



[Printable version](#) | [For free subscription](#) | [Previous issues](#)

also available in [French](#), [Portuguese](#) and [Spanish](#)

WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT
Monthly Bulletin - Issue 190 - May 2013

OUR VIEWPOINT

- [The “green economy”, biodiversity and “forest intelligence”](#)

COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- [Gender in the Fossil Patriarchy: New women’s carbon standard claims to ‘empower’ women](#)
WOCAN has launched the Women’s Carbon Standard, “genderwashing” a mechanism that from the start was a false solution and which undermines women’s rights, increases exposure of women to the impacts of climate change and exacerbates injustice.
- [Peru: REDD+ places the Amazon rainforest and biodiversity at the service of the financial market](#)
FADEMAD, a federation of small farmers based in the Peruvian Amazon, warns in an open letter to its members that the implementation of REDD+ in Peru is promoting the commodification of the rainforest and its biodiversity, taking advantage of the climate crisis to create new business opportunities. A prime example is the World Bank’s Forest Investment Programme (FIP) in Peru. While blaming small farmers for deforestation, it paves the way for the establishment of large-scale monoculture plantations of crops like oil palm and for mining, oil and gas projects.
- [Large scale logging in Africa pervaded by bribery and corruption](#)
Logging permits designed to promote small businesses and meet local needs are being allocated in their hundreds to industrial logging companies in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana and Liberia.
- [Congo Basin: Report on expansion of oil palm plantations](#)
Megaprojects covering half a million hectares and involving different companies and countries in the Congo Basin are under way despite strong opposition for their likely impacts on forests and local communities.

COMMUNITIES AND MONOCULTURE TREE PLANTATIONS

- [Brazil: Threat of monoculture eucalyptus plantation expansion in the Northeast](#)
The Araripe Plateau between the states of Piauí, Ceará and Pernambuco, which is covered by the Caatinga biome – extremely rich in biodiversity – and where peasant agriculture is currently the main activity, is facing a new threat: monoculture eucalyptus plantations for the generation of energy.
- [Vietnamese land grabs in Cambodia and Laos for rubber plantations: secrecy, destruction and violence](#)
A research by Global Witness denounces landgrabbing of Vietnamese companies to plant rubber trees moving in secrecy and shady connections with local elites in Cambodia and Laos.
- [Guatemala: Oil palm plantations cause new displacement of rural communities](#)

Rural communities in the municipality of Sayaxché, Petén, are currently being displaced for a second time – forcibly in most cases – because of oil palm plantation companies.

- Sierra Leone: large scale land acquisition for oil palm business in Pujehun district
A few corporations will concentrate control of more than 75% of the arable land in the Pujehun district for large-scale industrial agriculture, primarily oil palm plantations depriving local farming communities of their land and trees.

PEOPLES IN ACTION

- Fourth March in Defence of the Land, Water and Life in Uruguay
- Help Stop Genetically Engineered Eucalyptus Trees
- Unifying the struggle for the Amazon in Brazil
- Stop Destroying Yasuni Rainforest
- Protest in India against continued State repression on anti-POSCO people's movement
- Take action for indigenous rights in Sarawak
- Solidarity with the community of Cumbe, Ceará, Brazil against their criminalization

RECOMMENDED

- "An overview of industrial tree plantations in the global South: Conflicts, trends and resistance struggles"
- "Walking on Caves of Fire"
- "Towards a Post-Oil Civilization. Yasunization and other initiatives to leave fossil fuels in the soil"
- "Genetically Engineered Trees and Bioenergy. A Growing Threat to Forests and Communities"
- "La ruina de la fractura hidráulica"

[index](#)

OUR VIEWPOINT

- The "green economy", biodiversity and "forest intelligence"

The new "sustainable development" is called the "green economy", which will function on the basis of "green growth". Particularly since Rio+20, the UN and national governments have attempted to demonstrate to the world a renewed commitment to a policy of responsibility towards the environment and the future of the planet. Calling this policy "green", a colour associated with nature, is a smart move. But will the "greenness" of this policy also extend to concern for diversity? And in the future, will the "green economy" also be a "biodiverse economy"?

The Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) offers its services to countries that seek to develop "rigorous green growth economic development strategies". Those who contract its services will be provided with the methodology needed to formulate "green growth plans"; with assistance in establishing "public-private" partnerships, so that corporations play an even more dominant role in the world; and with the institute's research services. But nothing is mentioned about biodiversity. So what is the exact meaning of "green" in the programmes of the GGGI and other consulting firms that specialize in "green growth"?

One type of "green" can be observed, for example, in Peru (see the article in this issue of the WRM Bulletin), where the GGGI is one of the institutions offering assistance for "green" development in the Amazon rainforest. The assistance offered includes a number of REDD+ projects. One of the options for the implementation of REDD+ is the establishment of plantations of oil palm – a tree that is undoubtedly green on the outside and, in addition, a "renewable energy" source that can store

carbon. Monoculture oil palm plantations destroy biological and cultural diversity. But they are a profitable activity in which the growth of the trees contributes to “green” and “renewable” growth: perfect symbolism.

Another “green” component of the projects in Peru is the highly touted practice of “sustainable forest management”. This would appear to be a practically unassailable practice from an environmental perspective, since it aims to preserve “standing forests” and would therefore supposedly contribute to the preservation of biodiversity as well. Nevertheless, there have been many problems reported in connection with this type of “management” (see WRM Bulletin 188), particularly in areas granted in concession to logging companies. Even “selective” logging has proven to be destructive and to impoverish biodiversity. Moreover, in areas covered by these concessions, violations of the rights of local communities have repeatedly occurred.

Also considered to be “green” – although it is hard to believe – is the “offset” mechanism, which is essential for what “green growth” guarantees: above all, “growth”. This mechanism makes it possible for large-scale destructive activities, such as oil drilling, agribusiness, mining and hydroelectric dam construction, to continue growing unabated, including in forest areas. The idea is for measures to be adopted in order to “offset” the potential damages – for example, guaranteeing the preservation of an “equivalent” forest somewhere else, or simply planting a monoculture “forest”, whenever destruction is “needed” to make way for these activities.

While this may seem incredible, the consulting firms which think up these “innovative” means of growth make some equally incredible claims in their public relations material. Indufor, the Finnish forestry consulting firm contracted to design Peru’s Forest Investment Programme – one of the programmes that promotes REDD+ projects and the sale of “environmental services” – states on its website that it conducts “forest intelligence” that is “analytical, creative and practical”. The firm offers its clients “forest solutions” that are “cost-effective and sustainable”.

Either we begin to use and apply the knowledge and creativity of the world’s forest peoples and communities to design and implement programmes that can genuinely save forests, biodiversity and the planet itself from the environmental and climate crises, or we will end up handing over a world in crisis to the “intelligence” of consultants and their partners, who are eager to turn critical problems, almost miraculously, into “solutions” that create more business opportunities and profit for themselves and their clients, while leaving local communities with fewer forests and less biodiversity.

