can continue to count on his invaluable contributions.

Winnie Overbeek

(1) To quote the Argentine singer/songwriter Atahualpa Yupanqui: “Rico de lindas riquezas: guitarra, amigos, canción” (“Rich in beautiful riches: a guitar, friends, song”).

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HUMAN RIGHTS… AND WRONGS

- Human Rights Day: A Story of Social Struggles

The United Nations has designated 10 December as Human Rights Day. The date was chosen to commemorate the 10 December 1948 adoption and proclamation of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings is “the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”

The Declaration was the result of a process of evolution and a specific moment in history. As Amnesty International rightly points out, the Declaration was aimed at universalizing and concretizing “norms and principles that had been promulgated for centuries in a fragmented and scattered way in different cultural settings.”

Indeed, since the beginning of recorded history, all cultures and great traditions – both written and oral – have appealed to the need to treat those around us like brothers and sisters, highlighting concepts like respect, equality, solidarity and justice.

Throughout history and as societies grew to be increasingly complex – although not in a purely linear fashion – individual rights came to play an ever greater role. In modern history, the conceptualization of human rights came to encompass new dimensions to address not only the so-called first-generation rights (civil and political rights) and second-generation rights (economic, social and cultural rights) but also third-generation rights (solidarity rights), which place emphasis on the collective nature of their impact on everyone’s lives. This last category includes the right to a healthy environment, to clean air, to access to clean water and uncontaminated food,

rights that could be considered implicit.

In the meantime, there has also been growing awareness of the inferior status of women, subordinated to the authority of men, whether it be their husbands, fathers or even their brothers, a situation that has been repeated in different eras and in different civilizations. The growing influence of women in social struggles as well as their own struggles has brought another dimension to demands for equality and justice and given greater visibility to the structural nature of gender inequality, interwoven in all social and economic orders, as has been demonstrated throughout history.

What is undeniable is that, with or without declarations, the trampling of human dignity has been and continues to be an everyday occurrence. And this is because, to quote Amnesty International once again, "the history of humanity is the history of tension between the defenders of privileges and of abusive or violent conduct on one hand (on the grounds of traditions, divine rights or other justifications), and on the other hand, the desire to protect the life, liberty and well-being of marginalized or oppressed human beings."

As such, Human Rights Day is important as a reminder of our unfinished task as members of the human race: to extend awareness of ourselves to awareness of the existence of others, through respect and solidarity. While this would be the most effective way to fulfil our destiny of living in society as a guarantee of survival and of "good living", it would imply a transformation of individuals and societies pervaded by injustice, abuse, exploitation, exclusion and violence.

Vandana Shiva states that there are three levels of violence involved in the predominant so-called "development" model today: violence against the earth, which is expressed as the ecological crisis; violence against people, which is expressed as poverty, destitution and displacement; and the violence of war and conflict, as the powerful reach for the resources that lie in other communities and countries, seizing control of the land, water, livelihoods, knowledge, culture and future of communities to incorporate them into the market system.

In these times of war it is crucial to defend human rights. And this is especially the case when governments are increasingly responding to popular resistance with the criminalization of social protest. Those who organize and protest publicly as members of social movements or in reaction to processes of social conflict are frequently persecuted, repressed, arrested and imprisoned, with their acts of resistance and defence classified as crimes. And sometimes they end up dead.

A bleak illustration of this is the massacre that occurred on 15 November on the El Tumbador oil palm plantation in the municipality of Trujillo, in northern Honduras. The Latin American regional branch of the International Union of Food Workers (Rel-UITA) has been monitoring the violence perpetrated by oil palm producer Miguel Facussé Barjum, and reports that "an army of more than 200 security guards employed by oil palm producer Miguel Facussé Barjum, president of Dinant Corporation, and armed with high-calibre guns attacked members of the Peasant Movement of Aguán (MCA), who nine months ago retook the land illegally seized from them by this bloodthirsty

entrepreneur to plant oil palm trees.

“The violent attack by these paramilitary groups took a tragic toll of five deaths – Teodoro Acosta (45), Ignacio Reyes (50), Raúl Castillo (45), Ciriaco Muñóz (45), and José Luis Sauceda Pastrana (32), who was missing and subsequently found dead with three shots from an R-15 rifle to this face; one person, Noé Pérez, still missing; and numerous people injured, some of them hospitalized in critical condition.

“The El Tumbador plantation is one of the many ‘black histories’ that have formed part of the illegal seizure of land in Honduras by unscrupulous large landholders.

“When Temístocles Ramírez de Arellano, a nationalized U.S. citizen of Puerto Rican birth, was forced to sell his 5,724 hectares of land in the Bajo Aguán region to the Honduran state, this land was handed over to the National Agrarian Institute (NAI) for the purposes of agrarian reform. The land was used by the Honduran government to establish the infamous Regional Military Training Centre (CREM), where in the 1980s, U.S. experts trained Honduran, Salvadoran and Guatemalan government troops and Nicaraguan ‘Contras’ in the art of killing.

“By fine-tuning corruption techniques and using the Agricultural Modernization Law, passed in the early 1990s, large landholders succeeded in illegally taking over this land and began to plant oil palm trees. When local peasant families discovered that there was a title deed through which the Attorney General’s Office had transferred this land to the NAI, they began to organize to retake it.”

According to Esly Banegas, coordinator of the Coordinating Committee of Popular Organizations of Aguán (COPA), “The peasants of the MCA have been constantly harassed and threatened, and what we witnessed yesterday is a clear demonstration that power in Honduras is in the hands of hegemonic economic groups. They are the ones who run the country.”

Santos Cruz, a member of the MCA, declared: “We are wounded. In ten years they have murdered more than 20 of our comrades. This is a campaign of terror, aimed at intimidating us, so that we will renounce our right to the land. But we are already taking the necessary measures, and they are not going to succeed.”

According to Rel-UITA, for the Unified Peasant MovEment of Aguán (MUCA), the massacre perpetrated by Miguel Facussé’s guards demonstrates the complicity of the Porfirio Lobo government with the oil palm industry, a powerful national economic sector.

On every continent, in many places, the expansion of big business has significantly promoted the violation of human rights. Mining, a highly destructive industry, has claimed many victims among those who have fought back against the loss of their lands and livelihoods. In Nigeria, writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other leaders from the Ogoni tribe were hanged by the Nigerian dictatorial government because they stood against Shell and its oil mining activities on their land.

In the Philippines, the organization Kasama Sa Kalikasan/Friends of the Earth Philippines recently paid tribute to Arman Marin, killed by the chief security guard of

the Sibuyan Nickel Property Development Corp. (SNPDC) in the Island of Sibuyan, Romblon on October 2000 while leading the protest against nickel mining in their island; Eliezer “Boy” Billanes, known for his courage and as a relentless fighter against large mining companies and in advancing human rights, [who was] brutally killed on 9 March 2009 in front of the people in the public market of Koronadal City in South Cotabato; and another 23 comrades who were killed in the fight to defend the environment, peoples’ livelihoods and community rights.

In the defence of the wide spectrum of human rights, indigenous peoples have waged their own historic struggles against acts that range from violations of their rights to genocide. Today, they are also facing, among other threats, very subtle means that represent a threat to the integrity of their rights, such as the REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) mechanism developed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Instead of reducing fossil fuel-related emissions at the source, the countries of the North have contrived a series of strategies to avoid it. REDD is now being promoted as a means of stopping deforestation and the emissions it produces.

But indigenous and environmental rights groups warn that an agreement on REDD will spell disaster for forest peoples worldwide, limiting the rights of indigenous and peasant people over their territories. As noted by Tom Goldtooth, executive director of the Indigenous Environmental Network: "Yes, we need to stop rampant deforestation – but REDD will neither protect forests nor reduce dangerous pollution. REDD will allow polluting industries to avoid reducing emissions through offsets from trees and other so-called 'environmental services'. From an indigenous and human rights perspective, REDD could criminalize the very peoples who protect and rely on forests for their livelihood, with no guarantees for enforceable safeguards. REDD is promoting what could be the biggest land grab of all time."

And among indigenous peoples, the most vulnerable, the most invisible and ignored, are the indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation. In Paraguay, the organization Iniciativa Amotocodie works “from the outside” and at a distance to protect the rights to life and self-determination – including the right to the integrity of their environmental, cultural and spiritual habitat – of the uncontacted Ayoreo people living in the forests of the Chaco region.

The threats to these groups living in isolation – who until now have avoided all contact with the society surrounding them – are tied to the expansion of agribusiness, and also form part of the historical processes that have impacted on the Ayoreo people as a whole, as well as other indigenous peoples of the Chaco.

On 1 December, representatives of the Public Prosecutor’s Office (Ministerio Público) violently raided the offices of Iniciativa Amotocodie, confiscating information gathered through many years of research and investigation. The raid, carried out under a warrant that does not specify the punishable offence, is part of a long campaign of harassment waged by individuals linked to cattle ranching and agribusiness interests. Recently, Iniciativa Amotocodie had warned of the risks of involuntary contact and potentially disastrous consequences of the Dry Chaco 2010 expedition planned by scientists from the United Kingdom.

In response to the raid and seizure of personal and institutional material from the Iniciativa Amotocodie offices, the organization declared:

"* Our condemnation of the abuse of public power incurred and the excessive action taken against an honourable social organization with a ten-year record of defence of human rights and indigenous rights in Paraguay.
* Our condemnation of the persecution of individuals and institutions that defend human rights, which is sadly becoming increasingly common.
* Likewise, we request of the competent authorities that the investigation launched with no clear motive, nor with the slightest prior determination of its legitimacy, be overturned or swiftly completed as soon as possible so that the organization can continue with its work, and render accounts to the government with regard to its tax obligations and to the international cooperation agencies that support the institution.
* The institution will appeal to the pertinent bodies to claim reparations for this serious violation."

The struggle to defend human rights is vast and never-ending. At WRM, we strive for every denunciation, every act of support, every analysis we undertake to contribute to this struggle, as part of our daily work aimed at fostering change towards a world of greater solidarity. It is in this spirit that we join in the commemoration of Human Rights Day.

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- Brazil: Aracruz sows violence and destruction in Espirito Santo

On the occasion of Human Rights Day, we think it would be opportune to share a report conducted this year in Brazil: a research study that analyses the impacts of commercial mega-projects on human rights, focusing in this case on large-scale monoculture tree plantations in the northern region of the state of Espirito Santo. This report represents an important contribution, because it offers an overview that expands and enriches the struggle for human rights, while promoting the more effective incorporation of the issue of human rights in the struggles waged by the communities affected.

Environmental imbalance; hunger; poverty; disease; widespread destruction; deception; insects; psychological impacts; destruction of forests, of plants, of springs, rivers, streams and human health; breakdown of economic, cultural and religious structures; lack of respect; loss of land; depression; disorganization and destruction of *quilombola* (Afro-Brazilian) families; military police invasion of communities; expulsion of the young; unemployment; lack of jobs; semi-slave labour; unsustainability; misappropriation; pollution; destruction of life; violation of rights.

All of these can be found among the answers given by Afro-Brazilians in the state of Espirito Santo when they were asked about the last 40 years of Aracruz operations in the state. They were interviewed during the research for "Relatório de Impactos em Direitos Humanos de Grandes Projetos (EIDH/RIDH): O caso do monocultivo de

eucalipto em larga escala no Norte do ES – o projeto agroindustrial da Aracruz Celulose/Fibria e as comunidades quilombolas do Sapê do Norte" (Report on the Human Rights Impact Assessment of Mega-Projects (HRIA): The case of large-scale monoculture eucalyptus plantations in the northern region of the state of Espirito Santo – the Aracruz Celulose/Fibria agroindustrial project and Afro-Brazilian communities in Sapê do Norte). The National Movement for Human Rights in Espirito Santo (MNDH/ES) and the Centre for the Defence of Human Rights (CDDH) of Serra presented the study to the Legislative Assembly of the State of Espirito Santo on 27 May.

This report forms part of three case studies carried out by the MNDH this past year to provide evidence of the urgent need to reassess the current procedures for the installation of mega-projects, such as large-scale plantations, mining projects and mega-dams. Currently, in Brazil and many other countries, the authorities only require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) before granting authorization for the implementation and operation of mega-projects. The MNDH considers that an EIA is totally insufficient for measuring the real impacts of a project, particularly when it comes to the issue of human rights. The three case studies from Brazil are being compiled into a book and will be presented to the Brazilian government to demand the adoption of a legal instrument that makes it mandatory to conduct a Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA) for any proposed projects of this kind in Brazil. It should be noted that an important source of reference for the study conducted in the Afro-Brazilian communities in Sapê do Norte was a practical guide for conducting a human rights impact assessment prepared by the non-governmental organization Rights and Democracy.

The HRIA in Espirito Santo, Brazil addressed 40 years of human rights violations in the more than 30 Afro-Brazilian communities in Sapê do Norte, in the municipalities of Conceição da Barra and São Mateus. These communities are home to approximately 6,000 Afro-Brazilians who have suffered drastic changes to their way of life after the establishment of monoculture eucalyptus plantations on their lands, mainly by the company Aracruz Celulose, now Fibria.

The study is divided into chapters on the human rights to land, to a healthy environment, to food and to work, and the process of persecution and criminalization of Afro-Brazilians carried out by Aracruz Celulose/Fibria in alliance with public security forces and the so-called Peace in the Countryside Movement (MPC) – an organization made up of large landholders and some local sectors who oppose the territorial rights of Afro-Brazilians.

The right to land

The research carried out over the course of a year revealed that the right to land of Afro-Brazilian communities has been gravely violated. The team that conducted the HRIA had access to a wealth of documents which prove that Aracruz misappropriated land belonging to these communities, with the knowledge and consent of the state.