[index](#)

COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- Gender in the Fossil Patriarchy: New women’s carbon standard claims to ‘empower’ women





Another standard has been launched into a dead market that from the start was a false solution. Mainly polluting industries and consultancies benefitted from this carbon market and its existence promoted the illusion that climate change could be halted by offsetting, or moving emissions around instead of reducing them. On 24 April 2013, the Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture & Natural Resource Management (WOCAN) launched the Women's Carbon Standard. Supported to the tune of "a few million dollars" by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), WOCAN director Jeannette Gurung describes the standard as "a unique certification label that creates a standard for endorsing carbon offset or renewable energy projects that promote women's empowerment and sustainable development". How much of the "few million dollars" has reached women's groups and how much has flown into the bank accounts of consultants is unclear from the information available on the standard. According to the information available, the standard would certify the benefits of increasing women's participation in carbon offset and renewable energy project development and endorse projects that create increased direct or indirect economic benefits for women.

The question arises, however, how such a standard could ever do more than 'genderwash' a mechanism that by design undermines women's rights, increases exposure of women to the impacts of climate change and exacerbates injustice by allowing those who have historically emitted most greenhouse gases, and thus bear the main responsibility for climate change, to emit even more? Where is the empowerment for women living in rural communities in the global South who are asked to reduce their meagre emissions from burning firewood for cooking so affluent and wasteful buyers in the corporate and voluntary carbon markets can with clear conscience continue to belch out luxury emissions?

Underlying causes of the disempowerment of rural women who remain trapped in structural poverty remain unquestioned, the link between the carbon market and the development that passes them by but for which they pay the price of impoverished livelihoods, remains unaddressed by the standard. The women's carbon standard will also do nothing to address the harmful impacts of the large majority of carbon offset projects on women's lives, because the standard will be applicable only to "projects suitable for the mechanism" - which means the few boutique projects that for example sell cooking stoves to impoverished households or support installation of biogas digesters. Whether a voluntary certification standard can not only remedy the problems that have arisen even with these supposedly benign projects (see Mausam 2010 publication with case studies from India), but in addition turn such projects into 'empowerment for women' is highly questionable. And even if it did provide some additional revenue for a select number of women with access to the project - at what cost does that revenue come?

A statement launched in response to the women's carbon standard states: "We [...] reject the Women's Carbon Standard, "gender sensitive carbon offset projects," "women and children methodologies" and the promotion and certification of carbon trading and carbon offset projects of any kind, as women's empowerment and leadership or our families' and children's wellbeing. Carbon trading violates our right to life by selling permits to pollute to polluters and makes climate change worse. Carbon offsets projects have resulted in land grabs, human rights abuses, violation of the rights of women, children and Indigenous Peoples, forced displacement, armed guards, jailing, persecution and criminalization of activists. We defend life and human rights and demand climate justice."

justice now!

In 2011, the GenderCC-Women for Climate Justice, a global network of women, gender activists and experts from all world regions working for gender and climate justice, issued a statement in response to UN efforts to include forests into carbon markets through REDD. On the issue of gender and carbon markets, Gender CC state that: "However important to integrate gender in the carbon markets and REDD Plus, the latter are still false solutions which can lead to a poisonous scramble for resources and engender danger, displacement and disempowerment." Whether meaningful gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment can be achieved in the context of a mechanism that by design increases risk of run-away climate change, with impacts that will affect women particularly hard, is a question we need to ask ourselves.

The statement "Carbon Trading, CDM and REDD: New Forms of Violence against Women NOT Women's Empowerment!", organised by No REDD+ / Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities on Climate Change against REDD and for Life, is available at <http://wrm.org.uy/subjects/REDD/noredd-english.pdf> for sign-on.

Article based on: WOCAN Women's Carbon Standard: Leveraging Carbon Finance for Women's Empowerment, <http://wocan.org/sites/drupal.wocan.org/files/WOCAN%20Women's%20Carbon%20-1.pdf>, and <http://www.womenscarbon.org/sites/default/files/womens-carbon-standard.pdf>; "Still A Frozen Pie: GenderCC - Women for Climate Justice on the Bangkok Intersessional Meeting 2011," GenderCC press statement, April 7, 2011, http://www.gendercc.net/network/gendercc-news/news-details/browse/1/article/still-a-frozen-pie-gendercc-on-the-bangkok-intersessional-meeting-2011/169.html?no_cache=1

[index](#)

- Peru: REDD+ places the Amazon rainforest and biodiversity at the service of the financial market



The Peruvian Amazon, which covers more than 61% of the country's territory, is the fourth largest area of tropical rainforest in the world. Thanks to this extensive forest cover, Peru also has an extremely high degree of biodiversity; for instance, it ranks in fifth place worldwide for plant diversity, with close to 25,000 recorded species.

The Amazon rainforest in Peru is seriously threatened, as we have reported in previous issues of the WRM bulletin (188, 166, 161). The direct causes of deforestation include large-scale mining projects, oil and gas drilling, forest concessions to logging companies, highway construction (including construction in the framework of the IIRSA regional infrastructure programme), extensive cattle farming, and more recently, industrial oil palm plantations. Added to this is the deforestation caused by "illegal" mining as well as agricultural activities such as so-called "illicit" coca crops. In the

by illegal mining, as well as agricultural activities such as soy beans and coca crops. In the meantime, indigenous communities and peasant farmers who depend on the forests and have traditionally coexisted with them without destroying them are waging an arduous battle to defend their rights and ways of life. As a result of this long, hard struggle, some 15 million hectares of forest are already under some form of legally recognized indigenous control. There are still at least eight million hectares of reserves where official demarcation is still pending, in which many communities are the occupants of their own lands. There are hundreds of communities and territories that have yet to be systematized.

The official implementation of REDD+ in Peru, underway since 2009, created considerable expectations among the population of the region, with promises such as combating the causes of deforestation (e.g. extractive industries), guaranteeing participation and respect for the rights of local communities, improving the weak and fragmented management of forests, and generating wealth. In practice, however, REDD+ has failed to deliver on these promises, while a small group of actors have sought to capitalize on the forests and biodiversity for business purposes.

Blaming deforestation on small farmers

In recent years, as a response to climate change, the World Bank has initiated two forest-related programmes that promote carbon markets and commercial forestry. One of these is the Forest Investment Programme (FIP). The most recent information available on this programme in Peru, where it is implemented with the support of the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), reveals that deforestation increased from 91,000 hectares during the 2000-2005 period to 163,000 hectares between 2005 and 2008. The increase in deforestation coincided with the increase in economic “growth” rates, which averaged 7.5%. This growth was primarily due to the export of natural resources, with mining as the leading activity, accounting for 63% of total exports. Nevertheless, the FIP plan in Peru claims that the clearing of small areas of forest for agricultural activity, mainly by poor migrant peasant farmers merely trying to survive, was responsible for 75% of deforestation, while large-scale export-gearred projects are said to have played only a secondary role. What the FIP plan fails to explain are the underlying reasons that would lead migrant peasant farmers to clear forested areas for agriculture. It also fails to mention that the arrival of these people in the Amazon was preceded by the construction of highways, which is generally motivated by the interests of private companies and the government in moving natural products and resources out of the region.