The study reveals some extreme cases of manipulation. One of these is the case of Antonio Alage, who in 1947 (one year before his birth in 1948) “acquired” 200 hectares of land in Itauninas, Córrego de Santo Antonio, in the municipality of

Conceição da Barra. The same Alage, on 11 September 1975, requested 178 hectares of “devolutas lands” (1) from the state government of Espirito Santo, in a place called Rio Santana in the municipality of São Mateus. One day later, these lands were passed over to Vera Cruz Agroflorestal S/A, a subsidiary of Aracruz. The intermediaries received nothing in return; they were simply doing the company a “favour”. The HRIA points out that Aracruz’s ownership of these lands is consequently illegal and that “the communities were the victims of dispossession and false statements in the land acquisition process.”

These denunciations came to light in 2002 when a Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (CPI) was established to investigate Aracruz. Nevertheless, up until now, a request submitted to the Attorney’s General Office in 2004 to annul the illegal legitimization of ownership of these lands has had no results.

As a consequence of the resistance and organization of Afro-Brazilian communities, the Constitution and subsequently Decree 4887/2003 have sought to provide reparations for the violation of their territorial rights. Since then, INCRA (2) has undertaken five reports for the identification of Afro-Brazilian territories in Sapê do Norte, delimiting their borders and including various areas of land now occupied by Aracruz/Fibria eucalyptus plantations. However, so far none of these territories has been officially demarcated.

The environment

Deforestation and the impacts of the eucalyptus plantations have resulted in the violation of the right to an “ecologically balanced” environment as a “public good for the common use of the population”, which is enshrined in the Constitution as well as in international agreements. The arrival of Aracruz resulted in the communities’ loss of assets like the rainforest, with its flora and fauna, and rivers and streams, drastically reducing the quantity and quality of fish stocks in the region. Today, the rainforest has practically disappeared and the rivers have dried up from the impacts of the eucalyptus plantation.

In the HRIA, Afro-Brazilian community leaders report that the constant use of agrotoxic substances on the plantations has polluted the environment in which they live and on which they depend. One clear case is that of Jorge Francelino, who became seriously ill as a result of working in the application of these toxic substances on the eucalyptus plantations for Plantar, a company subcontracted by Aracruz. After many years, he finally succeeded in obtaining compensation from the company, but this has not given him his health back. “Sometimes I don’t know what I feel in my head. A headache goes away by taking a pill. But in my case, it’s an ache inside my head. My head goes numb, my forehead hurts, my nose hurts… One day I wake up deaf in one ear, the next day I’m deaf in the other ear. My throat hurts. And today, both of my legs are swollen!”

Moreover, the transformation of the Afro-Brazilian communities’ natural environment into a vast green desert has deprived them of the possibility of hunting, fishing, harvesting wood for building houses, gathering plants from the forest, making traditional crafts, planting food crops and the artisanal production of cassava flour. This results in the violation of their right to adequate food, which fosters food

insecurity. The study also reveals the differentiated violation of the rights of women hired by Plantar for the application of toxic substances on the eucalyptus plantations.

Criminalization

Today, in many of these communities, one of the most common sources of employment is the gathering of branches and other discarded bits of eucalyptus trees for the production of charcoal. This is an activity that many families depend on for their survival. This means that new generations are obliged to carry out work characterized by subhuman conditions, which is a violation of the right to decent work.

Initially, the gathering of this waste wood was permitted by Aracruz/Fibria through an agreement with a local association. In 2004, the company sought to gradually eliminate this practice, allegedly for tax-related and labour-related reasons. This quickly led to a process of criminalization of Afro-Brazilians, prohibiting and restricting their access to the plantations with the support of the security companies Visel and later Garra – also subcontracted by Aracruz – which are viewed by the communities as an armed militia.

The study reports that the first case occurred in 2006, when Aracruz/Fibria itself proposed that the Afro-Brazilian communities gather waste wood in an area in the municipality of Linhares. However, when the workers were on the site, the police arrested them and charged them with theft. A total of 82 people, most of them Afro-Brazilian, were arrested. Without their knowledge, a legal ruling banning entry to the area had been issued. Joelton Serafim Blandino, an Afro-Brazilian, recounts that “it was really difficult, because I didn’t have work to support my family when we were attacked in Linhares. I’m not a thief, I’m just struggling to survive and for my family to survive.”

Another case took place on 11 November 2009, in the community of São Domingos, when 130 military police arrived in the community with high-calibre weapons, dogs and horses and arrested 39 people, including a blind man and an 83-year-old man who died three months later. The study notes that the police action was particularly shocking because it was illegal: it was carried out at 8:00 a.m., while the legal order authorizing it was not issued until after noon. Moreover, the legal order authorized a search and arrests, but not imprisonment. On the way to the police station, the police stopped to get food at one of the Aracruz/Fibria offices, while the 39 people arrested were left handcuffed on the bus with a few heavily armed officers.

Based on an article by Winnie Overbeek (Red Alerta/Espirito Santo, Brazil woverbeek@terra.com.br), published in the newspaper *Brasil de Fato* on 22 June 2010. The full report is available at: www.cddh.com.br

(1) “Devolutas lands” are lands that belong to the state and which, according to the Federal Constitution, are to be allocated for small-scale farming in the framework of agrarian reform.
(2) National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform

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COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- Guatemala: Oil palm and sugar cane monoculture plantations hurt local communities on the Coyolate River

The Pacific watershed of Guatemala comprises 17 river basins. Most of the rivers in this region have a relatively short length of around 100 kilometres, from their source in the upper reaches of mountains and volcanoes to their mouths on the Pacific coast. One of these rivers is the Coyolate, which begins in the mountains of the department (state) of Chimaltenango and flows through numerous municipalities and communities. In the middle portion of the Coyolate river basin there are large areas of land used for monoculture plantations and livestock raising.

Sugar cane and oil palm plantations have been established in the region for decades, due to its fertile volcanic soil and abundant water resources. But the sugar cane and oil palm production system, like that of many other monoculture crops, requires huge amounts of water, which is obtained by partially or totally diverting rivers towards the plantations. This is done by building a series of walls and dikes to create channels that carry and distribute the river water to the plantations for irrigation. This practice has serious consequences for local communities: during the dry season, the rivers can dry up completely, affecting small and medium-sized livestock producers, local farmers, and the more than 15,000 people who live in the Coyolate River area and depend on its waters for their daily needs.

During the rainy season, the open channels can overflow and flood local communities, leading to states of emergency, evacuations and serious losses and damages. The diversion and over-use of the waters of the Coyolate modify and alter the natural course of the river, affecting the people and ecosystems that depend on it. This situation is combined with other impacts caused by large-scale sugar cane production, such as aerial spraying of chemical products to speed up the growth of sugar cane which also affect crops of beans, corn, peppers and coconuts, among others.

The drive for expansion has led sugar cane plantations and refineries to cut down large numbers of trees, which are also used as fuel for the refinery furnaces. Riverine forests are also affected by deforestation and the impact of soil erosion. The river banks have become increasingly fragile and cannot tolerate the abrupt changes and poor use of the soil in general.

The Coyolate also carries and supplies water to a mangrove system at its mouth. When water is diverted from the river, it does not reach the mangroves, which could lead to the systematic death of this ecosystem.

The case of the Coyolate River illustrates something that is happening to almost all the rivers on the southern coast of Guatemala, where the common denominators are the irrational exploitation of the area's resources, including water resources, and the widespread contamination caused by agro-industrial production.

The communities affected, such as Santa Odilia, have denounced this situation for years, but no real solution has been offered to them. Although they are grateful for the humanitarian aid provided to them, they are tired of depending on it. The solution to their problems is for agro-industries to respect the rivers, to stop diverting them, to use the water they need without depriving communities downriver of water and subjecting them to disastrous situations.

The diversion of the rivers and the environmental degradation caused by oil palm and banana companies have also been denounced by organizations like the Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC), which forms part of the Vía Campesina network. They have submitted complaints and demands for action to the corresponding Guatemalan government authorities with regard to the diversion of rivers in Ocós and Coatepeque, municipalities in the department of San Marcos. As a result of these demands, a high-level commission was created and has participated in monitoring activities in the plantations operated by the companies Bananera Sociedad Anónima and Palma del Horizonte. The CUC has called on the high-level commission to urgently issue a report on the inspections carried out, and to ensure that the report is objective, unbiased and fair. They have also asked the commission to propose effective solutions to deal with these problems.

Recently, a delegation from the Latin American Network Against Monoculture Tree Plantations (RECOMA) visited the community of Santa Odilia and gathered testimonies from the local population. Together with RECOMA, the community drafted a letter that will be sent to government representatives. The people of Santa Odilia hope to raise awareness among the international community, and especially the participants in negotiations around the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, of the local impacts of the false solutions to climate change being promoted as clean fuels or "biofuels", as in the case of palm oil. The letter is available in Spanish at http://wrm.org.uy/paises/Guatemala/Carta_desvio_rio_coyolate.html, and can be signed by sending an email message to recomala@gmail.com.

The government of Guatemala must take swift action to confront this situation, which affects thousands of Guatemalan citizens and violates their most basic human rights. Local communities are demanding that the rivers be saved, because saving the rivers will save thousands of peoples.

By Carlos Salvatierra, email: Salvatierraleal@gmail.com

With the support of Savia – Escuela de Pensamiento Ecologista: savia.guate@gmail.com and Comité de Unidad Campesina (CUC): cuc@intelnett.com

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- Oil palm in Nigeria: shifting from smallholders and women to mass production

West Africa used to be the centre of the palm oil industry. The export of palm kernels began in 1832 and by 1911 “British” West Africa alone exported 157,000 tonnes of which about 75 percent came from Nigeria. In the 1870s, British administrators took the plant to Malaysia and in 1934 that country surpassed Nigeria as the largest exporter of the product. By 1966, Malaysia and Indonesia had surpassed Africa’s total palm oil production.

In Nigeria, oil palm is indigenous to the coastal plain, having migrated inland as a staple crop. 80% of production comes from several million smallholders spread over an estimated area ranging from 1.65 million hectares to a maximum of 3 million hectares. For millions of Nigerians, oil palm cultivation is part of their way of life – indeed it is part of their culture.

As reported by Chima Uzoma Darlington, an Ngwa man from Abia State of Nigeria, “in Ngwa land and most parts of eastern Nigeria, the palm tree is highly valued. It contributes so much to the rural economy that we call it ‘Osisi na ami ego’ in my dialect, which literally means ‘the tree that produces money’. Apart from the oil, virtually every part of the tree contributes to rural livelihood. From the palm fronds, we get materials for making baskets and brooms. The tree is tapped for palm wine especially in Enugu State; and many young men in the rural areas earn their living as palm fruit harvesters while many women (married and unmarried) trade on the fruits.

In my place of origin, many of our prominent sons today, were trained using proceeds from palm trees. Up till today, many community developmental projects are financed using proceeds from the sale of oil palm fruits. In view of any developmental project, the Head of the Village or Community places a ban on individual harvesting of oil palm fruits for a specified period. When it is time for harvesting, individual members of the village or community are mandated to pay a specified amount of money to qualify them to partake in the harvest, which takes place collectively on an agreed date. This was also how they were able to train some of our prominent sons. Even as at today, indigent rural dwellers still pledge their palm trees to others in order to get money to take care of some needs like sending their children to school.”

As documented in the case of Akwa Ibom State, a southeastern coastal state in Nigeria and one of the areas where oil is produced in large quantities, women play an important role in the production, storage and commercialization of red palm oil, a common ingredient in the cooking of almost every type of dish prepared in Nigeria.

The processing of the fruits into vegetable oil is most commonly carried out by women. It begins with harvesting the ripe fruits which grows in clusters weighing between 20-30 kilos. The women work communally in groups of 2 or 3. The harvested fruits are cut into smaller clusters and sprinkled with water, and then, covered with thick jute bags or banana leaves to aid fermentation and make it easy for the seeds to be picked easily from its spiky stalks.

Two or three days after, the seeds are picked, washed and packed in to iron drums and boiled. Fire kindled from gathered fire-wood is usually prepared a night before

and at intervals, rekindled to keep the fire cooking constantly hot. As early as 4 or 5 a.m. the boiled seeds whose fleshy pericarp has become soft and tender are scooped with a small basket or sieve bowl into an earth dug-out mortar, which has been fitted with a metal drum. The boiled seeds are then pounded with a wooden pestle to separate the fleshy pericarp from its hard kernel seeds.

The next stage involves scooping this mixture onto a flat trough or onto the ground which had been covered with banana leaves. The kernel seeds are then separated from the fibrous mash. This is then scooped into a cylindrical hollow press. The wrench is then turned slowly and gradually, as this is being done, the extracted oil from the holes in the press is guided through a duct at the bottom of the press into a large bowl, trough or container. This process is carried out several times until oil is drained from the marshy mixture.

The next stage is carefully draining the oil into containers; in doing so, the women are careful not to allow dirt, fiber or other foreign matter into the oil. The finished product if in large quantity may be further stored in larger metal drums awaiting buyers who come to buy them off these women and transported to other towns. If the oil is not so large in quantity they are then taken to the local market for sale; either way, the Akwa Ibom woman earns her money.

“These palm trees”, informs Chima, “are mostly the ones occurring naturally on their pockets of land and not monoculture plantations. Most parts of the eastern Nigeria bear secondary regrowth forests with the oil palm tree being the dominant tree species.”

In the past, the Nigerian government had tried to implement large-scale oil palm plantations, most of which resulted in complete failures. Such were the cases of the 1960's Cross River State project and of the European Union-funded “Oil palm belt rural development programme” in the 1990's. This project included the plantation of 6,750 hectares of oil palm within an area thought to be one of the largest remnants of tropical rainforest in Nigeria and it was implemented by a company called Risonpalm Ltd., partly owned by the government. In spite of local opposition, the project moved forward and EU funding was only discontinued in 1995, seven years after its approval. The plantation was abandoned in 1999 and reactivated in 2003. In 2010, the local governor announced his intention to privatize it.