Like previous World Bank initiatives, the FIP seems to show little interest in analyzing the underlying causes of deforestation in Peru. One would have hoped that, instead of pointing an accusing finger at small farmers for creating small parcels of land for subsistence farming, the World Bank might have learned a lesson from prior failed attempts to curb deforestation. These attempts were also characterized by a lack of analysis, understanding and action on the underlying causes that led to the loss of forests.

And yet the FIP continues with the World Bank tradition of showing little concern for large-scale mining, oil and gas projects, based on the justification that the preparation of an environmental impact assessment (EIA) for a project of this kind ensures that the impacts are duly identified and mitigated. There is no mention, however, of the structural problems related to the undertaking of this type of study in Peru, which proves to be an extremely weak instrument for preventing and/or reducing impacts – and this does not apply only to Peru. Can it really be claimed that mitigating the impacts of large-scale extractive projects is that simple, when the FIP plan itself admits that, in 2012, there were 148 recorded cases of conflicts between companies and communities, 105 of them connected with mining and 24 with oil and gas extraction?

The authors of the FIP plan admit that in areas with some sort of protection, including indigenous

territories, there is less deforestation. Therefore, the most obvious proposal would be to officially demarcate all indigenous lands and those of other populations who depend on and take care of forests, as well involving these communities in forest management. In practice, however, local populations are not a priority for the FIP. In fact, at least 70% of the nearly 50 million hectares of land in the Peruvian Amazon that have been leased or are under negotiation with mining, oil and gas companies overlap with indigenous territories. The FIP is aligned with the corporate interests who initiated the “neoliberal sale” of the Amazon and, instead of identifying large-scale projects as the cause of deforestation, lays the blame on small farmers. Moreover, the FIP is based on a totally different premise: it considers the forest, its “natural resources” and its biodiversity as opportunities for the development of markets. These now include the carbon market and “environmental services” in general, as a means of promoting “sustainable, inclusive and competitive development” in the Amazon. This obviously involves big companies and not the indigenous and peasant farmer communities who have repeatedly stressed that they do not share this market-oriented view of the forest.

The Agrarian Federation of the Department of Madre de Dios (FADEMAD), an organization of small farmers, received a proposal in March 2013 from AIDER, an NGO, to plant 5,000 hectares of trees as part of an agroforestry project. The meeting where the proposal was made was also attended by a Peruvian representative of another organization, LIVELIHOODS, which was interested in supporting the initiative. At the end of the meeting, he said that his organization already had “buyers” in the “first world” who were interested in offsetting their carbon emissions in the North by supporting reforestation in the South. The FADEMAD representatives responded that they would be pleased to participate in an agroforestry project, since agroforestry is something that they already practice, but that they had no interest in participating in the carbon business. Their refusal was based on the experience of an earlier project in the region in which the communities involved signed contracts that forced them to relinquish their rights. FADEMAD also observed that although agroforestry has been a traditional practice for many years in the region, it seems that it has only recently attracted the interest of NGOs and private companies because of the business opportunities it offers through the carbon market.

Who benefits from REDD+?(*)

There are certainly some who reap considerable benefits from REDD. These include the consultants who prepare studies and plans, like the Finnish firm Indufor, commissioned to design the FIP plan in Peru, and the NGOs who act as intermediaries in contracts between foreign buyers – polluters like oil companies or finance banks – and local “suppliers”, usually peasant farmers and/or indigenous communities, as well as others who will be hired to develop and implement the “complex” and thus costly mechanisms for “measuring” and “monitoring” forest carbon. The case of Peru also shows how the focus on markets and business almost always translates into a total lack of transparency when it comes to the “objects” of negotiations, something that has happened around the world.

With its market focus, the FIP plan for Peru concentrates on actions aimed at increasing carbon “stocks” or sinks and thereby the financial volume of “carbon credits” that can be negotiated on the basis of forests or plantations. These actions include: (1) Granting forest concessions for the extraction of timber under a so-called “sustainable forest management” scheme, preferably with “certification”, such as under the FSC. The FIP plan suggests a partnership with the Forest Institute of Brazil for the training of technicians, which would serve as a strong incentive for an activity that has already been heavily challenged in Peru by indigenous and peasant farmer communities, and a significant cause of deforestation, something that is disregarded by the FIP. (2) Promoting “carbon positive” agriculture, such as oil palm plantations, which already have national government and international support as an alternative to “illicit” crops. This is based on a false supposition, because in addition to promoting a monoculture model that leads to a whole range of negative social and

environmental impacts, the use of palm oil as an energy source can also generate up to 25% more carbon emissions compared to fossil fuels, if the effects of changes in land use are included in the calculations. (3) Promoting large-scale tree plantations in the regions that the migrant peasant farmers are coming from, including the recommended establishment of 250,000 hectares of plantations in Cajamarca and Huánuco, near San Martín and Ucayali, as a means of employment generation and carbon sequestration. A similar project in Ecuador has demonstrated how this type of proposal generates many more problems for peasant farmer communities and is only attractive for plantation companies (see <http://wrm.org.uy/wp/blog/books-and-briefings/carbon-sink-plantations-in-the-ecuadorian-andes/>). (4) Promoting a domestic carbon market to foster “innovation in financial products”, including financial speculation schemes such as “venture capital funds”. All of this represents not only the financialization and greater privatization of nature, but also a deepening of the neoliberal processes already underway in Peru and the rest of Latin America for decades, with serious social and environmental impacts.

The FIP plan for Peru also praises the country’s new forest law as a positive step, for example, because it allows large-scale projects to “offset” the destruction they will eventually cause, which can open up even further business opportunities. The principle of “offsetting” is a repeated and fundamental factor in the REDD+ proposal; for instance, any necessary deforestation in the desired future of “zero deforestation” could supposedly be offset by promoting tree plantations, falsely classified as “forests”. With regard to this new law, FADEMAD comments: “A quick analysis ... shows us the inconsistencies of the proposal of economic growth and environmental sustainability (in the name of which they are plundering our natural resources); in more than 30 articles of the law, in addition to mentioning ecosystem services, they also mention tree plantations and even agroforestry.”

The FIP plan also refers to seeking “synergy” among the more than 100 REDD+ initiatives in Peru, which already represent close to 400 million US dollars in investments, involving agencies like KfW and GIZ (Germany), USAID (the United States), FAO-Finland, and the government of Japan, including JICA, in addition to the World Bank and the IDB which, together with the private sector arm of the World Bank – the International Finance Corporation (IFC) – would concentrate on land titling and support for logging companies to work “sustainably”. Various agencies that seek to promote the “green economy” are also actively participating, such as the Global Green Growth Institute, with the aim of developing “rigorous green growth economic development strategies”. Another private foundation involved is GBMF, which, together with KfW-Germany, is financing the measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) component of REDD+ in Peru. MRV is a key component in order for carbon to be sold on international markets. All of the countries mentioned above have significant economic interests in Peru, as well as consuming part of the natural resources that it exports.