The World Bank played an important role in the promotion of the oil palm business in Nigeria. According to a recent World Bank document, Nigeria has been “the second largest recipient of World Bank palm oil sector projects, with six projects over the 1975 to 2009 period. One project is still under implementation. Results achieved included the plantation of 42,658 ha of oil palm, as well as road improvement and increased milling capacity.”

The Federal Government appears to be now willing to revitalise oil palm production. In April 2010, the government launched a Common Fund for Commodities “in order to improve the income generating potential of oil palm in West and Central Africa.” The initiative was developed by UNIDO and funding is shared between Nigeria, Cameroon, UNIDO and the private sector.

In line with the above, officials of Nigerian Institute for Oil Palm Research (NIFOR) have recently said that "promotion of private sector participation in oil palm plantation holds the ace in effective revival of the produce business in the country." Director of NIFOR, Dr Dere Okiy has stated that "the land tenure system in the country" is a "limiting factor against private mass production of palm oil by individuals" and "called on local and state governments to provide land areas to oil palm farmers to encourage mass production of palm oil."

Everything seems to point at the possible expansion of oil palm plantations in Nigeria -revitalizing old ones and establishing new ones- both aimed at the national and international market. But, as Chima warns, "The establishment of monoculture plantations usually involves the destruction of the existing vegetation, and this will amount to the felling of the naturally occurring oil palm trees on which the people depend for their livelihood." And he concludes: "Land grabbing from rural people to encourage large scale monoculture oil palm plantations will impoverish them the more and cause hardship."

Source: "Oil palm in Nigeria", WRM draft at http://oilpalminafrica.wordpress.com/2010/08/06/oil-palm-in-nigeria/ and comments from Chima, Uzoma Darlington.

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- Amazon Basin: IIRSA opens the way for rainforest invasion

As the neo-extractivist and development policies of the region's governments continue to move forward, they come hand in hand with the destruction of the natural environment and the genocidal ethnocide of the indigenous peoples who inhabit it. The crossroads we are facing is more critical than ever: if the capitalist invasion is not stopped, the indigenous peoples and the rainforests will disappear. If the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) – so zealously promoted by the governments of Brazil and other countries in the region, the multilateral financial institutions and transnational corporations – is not stopped, then the rainforest and the indigenous peoples will be nothing more than pictures and artefacts in the museum of horror chronicling the violent conquest of the last internal continental frontier to open the way for the plunder of its natural resources, the irreversible alteration of its ecosystems, and the extinction of its cultures.

Brazil has become one of the world's ten largest economies, and accounts for more than one half of South American economic activity. Brazil's GDP represents 55% of the GDP of South America as a whole. The new capitalist monster has fixed its sights on a specific goal: to open up the Amazon basin to the large-scale exploitation of natural resources, thus completing its territorial domination and inexorable westward march.

A complementary requirement for fulfilling this goal was to break down the geographic barrier that the vast rainforests and wide rivers have historically represented, serving to hold off the penetration of transportation, machinery, markets

and big corporations. As a result, opening up the Amazon region and physically linking it with export ports on the world's two most important oceans, the Atlantic and Pacific, and through them with the rest of the globalized world, is the main objective of the IIRSA initiative, launched in August 2000 in Brasilia. And now, just ten years and a few months later, IIRSA is on the verge of achieving its objective.

When construction is finished on the Billinghurst Bridge over the Madre de Dios River, which will connect the city of Puerto Maldonado with the village of El Triunfo, both in the department (state) of Madre de Dios in southeastern Peru, it will mark the completion of the so-called Peru-Brazil Inter-Oceanic Highway Corridor, and South American history will change forever.

Until now, river navigation was the most effective way of penetrating the rainforest. During the rubber boom between the years of 1870 and 1914, which marked the first forcible incorporation of the Amazon basin into the world market, the rivers became the means of entry of thousands and thousands of outsiders into the rainforest, leading to a genocide of indigenous peoples that continues to be hidden and silenced today.

The current borders between Brazil, Peru and Bolivia in the territories now crossed by the Inter-Oceanic Highway Corridor and its area of influence were established during this violent invasion, in which entire peoples were enslaved and forced to work as rubber tappers, leading to the death of a great many. Some took refuge deep in the rainforest, around the headwaters of the rivers where they were no longer navigable, and were thus able to avoid total extermination. These are the peoples currently known as "uncontacted indigenous tribes" or "indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation".

A century after this ethnic slaughter, many of these peoples who chose freedom over annihilation have since been forced by Christian missionaries to leave their isolation and currently live in a state known as "initial contact" with the hegemonic society of the countries in which they live. This is a situation in which the survival of their way of life and culture is extremely vulnerable and in danger of slowly disappearing, a tragedy known as ethnocide.

Today, an interconnection like the one to be created by this bridge, no matter how remote or isolated the regions affected are considered from a national point of view, is possible for the new world order based on the development of productive forces on a global scale, and in which, for this very reason, the aggression and threats have reached a planetary scale. The bridge, we must stress, is the perfect symbol for IIRSA, which is just another name for globalization in South America.

Its inauguration will merely speed up the historical processes of genocide and ethnocide against indigenous peoples, leading to the permanent extinction of the last uncontacted indigenous peoples of the Amazon rainforest, once their lands are invaded as a result of the aggressive new dynamics ushered in by the highway corridor.

Indigenous communities today are already caught up in ongoing conflicts over the defence of their territories. What will happen when there are no longer any obstacles

to stop the corporations from entering anywhere they want, wherever there is a natural resource to be exploited?

If the capitalist invasion is not stopped, the indigenous peoples will disappear, their communities will disappear, along with their ways of life, their customs, their traditions. And once the peoples who defended the rainforest – because it was essential to their survival and their culture – have disappeared, then the rainforest itself will disappear, burned down, deforested and wiped off the face of the earth to make way for permanent occupation by agribusiness and large-scale cattle farming.

Extracted from: "IIRSA y los pueblos indígenas aislados y vulnerables. El Puente Billinghurst y la Interoceánica: punto de no retorno para el genocidio y la devastación de la Amazonía", by Pablo Cingolani, 21/11/10, which was sent to us by the author. The full text is available - in Spanish- at: http://alainet.org/active/42481&lang=es

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- Philippines: Deforestation through mining subsidized by CDM project

In the Philippines, mining, along with logging, has been among the forces behind the country's loss of forest cover: from 17 million hectares in 1934 to just three million in 2003 or an 82 per cent decline. While about sixty per cent of the country's land area was covered with forest seventy years ago, now it is less than ten per cent. (17) And with over half of ongoing and planned mining operations located in areas that are ecologically highly vulnerable and with over a third of approved mining and exploration leases located in intact forests (18) -- much of the little that remains could be lost to extractive industries such as mining.

In addition to contributing to global climate change, mining has a devastating impact on local communities. Denuded forests, degraded mountainsides, and polluted rivers and seas have resulted in residents being driven from their lands, deprived of access to food, water, and livelihood, and exposed to harmful chemicals. Over the years, a series of large and small mining disasters have inundated rivers, irrigation systems, and farmlands with toxic mining residues, killing fish, aquatic life, and crops, and threatening public health. More than 800 mine sites litter the countryside -- contaminated but abandoned. Apart from the ecological destruction, the militarization accompanying mining projects has spawned violence and human rights abuses.

Because many mining operations take place in upland areas, mining's impacts have been borne disproportionately by one sector that has been more marginalized than others: indigenous peoples. As much as half of all areas being claimed by mining companies for their operations are areas considered ancestral lands by indigenous peoples. Numerous cases of indigenous peoples being displaced from their lands and cut off from their sources of livelihood have been documented. Under the law, no mining can commence without their consent; in practice, mining companies have used their resources and connections to skirt this requirement, buy off support, and divide indigenous communities.

And yet, those mining companies, the very agents of deforestation, are being rewarded by Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects - a scheme that allows developed countries to buy “credits” from projects that supposedly reduce greenhouse gas emissions in developing countries, instead of cutting their own emissions domestically. Each CDM credit represents a payment made by a corporation in a rich country for a poor country not to use the limited resource so that the former can use this resource for itself.

The largest CDM project in the Philippines to date, the Montalban Landfill Methane Recovery and Power Generation Project, illustrates the tangle of corporate interests caught up in polluting, carbon-intensive, resource-extractive activities to be rewarded by the CDM. Accounting for around half of all CDM credits from the country, the project claims to “reduce” emissions by around 5.9 million tons worth of carbon dioxide in ten years by capturing and converting methane from trash to electricity.

The project is run by a subsidiary of Nickel Asia Corporation, the Philippines’ largest nickel mining company. Nickel Asia was founded and is owned by mining magnates Salvador and Manuel Zamora, of the wealthy and influential Zamora family. Manuel and Salvador are respectively ranked 20th and 32nd richest men in the Philippines according to Forbes magazine. The two have a combined net worth of nearly $200 million, or the equivalent of the average annual income of around 55,000 Filipino families. Manuel was former president and present director of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, the mining industry lobby group.

Nickel Asia has four subsidiaries that own equity or operating interests in various mining operations across the country. The vice-chairman of one of these subsidiaries is Philip T. Ang, the country’s 33rd richest individual. Nickel Asia also has minority interests in Coral Bay Nickel Corporation, the majority of which is owned by a Japanese consortium and ran by Sumitomo Metal Mining Corporation, Japan’s top nickel and second largest copper producer. Together, these subsidiaries dominate the local nickel mining industry, with a combined net income of nearly 15 billion pesos in 2007 -- over a billion pesos more than the budget of the government’s own environmental regulatory agency, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Apart from chairing Nickel Asia, Manuel Zamora has also been a member of the board of Philex Mining Corporation, the country’s largest copper and gold mining company. Philex has mines in Negros Occidental and Zamboanga and ongoing operations in Benguet and Surigao del Norte. In Zamboanga, it has a coal mining project with about two million tons of coal reserves. It is also into oil and gas exploration. Half of Nickel Asia’s shares is owned by Luis Virata, the country’s 15th richest man. He also sits on the board of another mining firm, Benguet Corporation, the Philippines’ oldest mining company.

The Zamora mining operations are accused by environmentalists and indigenous communities, and local residents of undermining laws protecting forests, displacing indigenous peoples, poisoning water sources, and cutting-off people from their means of subsistence. In one mine, it has even been implicated in direct violence against residents opposed to its operations.

With the CDM, the Zamoras and their CDM venture partners can expect to earn 0.3 billion to 1.7 billion pesos a year in estimated revenues from their Montalban project -- as much as ten per cent of all their income from mining in 2007 and more than the individual incomes of their Cagdianao or Rio Tuba mining operations. This provides proof that the CDM's impact on its developers' consolidated financial sheets may not be negligible.

Not only is the CDM subsidizing activities that promote climate change, it is also boosting the profits of some of the very parties most responsible for perpetrating deforestation and environmental degradation. Indeed, it's a Costly Dirty Money-Making scheme.

Excerpted and adapted from: "The CDM in the Philippines: Rewarding Polluters", Herbert Docena, Focus on the Global South, http://focusweb.org/philippines/content/view/334/7/; "Costly Dirty Money-Making schemes", Herbert Docena, Focus on the Global South, June 2010, http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/sites/thecornerhouse.org.uk/files/CDM%20Philippines.pdf

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COMMUNITIES AND TREE MONOCULTURES

- Uruguay: Tree plantation workers and agrotoxic spraying

One of the promises made by plantation companies to gain support – from the government and from local communities – is that they will create employment. What they fail to specify beforehand is the type of employment they will create and under what kind of working conditions, in terms of both salaries and workers' health and safety.

The majority of jobs on tree plantations, except for pruning, involve the use of agrotoxic substances at one stage or another. In the nurseries where the seedlings are raised, it is mainly fungicides that are used, on an ongoing basis. Preparing the land for planting involves the use of chemical herbicides, fertilizers and insecticides. After the trees are planted, agrotoxic chemicals continue to be applied for a year to control the growth of weeds. Finally, when the trees are thinned or logged, herbicides are used once again to eliminate the sprouts.

A recent study by PAN-Uruguay on tree plantation workers and agrotoxic substance use (see "Uruguay: trabajo y agrotóxicos en la forestación" in http://www.rapaluruguay.org/agrotoxicos/Uruguay/FOSA.pdf) reveals some interesting facts. The research was carried out on plantations operated by FOSA (Forestal Oriental S.A.), a transnational company that is owned by UPM (formerly Botnia) and which among other things is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

The study provides a detailed list of the chemical substances used by the company, including different herbicides (acetochlor, glyphosate, oxyfluorfen, haloxyfop-methyl),

the insecticide fipronil, and various fertilizers (ammonium sulphate, phosphate), noting that these substances are potentially carcinogenic and can cause hormonal alterations, among other health impacts. Therefore, as the study reveals, while it is true that the substances used on the plantations are authorized by the Uruguayan Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries and by the FSC, it is no less true that they are all highly toxic, both for the workers who handle them and for the environment.

The use of these agro-toxic products means that workers are subjected to ongoing, prolonged, daily exposure to chemical substances. Moreover, some workplaces do not provide sufficient drinking water or adequate hygienic conditions, which aggravates exposure to these substances. The half hour that workers are allowed for lunch is not enough time to fully remove their protective gear or to properly wash their hands, and so most normally only take off their gloves and masks to eat.