Finally, the FIP plan admits that creating a better “business” environment in the Peruvian Amazon, with more infrastructure and economic activities, could lead to an increase in undesirable phenomena such as migration and the “disorganized” occupation of land, and consequently, an increase in deforestation. In response to these concerns, it proposes strategies such as land zoning, “synergy” among institutions, and “decentralized management”, put forward as measures that would serve to resolve, as if by magic, any serious problems.

Final comments

From the very beginning of its promotion, REDD+ has been about carbon, about the reduction of greenhouse gases from deforestation and forest degradation. No matter how hard organizations concerned about forest destruction may strive to change this concept and include a holistic view of the forest, which includes the rights of forest peoples, biodiversity and other issues, and although REDD+ has supposedly promoted the REDD+ concept, these initiatives promote REDD+ activities

REDD+ has supposedly expanded the REDD concept, those who work to promote REDD+ continue to focus primarily on carbon and have their sights set on the carbon market. As with any other market, the buyers are concerned above all with the value and quality of the merchandise, as well as wanting to exploit other markets. This is the way REDD+ is developing in Peru, and the experience of recent years has demonstrated that REDD+ projects are not aimed at defending the interests or improving the lives of indigenous peoples and small farmers.

REDD+ is therefore simply another business market, in the midst of the climate crisis, which in coordination with other markets, such as those of the extractive industries and palm oil and logging companies, ends up increasing the threats already facing the peoples of the Amazon. Moreover, the actions of those who promote REDD+ have an even more perverse effect: they generate serious divisions in communities and take advantage of the fact that these communities and their organizations are waging an arduous struggle fraught with many difficulties. As FADEMAD states: "Our structural weakness, viewed from the outside, is the best opportunity for all those who seek to implement their plans in the Amazon. Internal divisions and struggles not only weaken processes for strengthening but also open the way for political opportunism and an assault on common goods."

Due to the fact that REDD+ was designed to work as a market mechanism, it will not reduce deforestation (and thereby, carbon emissions), but instead will grant "rights" to continue polluting and, consequently, will further exacerbate the climate crisis as well as the depredation of the Amazon by large-scale extractive projects. And this will also increasingly affect the tropical forests and their inhabitants in Peru – a country already identified as one of the most seriously affected worldwide by climate change, in both the Andean and Amazon regions.

(* REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) is based on the idea that the carbon dioxide naturally absorbed by trees can offset the carbon emissions produced elsewhere. This premise has given rise to the "carbon market", where polluters can buy carbon credits to compensate for their own emissions from carbon offset projects. For more information on the troubling impacts that REDD+ projects have caused for indigenous communities and other local populations worldwide, see the WRM booklet "10 Things Communities Should Know About REDD" (<http://wrm.org.uy/wp/blog/books-and-briefings/10-things-communities-should-know-about-redd/>) and various other related WRM publications and articles available at: <http://www.wrm.org.uy/subjects/REDD.html>

Sources: Analysis of the FIP plan for Peru by AIDSESP

(http://issuu.com/aidesep/docs/an_lisis_pif_versi_n_14.02.13?mode=window); FIP Plan, Version 15/03/2013 (available in Spanish at <http://wrm.org.uy/paises/Peru/PIF-PERU.pdf>), Public statement by FADEMAD – Federación Agraria Departamental de Madre de Dios (available in Spanish at <http://wrm.org.uy/paises/Peru/Informe-FADEMAD-Peru.pdf>), "La realidad de REDD+ en Perú: entre el dicho y el hecho", AIDSESP, FPP and others (http://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/publication/2011/11/la-realidad-de-redd-en-peru-entre-el-dicho-y-el-hecho-para-el-sitio-web_0.pdf)

[index](#)

- Large scale logging in Africa pervaded by bribery and corruption





Logging permits designed to promote small businesses and meet local needs are being allocated in their hundreds to industrial logging companies in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana and Liberia.

Deforestation has been and still is a fierce scourge with both visible and hidden causes. One of the most outstanding and hoisted underlying cause of deforestation in Africa is the duo of bribery and corruption, which have long plagued the forest sector on the continent. Many efforts and much money have been focused on regulatory reform and on strengthening the rule of law in producer countries – but they have failed.

The new report by Global Witness “Logging in the shadows” (available at http://www.globalwitness.org/sites/default/files/library/Shadow%20Permit%20Report%202013%20Final_Web_0.pdf) identifies how permits designed to promote small businesses and meet local needs are being allocated in their hundreds to industrial logging companies in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana and Liberia.

In Liberia, Atlantic Resources Ltd. and Alpha Logging & Processing Inc. – companies linked to Malaysian giant Samling Global Ltd – obtained logging rights over 10% of Liberia’s territory via “shadow permits”, despite Samling’s dubious global reputation.

Allocated in secret and subject to few controls over their operations, these “shadow permits” facilitate quick access to forests for highly lucrative, large-scale logging operations which bypass oversight by the authorities. They typically include low taxation, poor consultation with local people, little to no local processing and minimal environmental requirements.

As the report points out: “The absence of effective control over shadow permit operations allows loggers to operate with scant regard for the environment. Environmental impact assessments are rarely, if ever, carried out and the tendency to use the same permit in multiple locations exacerbates the potential for environmental damage. The consequences in Liberia have been particularly shocking, where 40% of the country’s forests have been allocated via Private Use Permits.”

Overcoming secrecy, shadow permits have been successfully exposed in all four countries, but the information has come out long after logging has started and when it is too late for the forests and the forest people.

The report concludes that shadow permits are the product of a political economy that privileges power, patronage and vested interests above wider society and the environment. Bad behavior by self-serving and unaccountable elites undermines citizens’ confidence in government and stifles the growth of sustainable local economies. In the absence of a functioning permit system for local use, forest-dependent communities are forced to meet their timber needs illegally, further undermining the rule of law.

While corruption is identified as a crucial underlying cause of deforestation, the report recognizes that without also tackling other drivers of deforestation, like global demand for timber, Europe’s Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) and other initiatives – like the European Union Timber Regulation (EUTR), and the extension of the Lacey Act in the United States (US) – will fail to reduce deforestation

Valuable recommendations are offered including an open, transparent, and competitive allocation process to ensure that a fair price is paid for access to resources, that EU and US importers do not assume that timber is legal because it has a permit, the need to increase efforts to provide a meaningful legal framework for community-based approaches to forest management, and to devote adequate resources to its implementation, so that forest-dependent people can enjoy proper control over their own resources.

Still, the report doesn't say it but it would be necessary to strongly challenge the whole pattern of production, trade and consumption that fuels the logging industry as well as the bribery and corruption that pervades it.

[index](#)

- Congo Basin: Report on expansion of oil palm plantations



In February 2013, the Rainforest Foundation UK launched a new report on plans for expansion of large scale oil palm plantations in the Congo Basin and the likely impacts on forests and local people from these developments. Megaprojects covering half a million hectares and involving different companies and countries in the Congo Basin are under way and will imply a fivefold increase of industrial oil palm monocultures in the region.

The report "Seeds of destruction" gives an overview of the expansion plans for oil palm in the Congo Basin and features specific cases of palm oil companies Herakles Farms, Olam and Atama Plantation SARL.