The workers reported that "the way the company hires workers is by announcing that there are job openings, and those who are interested can sign up." Potential candidates then make a first visit to the site and "check" for themselves whether or not they are fit to do the work required, because if they suffer adverse reactions to the products being used (headaches, vomiting, dizziness), they are obviously not cut out for it. In other words, the products used are so toxic that they allow for the "self-selection" of staff based on their ability to physically withstand them. The wife of one of the workers added that "after I washed his coveralls I would throw the water [from the wash tub] on the grass, and it would turn brown, as if it had been burned."

Another point that should be stressed is that the work of applying these substances with a backpack sprayer – categorized as unskilled labour, despite the degree of specialization involved – is carried out on a piecework basis. This demands high levels of output if workers hope to earn a decent day's wages, and on days when bad weather keeps them from working, they don't get paid at all. Walking long distances over vast stretches of land among weeds and furrows carrying a backpack that weighs around 16 kilos makes it almost impossible to withstand wearing a protective suit, especially in the summer.

One woman reported that "every worker had to cover a *melga* (the width between two furrows). You had to hurry, because everything was scheduled for the work to be completed in a certain amount of time, without taking into account the temperature or how 'dirty' the fields were."

According to the testimony of another worker, the hot summer season is the worst. "When we took off our coveralls it was like they'd been taken out of a pail of water, they were soaked with sweat." "After walking 30 metres you feel like you can't walk anymore. But you have to walk for kilometres. The ground isn't level, you have to walk up and down hills, and it's exhausting. Between the weight you have to carry and the high shrubs it's really difficult to walk. You end up with terrible knee pains. You have to walk long distances carrying a lot of weight, and you get blisters and calluses from walking so much."

"The weeds are tall and some of them have thorns, like *tutía* (sticky nightshade), thistle and *amor seco*, which has tiny thorns that stick to your coveralls around knee-

height. You also have to be really careful to make sure the thorns don't tear a hole in the hose, because even if that happens you have to keep working, because if you stop, you don't get paid. Since you have to meet a minimum quota, you have to move really fast and sometimes you even have to run. Sometimes when you're rushing, the cap on the backpack sprayer comes loose and it drips onto your body."

On top of all of this, workers are hired through outsourcing or subcontracting. This system and the fact that work crews are constantly moved around makes union organization difficult, since workers are isolated in small groups, working under the orders and rules of the subcontracting company that hired them. This lack of organization prevents workers from being able to demand better pay, better occupational health protection, and other workers' rights.

One worker clarified that "there is no union organization in Forestal Oriental. There is also very strong social pressure against unions, and the way that workers are hired, through subcontracting companies, makes organizing very difficult."

The chemical products used also affect the fauna. They accumulate in the soil and get into local waterways, by seeping through the soil or being washed into the waterways by rain. Some of the consequences of the resulting contamination include the death of hares as well as armadillos and other species of native fauna; the degradation of the soil, which suffers a significant loss of organic matter and an increase in acidity, leading in turn to the alteration of normal values of other physiochemical properties; the contamination of water in wells and cisterns used for human consumption; and the death of fish in freshwater rivers.

Meanwhile, the PAN-Uruguay report reveals that Forestal Oriental, in conjunction with Bio-Uruguay (a private institution), carried out a research study into biological pest control of leaf-cutting ants (the insect that poses the greatest threat to plantations) using entomopathogenic fungi (see http://www.biouruguay.org/noticias/photos/informefinal%20hormigas2.pdf). What does this mean? That in view of the danger posed by fipronil – which is now recognized as being highly toxic not only to bees but also to human beings – a non-polluting alternative was found for controlling leaf-cutting ants using a native fungus considered harmless for the people handling it and for the environment. But although this research was completed in May 2008, the company is still not using this safe alternative solution on its plantations.

Despite all of the above, the company is protected behind the green label granted by the FSC (a label that has been discredited internationally, partly because of endorsing practices like these), which certifies its plantations as "environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable." The case of FOSA provides overwhelming proof that monoculture tree plantations cannot be legitimately certified, because they have serious impacts on the environment, obstruct the right of workers to organize, endanger the health of workers, and economically benefit the plantation companies alone.

Article based on "Uruguay: trabajo y agrotóxicos en la forestación", a joint publication of Rap-Al Uruguay (http://www.rapaluruguay.org) and Rel-UITA (www.rel-uita.org) authored by María Isabel Cárcamo, e-mail: coord@rapaluruguay.org. The publication

is availabe at http://www.rapaluruguay.org/agrotoxicos/Uruguay/FOSA.pdf

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- South Africa: Research shows conclusive results on the impacts of tree plantations on water

At a time when water resources are becoming scarce and ever more threatened by global warming and climate change, a research carried out in South Africa becomes quite timely. After 70 years of monitoring in the Jonkershoek reserve, in the Western Cape Province, the study reveals the impact of monoculture tree plantations on underground water and streamflow. This is very important, given that plantations use significant amounts of water and have expanded greately in South Africa, a country with scarse water resources.

"The Jonkershoek Research Catchments: History and Impacts on Commercial Forestry in South Africa" by Arthur Chapman, was presented on September 2007 to a Field Day of the International Plantation Certification Symposium 2007 "Impact of Certification on Plantation Forestry", South Africa.

As a follow up and through the collaboration of GeaSphere / EcoDoc Africa - made possible with funds from the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation -, the educational documentary "Plantation Trees and Water Use: Seventy years of Jonkershoek Paired Catchment Experiments" (part 1 and part 2) presented Arthur Chapman sharing on a tour the background of seventy years of hydrological research in the Jonkershoek Valley and how the paired catchment experiments work, and how much water trees really use.

The story starts in South Africa in the 1850s, when the region saw their forests depleted by European settlers. To mend that, a program of afforestation was established using exotic species, particularly eucalyptus from Australia and pine trees from the Mediterranean and North America. As early as 1900 concerns grew among farmers because they noticed that streams were declining below the tree plantations.

The concern was eventually taken to the 1935 Fourth British Empire Forestry Conference. The then Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry spoke on the "question of the influence of afforestation on water supply about which a controversy had arisen, especially with regard to the use of exotics, notably the eucalyptus and to a lesser extent the pines".

The conference acknowledged the problem and agreed to a program of hydrological research. By 1936 construction of infrastructure was underway on weirs (small dams) in the Jonkershoek State Forest and a programme of research was developed. Since that date tree plantations have been monitored in 9 catchments.

The experimental design was based on the paired-catchment approach. The principle is that the streamflow from two untreated catchments are compared, so as to establish their natural relationship. One is then treated, i.e. planted to trees. The

change in the relationship between the two catchments after afforestation could then be ascribed to the treatment or influences of afforestation. Twenty nine raingauges, of which 12 were continuously-recording, measured what water was going into the catchments and 8 continuously-recording weirs (6 remain operational) measured what was coming out.

Catchment areas range from 27 – 246 ha, with relatively steep slopes and strong rainfall gradients, caused by orographic forcing in incoming north-west frontal systems during the winter months (the Western Cape having a Mediterranean climate). Mean annual rainfalls of about 1200 mm on the lower slopes can go as high as 3000 mm/a.