Atama Plantations SARL, mainly owned by the Malaysian WahSeong, and with a business focus in 'specialist pipe-coating', will develop 180,000 ha of oil palm plantations in a concession agreement that covers 470,000 hectares of mostly forest land in northern Congo. Evidence suggests that the area designated for clearance mostly appears to be intact rainforest. Despite no evidence of social and environmental assessments, nor of the free, prior, informed consent of the local people, the Atama development has started large-scale clearance of the forest.

Olam, the Singaporean agricultural commodities trading giant, has entered into a joint agreement with the Gabonese government to develop 130,000 hectares of palm oil in this forest-rich country, with the potential for significant environmental impacts, and uncertain social consequences, especially for traditional forest communities. The initial phase of the oil palm development is in Kango, in the Estuaire region, about 60km outside Libreville, and in another area slightly further south in Mouila, with large areas of high conservation value forests (see also <http://www.wrm.org.uk/bulletin/187/viewprint.html#10>)

<http://www.minifog.org/2013/02/10/2013-02-10-herakles-farms/>

New York-based Herakles Farms, founded by investment group Herakles Capital, is developing 60,000 hectares of oil palm plantations in Cameroon, some of them near several key wildlife sanctuaries and protected areas. The development, which has received generous tax breaks from the Cameroonian government, has been controversial locally, nationally and internationally. The strong opposition to the expansion, including exposure of secret negotiations between the company and Cameroonian officials when the contract was initially awarded in 2009 and belated direct consultation with affected communities that have been criticized for often involving gifts and other incentives led to Herakles recently halting its plans to seek certification under the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) scheme. According to the latest information received via Palm Watch Africa, the future of the project seems to be in question since the Government of Cameroon's Ministry of Forestry & Wildlife (MINFOF) issued an order that requests that the company cease preparing land near its Talangaye nursery, the resumption of activities "being subject to a declaration of public usefulness made to the zone where your entire project is located".

Arguments such as creation of jobs and development of the agricultural sector are cited by governments applying these policies that promote large scale oil palm plantations. The reality however too often is that after an initial boost of jobs for site preparation, more income is lost than generated due to the destruction and displacement of subsistence and small-scale agriculture. Pursuing this model of development of the agricultural sector also means large-scale deforestation, with all its consequences for forest biodiversity, cultural diversity, linguistic diversity and forest peoples' ways of life.

The huge asymmetry in political power between big companies supported by the government on one side, and forest dependent communities –mostly with no formal land rights and limited political voice and influence on the other side – are a common feature of this kind of "development".

The report by The Rainforest Foundation "Seeds of destruction" is available at <http://www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/files/Seeds%20of%20Destruction.%20February%202013.pdf>

Palm WatchAfrica articles about Herakles are available at <http://www.palmwatchafrica.org/herakles-farms-releases-public-statement-operations-suspended/>

[index](#)

COMMUNITIES AND MONOCULTURE TREE PLANTATIONS

- Brazil: Threat of monoculture eucalyptus plantation expansion in the Northeast



The Araripe Plateau, as an elevated region, plays a key role in maintaining the local microclimate

and in the region's water cycle. It could also be considered the source of biodiversity in the region known as Sertão do Araripe Pernambucano. It is in this very region that a public-private partnership is promoting monoculture eucalyptus plantations as a source of energy for gypsum production. The public agencies involved are the Agronomic Institute of Pernambuco (IPA) and the Rural Federal University of Pernambuco, with the support of the state and federal governments. Among the private companies involved are Brazilian pulp and paper giant Suzano, which is supplying the eucalyptus seedlings, and the region's gypsum plaster manufacturers, who say they account for 95% of production in Brazil.

The members of the public-private partnership claim that large-scale eucalyptus plantations, on an area of up to 300,000 hectares, would be a "sustainable" solution for the energy demands of the region's gypsum production hub, as the eucalyptus would replace the current use of wood from the Caatinga vegetation, currently the most prevalent energy source, and of oil. In the presentations conducted in the region to promote the initiative, the researchers also claim that the eucalyptus trees would protect the soil, consuming relatively little water, and that the eucalyptus "forests" would have additional value due to their contribution to mitigating climate change. The Official Journal of Pernambuco reported in September 2011 that the government would allocate 6.4 million reais (close to three million US dollars) for "reforestation" on "degraded lands".

In the first place, it is difficult to imagine a "sustainable" solution for the maintenance of an activity that is, in fact, totally unsustainable. There are 40 gypsum mines and 140 plants for the production of gypsum plaster and other related products in the region, concentrated in the municipalities of Araripina and Trindade. The industrial operations lead to the formation of a white powder – created by the release of gypsum and plaster into the atmosphere – which causes severe respiratory ailments among the workers and harms the vegetation in the surrounding area. There is little environmental control, nor recuperation of mining areas. In addition, if the idea is to plant 300,000 hectares of eucalyptus trees in these municipalities, there would not be enough land even if the entire area were covered with plantations, since these two municipalities combined cover a much smaller area, of only 163,000 hectares: 140,000 in Araripina and 23,000 in Trindade.

Secondly, eucalyptus plantations would affect the small farmers in the region who make up the majority of the rural population and are already suffering the impacts of mining activity. The likely displacement of farmers would also negatively affect food production in the region – as food production is replaced by eucalyptus, thus reducing food produced regionally. Moreover, it is well known that monoculture eucalyptus plantations are one of the economic activities that generate the least employment in rural areas, which means that this is not an alternative source of income for the majority of peasant farmer families. Local experiences in other places also demonstrate that eucalyptus plantations have serious negative impacts on the soil and water, as has been widely exposed in numerous WRM publications.

What about the claim that planting eucalyptus trees would provide greater protection for the Caatinga biome? First, it is not true that eucalyptus is planted on "degraded lands". This has been the discourse used around the world to promote these plantations, but in practice, companies seek out level and fertile land to plant on – in other words, the land where peasant farming communities normally live and work. The experience with eucalyptus plantations in Minas Gerais also demonstrates that when eucalyptus is planted to replace the use of native wood as a source of energy for industrial purposes, it is the eucalyptus itself that causes the gradual destruction of the native biome – in the case of Minas Gerais, the Cerrado or tropical savannah. The only real solution would be to halt or strictly limit the expansion of agribusiness and its large-scale plantations of sugarcane, soybeans, corn, eucalyptus, etc., as well as other large-scale projects like mining and the Transnordestina railway in the Araripina region, while promoting activities that genuinely benefit the rural population such as support for peasant farming.

the rural population, such as support for peasant farming.

Meanwhile, the claim that eucalyptus plantations have additional value for the climate is a bad joke. While the trees temporarily absorb and store carbon (CO₂) while they are growing, it is released back into the atmosphere when the wood is burned. The so-called carbon market, through which carbon credits calculated on the basis of the growing trees provide polluting industries with the right to continue polluting, is not a solution to the climate crisis. On the contrary, it simply serves to further postpone the adoption of the structural measures needed to genuinely confront the climate crisis, such as changes to the model of excessive energy consumption and to the current dependence on fossil fuels. It should also be remembered that, like petroleum, biomass (in this case, eucalyptus wood) as an energy source is an archaic technology, based on a destructive process of large-scale combustion, which intrinsically results in emissions of CO₂ and other pollutants. Moreover, there is no reliable scientific evidence that biomass energy generates fewer carbon emissions than petroleum when the entire production cycle is taken into account.

Another threat related to the expansion of eucalyptus plantations is the introduction of genetically modified eucalyptus trees in the region. Suzano, which is interested in planting eucalyptus in Pernambuco, is the Brazilian company most heavily involved in transgenic eucalyptus research. It recently acquired one of the most recognized biotech companies working in this area, UK-based FuturaGene, has obtained authorization for trial planting in Brazil, and is now heavily lobbying for authorization of commercial planting. There are numerous risks associated with this technology, including increased use of toxic agrochemicals and genetic contamination of native vegetation. But

the very fact of the unreliability of genetic modification should be reason enough for the authorities to ban the use of this technology, even on a “trial” basis.

Lastly, in the region of Araripina, as in other areas affected by the expansion of monoculture eucalyptus plantations, there has been the usual lack of consultation with local communities as to whether or not they want these plantations. The issue is being addressed only by a small group of research institutes, companies and politicians. But it is the communities who have lived in the region for generations who should be the first to make decisions on the future of their region. It is simply not acceptable for a handful of researchers to decide which areas are “available” for planting eucalyptus. What does “available” mean to them? Would the people who live in the region agree that their territories are “available” for this purpose?

This is why the local residents and organizations of the region, such as the Small Farmers Movement (MPA), have opposed this process and carried out numerous actions, such as organizing seminars and signing a manifesto in which they reject that public funds, which should be used to strengthen peasant agriculture, are instead being allocated to research that solely benefits private companies. They have also declared that even the trial plantations already established should be prohibited, since they are located within the Environmental Protection Area (APA) of the Araripe Plateau, and that plantations should not be allowed on any land used for peasant farming.

Winnie Overbeek (This article is based on information gathered during a field visit to the region in May 2013.)

References:

- Diário Oficial do Estado de Pernambuco – 18/09/2011, p. 2 – “Convênio libera R\$ 120 milhões para o Sertão de Araripe” - Apresentação “O eucalipto como fonte energético no Pólo Gesseiro de Araripe-PE”, <http://www.itep.br/siteteste/images/Biblioteca/eucalyptus%20como%20alternativa%20no%20pga%20modo%20de%20compatibilidade.pdf>
- <http://arripesolarsustentavel.wordpress.com/>

- Vietnamese land grabs in Cambodia and Laos for rubber plantations: secrecy, destruction and violence



The characteristics of natural rubber make it a competitive material for industrial and medical uses, but products related to transportation, tyres and tyre products, are by far the largest single end market for natural rubber: they account for over 50% of consumption.

Though natural rubber cannot be easily substituted by synthetic rubber derived from petrochemicals, its price and demand are closely linked to that for synthetic rubber, which is in turn strongly influenced by oil prices. Thus, demand for natural rubber rises as oil prices rise. In the current context of high oil prices, demand for natural rubber has increased and translates in pressure on the land where rubber trees (*hevea brasiliensis*) can be grown.

Today most rubber is produced in South and Southeast Asia, with Vietnam having a growing role producer and trader country, being the third producer country after Indonesia and Thailand. A new report from NGO Global Witness has revealed the increasing pressure for land of Vietnamese companies in neighbouring Cambodia and Laos resulting in land grabs in both countries, financed by international investors including Deutsche Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) – the private lending arm of the World Bank. Two of Vietnam's largest companies, Hoang Anh Gia Lai (HAGL) and the state-owned Vietnam Rubber Group (VRG) have acquired more than 200,000 hectares of land through deals with the Cambodian and Laos governments.

The “rubber barons”, as Global Witness has named the Vietnamese companies that since 2000 have taken up more than 3.7 million hectares of land, 40 per cent of which is for rubber plantations, have moved in secrecy and shady connections with local elites in Cambodia and Laos, primarily benefitting only the elites, whilst the costs are paid by poor rural communities and their surrounding forest ecosystems.

The thorough research of Global Witness has revealed that “very little information is available regarding land concessions in Cambodia and Laos. There is no publicly available cadastre of land holdings, no information about the areas the governments are targeting for investment, no disclosure when companies begin negotiating a land lease and no information about the beneficial owners involved. Environmental and social impact assessments, if done at all, are not released to those potentially affected. As a result, in the majority of cases, the first local communities in either country know about a company being given the land and forests on which they and their ancestors have lived is when the bulldozers arrive and start digging it up.”

Both Vietnamese companies are involved in clearfelling intact forest within and beyond their concession boundaries. Along with the destruction of forests also the indigenous peoples' sacred forests and burial grounds disappear; local people complain of increased food and water shortages,

loss of livelihood without compensation and poor employment conditions.

The report also denounces that: “when people have had their land and forests grabbed by a company, one of the most significant barriers to justice, getting the land back, or even compensation, is the lack of access to data: who took their land, the boundaries of the concession, what the land is being used for and what environmental or social impacts from the project are anticipated.”

When communities resist, armed security forces come in support of the investors subjecting local people to harassment and jail. Land grabbing has accelerated in tandem with the violence that surrounds it.

The report from Global Witness, “Rubber Barons” is available at <http://www.globalwitness.org/rubberbarons/>

[index](#)

- Guatemala: Oil palm plantations cause new displacement of rural communities



Industrial monoculture oil palm plantations have expanded significantly in Guatemala in recent years. One of the areas that has seen the greatest increase in these plantations is the municipality of Sayaxché, Petén, where companies have determined that the land is optimally suited for oil palm production.

During a recent visit to Guatemala (1), WRM interviewed Lorenzo Pérez Mendoza, coordinator of the National Council of the Displaced in Guatemala (CONDEG), an organization that is providing accompaniment and assistance for communities in Sayaxché for the defence of their land and labour rights.

The population of Sayaxché is made up by displaced persons from different parts of the country. In the early 1960s, families arrived here in search of land that the government was distributing to landless peasant farmers and indigenous people through colonization programmes. During the bloody 36-year civil war in Guatemala, they were joined by families who had survived massacres perpetrated against entire communities and were seeking new lands on which to settle. At the end of 1990s, during the peace process that ended the war, the government regularized land ownership, granting all of the peasant and indigenous families legal title to the land they occupied.

Lorenzo told WRM, “These communities are currently suffering a second displacement, which is

Lorenzo told WRM, these communities are currently suffering a second displacement, which is forced in most cases, provoked by oil palm plantation companies. During the last decade, Sayaxché has been the target of land grabbing by these companies. Using different strategies, the companies have been buying up land from peasant and indigenous families, cattle ranching companies, and even entire communities. They frequently use pressure and threats to achieve their goals: 'If you don't sell us your land, we'll negotiate its sale with your wife,' which is an indirect way of saying, if you don't agree to sell it, we will kill you and then negotiate with your wife. Most of the lands are joint-owned; the sale of a property requires the signature of both the man and the woman. As a result, when men are pressured by the companies to sell, they in turn pressure their wives to sign. This leads to serious family conflicts.