Solid and fairly conclusive results on the impacts of tree plantations on water have come out including certain rules of thumb.

Where pines grow the water is about 300-400 mm rainfall equivalent. Namely, the tree plantation is using up to 400 mm rainfall equivalent which means 400 million litres of water per sq Km per annum that does not come out in the streams.

Eucalyptus have shown to be quite more prolific in their water use: 600 mm rainfall equivalent (600 million litres of water per sq Km per annum that does not come out in the streams). In one or two cases a very deep soil profile full of soil moisture used up the rainfall that was coming in as well as the existing soil moisture that would have gone originally to the stream. The streamflow dried up completely and it took 4 years for the soil profile to restablish itself and the streamflow to reappear after the clearfelling.

The onset of streamflow reductions was evident approximately at 5 years, and is strongly associated with plantation age, up to a peak reduction occurring at around 15 years, followed by a gentle decline in water use. A rule of thumb is 30-40 mm streamflow reduction per 10% of catchment planted, at peak water use.

Asked about how much water does each tree use every day, Chapman replied that 50 lts a day is a reasonable standard when the trees are between 5-7 years old. However, in the case of eucalyptus, the average may range from 100 lts to 1 000 lts depending on where the landscape is. Trees next to a stream can use twice that amount of water because they have more access to it.

The conclusions of the study and documentary come in support of an urgently needed debate on the peril of large scale monoculture tree plantations, particularly regarding the issue of water in every country where they are being established.

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- Chikweti plantations in Mozambique: Will the FSC continue certifying the uncertifiable?

The FSC (Forest Stewardship Council)website has announced that the company Chikweti Forests of Niassa, which operates in the province of Niassa in northern Mozambique, is seeking the FSC “green label” for a 33,916-hectare monoculture tree

plantation. According to the website, the pre-evaluation was carried out in November 2010, and the main evaluation is anticipated for February/March 2011. The FSC certification body in this case is Soil Association Woodmark, based in the United Kingdom.

Companies that promote large-scale monoculture pine and eucalyptus plantations began establishing operations in Niassa in 2005, and Chikweti is one of the most prominent among them. The companies have been drawn to Niassa because it is the largest province in Mozambique, it offers a flat terrain and fertile soil, and it has a relatively small population of one million people.

But although the population of Niassa is relatively small, no fewer than 70% to 80% of its inhabitants live in rural areas. Since 2007, when the companies began planting trees, the main peasant organization in Mozambique, the National Union of Small Farmers (UNAC), has denounced the fact that the companies are planting eucalyptus trees on land that belongs to peasant communities, thus reducing peasant families' access to land for growing crops. According to UNAC, this threatens the food security and sovereignty of local families and the region as a whole.

It should be noted that the Mozambique Land Law of 1997 guarantees peasant families access to their lands. When a company wants to use land that belongs to a community, even if it has a concession from the national government, it must carry out a consultation process with the community. However, a 2008 report conducted for the Embassy of Sweden revealed that this process was not effectively carried out, and the communities' views were not heard. The communities have also complained about the poor working conditions offered by the pine and eucalyptus plantation companies.

In November 2009, two activists from the Brazil-based Alert Against the Green Desert Network travelled to communities in Niassa to hear from community leaders – known as *régulos* – about their experiences with pine and eucalyptus plantations in the region. At the same time, they shared their own experiences with communities in Brazil that have suffered the impacts of monoculture tree plantations for over 40 years. The Brazilian activists were able to confirm the denunciations made by UNAC, which were gathered in a report published by WRM: "The Expansion of Tree Monocultures in Mozambique: Impacts on local peasant communities in the province of Niassa, a field report". The report noted that the companies whose plantations were causing problems for local communities were seeking FSC certification.

Perhaps this is why Chikweti Forests of Niassa called on a group of its technicians to respond to and challenge the WRM publication (see http://wrm.org.uy/countries/Mozambique/carta_Chikweti.pdf), particularly with regard to the complaints of local community members who reported that they had been fired by the company, that they had no right to transportation, that there was differentiated treatment of "white" and "black" workers, and that the monoculture tree plantations were taking over lands used by peasant families, among other complaints. The company addressed these issues in its letter, although here we will only highlight its claim that it uses "abandoned" fields for planting trees.

WRM, in turn, responded to the letter from Chikweti (see

http://wrm.org.uy/countries/Mozambique/Resposta_WRM_para_Chikweti.pdf), stressing that "our publication is the result of real and frank conversations with peasant men and women, who expressed their complaints and concerns," and that "the seriousness of these complaints and concerns led WRM (…) to publish them." With regard to the issue of land use, WRM stressed that according to the peasant farmers interviewed, the fields that the company was using for monoculture tree plantations were not in fact "abandoned" but had merely been left fallow to allow the soil to rest before replanting.

In October 2010, two peasant farmers representing UNAC visited Brazil to continue the exchange begun by the Brazilian activists. There they were able to see with their own eyes the disastrous impacts of monocultures and eucalyptus trees on peasant communities in the states of Espírito Santo and Minas Gerais. They witnessed first-hand how water sources had dried up, how peasant families were gradually forced off their lands, and how the lack of access to land for those who remained affected their food security and sovereignty, especially for women. As in Mozambique, the companies in Brazil had also promised to create many new jobs, but once the plantations were established, very few workers in the communities were able to obtain employment, and the conditions were extremely poor. On the other hand, the peasant agriculture initiatives that they visited demonstrated how this way of working with the land generates a great deal more employment and income, preserves the environment, and allows families to continue living in the countryside.

It appears that the companies operating in Niassa are following in the footsteps of those responsible for what has happened in Brazil, particularly in terms of the situation of local peasant families. What's more, they want to legitimize their activities with the FSC green label, as in the case of Chekweti Forests of Niassa.

In this regard, we will quote once again from WRM's response to Chikweti: "We would like to point out as well that we have observed, on an international level, that the process of certification under the principles and criteria of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has ceased to consult with and listen to the communities impacted by tree monocultures, which has benefited the eucalyptus and pine plantation companies. It is precisely these companies that hire consulting firms to carry out certification. In our opinion, for this and other reasons, the FSC has irresponsibly permitted the certification of hundreds of millions of hectares of eucalyptus and pine monoculture plantations operated by companies around the world, erroneously declaring that these plantations are 'socially beneficial, environmentally appropriate and economically viable.'"

Finally, we have a message for the Mozambican authorities, the FSC and above all the European investors in the monoculture tree plantations in Niassa (1): a monoculture tree plantation, whether of eucalyptus, pine or any other tree species, does not bring benefits to local communities; on the contrary, it causes negative impacts like those taking place in Niassa. The FSC cannot be allowed to once again certify the uncertifiable.

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(1) The government of Sweden, the Norwegian company Green Resources and the

Global Solidarity Forest Fund, supported by churches in Sweden and Norway and the Dutch pension fund ABP.

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