"The families who refuse to sell are left surrounded by oil palm plantations. When the companies buy properties, they close off the public rights-of-way, preventing neighbouring residents from accessing their own lands along the roads they have traditionally used to reach their crops. They are forced to use other longer routes, or roads that are in poor condition, which means they may have to walk for

several hours to reach their destination. This makes it almost impossible for them to get to their fields to plant crops and to get out to sell the crops they harvest or to buy basic supplies. Peasant farmers have also been subjected to other methods used to push them into abandoning or selling their lands. There have been reports of the burning and fumigation of their parcels of land and crops, and of crop theft."

According to the CONDEG coordinator, "The root of the problem lies in two facts. One is the policy on the operations of companies, which have the full support of the state, from the governor up through to the Ministry of Labour and right up to the national government. We find this extremely troubling. The other is that the state institutions that legalized ownership of the land did not provide even a minimum of technical assistance as to how to manage the land, nor any incentives to promote food production. The people who settled in the area began to adapt as well as they could to life in the countryside, but at the same time, the companies began to arrive with promises of development and employment.

"As time passed the people came to see that these promises are never kept. Of the families who sold their parcels of land, some left, others ended up leasing small parcels of land to grow food for their own subsistence, and others became workers dependent on the palm oil companies, which take advantage of populations who are poor and face serious economic difficulties."

Lorenzo highlighted the fact that May 8 marked a full year since 13,000 peasant farmers and plantation workers from the municipality of Sayaxché staged a mobilization against the palm oil companies of the region to demand better working conditions and decent wages. Up until now, the government has yet to deliver on its pledge to respond to the demands presented.

"Mother Earth can live without humans, but humans cannot live without Mother Earth," reflected Lorenzo. "The oil palm companies have established plantations on lands where peasant farmers used to grow corn, beans and squash, among other crops, and in places that were used as pasture lands for raising cattle. Now it is private property, no one can pass through it because there are private armed guards. People have lost access to water, to firewood, and public rights-of-way are closed off. The companies have destroyed what was left of the forests; oil palm is not like coffee, which can be integrated into the forest. They clear away everything to benefit the monoculture plantations.

"We have a serious problem in Sayaxché with cases of deforestation and violations of labour rights and the right to access to the land (?). Now that everything is covered with oil palms, the people

and the right to access to the land (2). Now that everything is covered with oil palms, the people realize that you cannot eat oil palm, not even animals eat it; it is only of use to the companies.”

(1) WRM visited Guatemala in coordination with SAVIA, the representative in Guatemala of RECOMA (the Latin American Network Against Monoculture Tree Plantations) and with the collaboration of Redmanglar, to participate in information-sharing activities and gather testimonies on the impacts on local communities of the expansion of monoculture oil palm plantations.

(2) For more information, see the reports produced by CONDEG: “Investigación y documentación de casos de violaciones de derechos de paso de las personas y/o comunidades del municipio de Sayaxche, departamento de Petén” available at <http://wrm.org.uy/paises/Guatemala/casos-derecho-de-paso.pdf>, and “Aproximación a las prácticas de violación a los derechos laborales en las fincas de palma africana, Sayaxche, Peten. ¿Neocolonialismo?” available at <http://wrm.org.uy/paises/Guatemala/informe-CONDEG-EMPLEO.pdf>

[index](#)

- Sierra Leone: large scale land acquisition for oil palm business in Pujehun district



A few corporations will concentrate control of more than 75% of the arable land in the Pujehun district for large-scale industrial agriculture, primarily oil palm plantations depriving local farming communities of their land and trees.

Following a global trend, companies and investors, by way of large-scale land leases, are taking over significant areas in Sierra Leone, a country of about 7.2 million hectares of which 74 percent is considered suitable for agriculture and where about 60 percent of the population - some 3.5 million - depends on smallholder agriculture for their livelihoods.

Research undertaken by the Oakland Institute and GreenScenery in late 2010 showed that more than 500,000 hectares had been or were being acquired by foreign investors in Sierra Leone and particularly in the Pujehun district.

Following up the process, in a recent report and based on figures from registered land leases, Green Scenery calculates that 60% of the total area in Pujehun district is already being, or could soon be converted into large-scale industrial agriculture, primarily into oil palm plantations. That would imply that a few corporations will concentrate control of more than 75% of the arable land in the district. Just one company, Biopalm Energy Limited, registered in Singapore and part of the Indian SIVA Group, controls nearly 98,500 hectares, close to one quarter (23.9%) of the entire Pujehun District.

The research found that a small group of people has been behind several different companies

involved in the land deals in Pujehun District revealing that the main intention behind the land acquisitions is speculation for high rates of return from the transfers rather than to create new opportunities for farmers and local communities to improve their lives, or even for revenue to the state.

Leasing of large tracts of land to investors for 50 to 100 years will deprive local farming communities of their land and trees, leaving them with very little to live off.

In most cases consultations were found to lack legitimacy as long as very few stakeholders participate in the initial stage, youth and women were excluded from decision-making, chieftdom authorities were not fully aware of the registered documents or their details - such as the size, the survey map, the length of the lease, payment procedures - and they seemed unaware that these leases were binding documents.

All in all it's the big companies which get the major profit while smallholders, who are the pillars of the country's food security with crops such as rice, cassava, sweet potato, groundnut and palm oil, will face a dramatic reduction in farmland availability.

This will inevitably affect food security, says Green Scenery, which has released a press release denouncing the situation and calling on international partners of Sierra Leone to recognize findings from civil society organizations and grievances of affected chieftdoms and communities. Green Scenery demands the government to re-examine the policy to attract foreign private investment in agriculture for large-scale monoculture and to place and enforce a moratorium on large-scale investment in agriculture before it is too late.

Article based on the Press Release "Is our country part of the 'wild west'? A moratorium on large-scale land leases for agriculture is urgently needed in Sierra Leone," Green Scenery, www.greenscenery.org/publications; and on the report "Land Investment Deals In Sierra Leone. Green Scenery Briefings Part I – IV," http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/2011_10_GS%20Briefings_layout_web.pdf

[index](#)

PEOPLES IN ACTION

- Fourth March in Defence of the Land, Water and Life in Uruguay

Some 20,000 people participated in the 4th National March in Defence of the Land, Water and Life held on May 10, 2013 in Montevideo, Uruguay. The march was organized and promoted by some 40 organizations from around the country, in response to the growing concentration of ownership and foreign control of land in Uruguay, where 42% of arable land is currently under foreign ownership. At the same time, there has been continuous expansion of large-scale monoculture plantations in the country, with 1.5 million hectares of transgenic soybean plantations, a similar area of transgenic corn, and another 1.5 million hectares of pine and eucalyptus plantations. Monoculture tree plantations in particular are expected to continue expanding, as the foreign joint venture Montes del Plata plans to complete construction of the world's largest pulp mill in Uruguay this year.

For more information see: <http://www.noalamina.org/mineria-latinoamerica/mineria-uruguay/cuarta-marcha-uruguay-en-defensa-de-la-tierra-el-agua-y-la-vida-2>

[index](#)

- Help Stop Genetically Engineered Eucalyptus Trees

From May 26-June 1, the International Tree Biotechnology 2013 Conference took place in Asheville, NC. This conference is a gathering of genetically engineered tree proponents and scientists. The Campaign to STOP GE Trees together with Join Earth First! and Global Justice Ecology Project had called to Resist the Tree Biotechnology 2013 Conference and carried out a week of resistance to genetically engineered trees.

The protestors said that if legalized, GE trees would lead to the destruction of native forests and biodiversity in the US South, and be economically devastating to rural communities. After disrupting for 20 minutes a major presentation by Belgian tree engineer Wout Boerjan entitled, "Engineering trees for the biorefinery," two Asheville residents were arrested.

The full story with photos can be found at: <http://globaljusticeecology.org/stopgetrees.php?tabs=0> and updated information at <http://globaljusticeecology.org/pressroom.php?ID=646>

[index](#)

- Unifying the struggle for the Amazon in Brazil

On May 2, some 200 indigenous peoples, riverine communities and fishermen joined in a historic moment of unity and struggle for the Amazon and its peoples at the Pimental construction site of the Belo Monte dam where they continue to occupy the area. They demand that the Brazilian Federal Government clearly define the regulation of prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples and to immediately suspend all work and studies related to dams on the rivers where they live. The Brazilian government has repeatedly disrespected and assaulted traditional populations and has conducted studies on their lands without hearing them. Researchers carrying out the studies required for licensing were often accompanied by military troops, chariots of war and ammunition.

Among the warrior communities present at the protest are the Munduruku peoples of the Tapajós River basin who traveled some 900 kilometers to stand in solidarity with the Xingu people. The Munduruku indigenous people have been resisting the construction of a hydroelectric dam complex in their lands in Medio Tapajós, Itaituba. As a result, they were victim of aggression of the State under the "Operation Tapajós" (see WRM Bulletin 189).

Demands were unified, calling for the government to respect the Brazilian constitution, international treaties and participants demanding Justice Now!

http://amazonwatch.org/news/2013/0503-a-united-cry-against-dams-in-the-amazon?utm_source=Amazon+Watch+Newsletter+and+Updates&utm_campaign=c88fe43d23-eoa_bmd_blog_plus_20130507&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e6f929728b-c88fe43d23-339991282, <http://amazonwatch.org/news/2013/0502-indigenous-peoples-launch-new-occupation-on-belo-monte-dam-site>, <http://amazonwatch.org/take-action/belo-monte-justice-now>, and <http://www.xinguvivo.org.br/2013/05/27/governo-nao-cumpre-palavra-e-indigenas-ocupam-belo-monte-novamente/>

[index](#)

- Stop Destroying Yasuni Rainforest

The Huaorani, the last known group of Indigenous peoples still living in voluntary isolation in Ecuador in the Amazonian area of Ecuador known as Yasuni National Park and Biosphere Reserve are threatened by encroaching oil development, settlers and illegal loggers.

Now, some Huaorani of Yasuni, are developing new ways to enable their kin to remain living in voluntary isolation, protect the rainforest that is their home and source of life. They have launched a petition to Ecuador's President demanding a legal title to their ancestral territory, and reforms to the laws of Ecuador to protect their land and their right to live as Huaorani.

You can sign the petition at <http://www.change.org/petitions/presidente-de-la-republica-de-ecuador-stop-destroying-yasuni-rainforest-something-must-remain-for-the-huaorani>

[index](#)

- Protest in India against continued State repression on anti-POSCO people's movement

In the continuum of brutal attacks on the struggle against forcible land acquisition for a POSCO steel plant in Odisha, India, the most recent case of repression has been the unlawful arrest of POSCO PratirodhSamgramSamiti (PPSS) leader AbhaySahoo from Bhubaneshwar airport by Odisha Police on 11th May.

From 16th May 2013 onwards, a Odisha wide platform POSCO Pratirodh Jan SangharshManch (PPJSM) have started a demonstration for indefinite period demanding immediate scrapping of the project and release of PPSS leaders AbhaySahoo, LaxmanParamanik (victim of a bomb attack in early March), Promod Das and two others from jail

[index](#)

- Take action for indigenous rights in Sarawak

Tens of thousands of indigenous people from Sarawak, Malaysia, are threatened with forced displacement as the Sarawak government moves ahead with plans for 12 massive new dams. These dams will devastate the traditional homelands of native communities, drown pristine tropical habitat, and generate dangerous methane gas, a dangerous climate polluter.

The SAVE-Rivers movement has launched a petition demanding that decision makers stop construction of these destructive dams and instead respect indigenous rights and find alternatives that reduce social and environmental impacts while still meeting Sarawak's energy needs.

You are invited to sign the petition at <http://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/stop-the-destruction-of-sarawak-s-rivers>

[index](#)

- Solidarity with the community of Cumbe, Ceará, Brazil against their criminalization

Communities and International Redmanglar member organizations expressed their solidarity with the people and community of Cumbe, Ceará, while expressing its total rejection to criminalize actions that the community lives by the particular interests of the employer Rubens Gomes dos Santos, who has tried every means to revive illegally abandoned shrimp farm.

Send your signatures of support and solidarity letters to email: luvital@gmail.com
http://www.redmanglarinternacional.org/sitio/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=44&Itemid=71

[index](#)

RECOMMENDED

- "An overview of industrial tree plantations in the global South: Conflicts, trends and resistance struggles", EJOLT Report 3, has just been published in Bahasa Indonesia.
http://www.wrm.org.uy/publications/EJOLTplantations_Bahasa.pdf

[index](#)

- "Walking on Caves of Fire", by Nnimmo Bassey, records his impressions of the level of impacts from mining in Witbank, Old Coronation mine and other Highveld communities from a field trip in Mpumalanga Province organised by Friends of the Earth South Africa as a prelude to Oilwatch Africa conference that was held in Midrand mid May 2013. <http://nnimmo.blogspot.com/2013/05/walking-on-caves-of-fire.html>

[index](#)

- "Towards a Post-Oil Civilization. Yasunization and other initiatives to leave fossil fuels in the soil". The EJOLT Report No. 6 traces the birth and growth of the idea of leaving oil in the ground. It also analyses the links between the proposal and the world movement in defense of indigenous peoples as well as discusses the financial aspects of the Yasuni ITT proposal, siding against 'carbon trading'.

http://www.ejolt.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/130520_EJOLT6_High2.pdf

[index](#)

- "Genetically Engineered Trees and Bioenergy. A Growing Threat to Forests and Communities", an updated briefing paper of the Global Justice Ecology Project analyzing the state of GE Trees and bioenergy

<http://globaljusticeecology.org/file/Analysis%20of%20the%20State%20of%20GE%20Trees%20May%202013.pdf>

[index](#)

- "La ruina de la fractura hidráulica", a report by Ecologistas en Acción that exposes the truth about the extraction of unconventional gas through hydraulic fracturing or "fracking".

<http://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/article25805.html>

[index](#)
