

WRM Monthly Bulletin

November 2015 - Realities hidden under the "green" discourses in Paris

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The Bulletin aims to support and contribute to the struggle of Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities over their forests and territories. Subscription is free.

OUR VIEWPOINT

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The contradictions behind the “Zero Deforestation” pledge

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REALITIES HIDDEN UNDER THE "GREEN" DISCOURSES IN PARIS

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Burning Season In Indonesia

What have industrial plantations and the Indonesian State done to the islands' forests?

The forest and land burning madness is going rampant again in Indonesia. The hotspot data from satellite imaging and ground observations strikingly fits the spatial distribution of plantation and logging concessions. What mainstream reports do not show is the connection between the expansion of industrial plantations and the permanent damage of the indigenous lifespace and food regime, the rapid jump in the country's fossil fuel consumption for biomass import, the devastation of vital riparian systems by the enormous use of surface and groundwater for mining and real estate industry, as well as the conflicts and forced evictions. The expansion of plantations has always been a cause of deforestation, not its remedy.

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Malaysia: Indigenous groups from around the globe adopt anti-dam declaration

Indigenous peoples fighting the construction of dams in many parts of the world stand in solidarity with the second year anniversary of the blockades against the Baram Dam in Sarawak, Malaysia. The blockades have successfully stopped the works on the Baram Dam as well as its access road for the last two years. The World Indigenous Summit on

Environment and Rivers released a declaration, which, among others, acknowledges the widespread suffering and destruction caused by dams, asks to halt ongoing projects that are in conflict with local groups as well as demands that dams should no longer be presented as “climate neutral”.

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Brazil: Forest Carbon Demonstration Project in the Tapajós-Arapiuns Extractive Reserve

The carbon credit market, a mechanism of the so-called "green economy", has been under debate in Brazil for about a decade, and there are many concerns and varying perspectives on this issue. Governments and companies currently see the mechanism as a possible way to generate financial return. Meanwhile, traditional communities are concerned that the mechanism, among other risks, could expose them to loss of their rights and territorial security. For this reason, communities and leaders from the Tapajós Arapiuns Extractive Reserve (RESEX) – together with social movements from the neighboring city of Santarém, in the state of Pará in the Amazonian region of Brazil – have opposed a forest carbon demonstration project proposed by ICMBio. ICMBio is the government body responsible for managing Conservation Units, including RESEX. RESEX is a category of Conservation Unit that allows people who inhabit and depend on forests to use them sustainably.

5

Forestry Community Forum: community mobilisation in plantation forestry

The Forestry Community Forum is an organisation of dwellers and labour tenants residing in plantation forestry / worker villages in the Boland region of the Western Cape Province, South Africa. The overall goal is to achieve land reform and local economic opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. Constituted in 2011, when villagers started to organise and mobilise, the Forum has a total of fourteen participating villages. Its mission is to organize and mobilize villagers for fairness, equality, redress and transformation of the tree monoculture plantations sector that continue to benefit a few at the cost of villagers, i.e. tenants and workers.

6

Banking on biodiversity in Sabah, Malaysia

The trade in biodiversity credits has been positioned as a solution to the problem of biodiversity loss (especially orang-utan habitat) in Sabah. This approach, however, fails to recognise Malaysia's international political economy of palm oil and timber, the problems associated with the large-scale, export-oriented monocultures that replace Borneo's rainforests, overconsumption and corporate greed, high-level corruption and industrial logging. Local (indigenous) peoples, depicted as hunters and poachers, are made to appear as the “real threat” to Sabah's wildlife. In turn, biodiversity offsetting enables the positioning of corporate and state actors as “saviours of nature”.

PEOPLES IN ACTION

Keep fossil fuels in the ground: a declaration for the health of Mother Earth

Brazil: a mining-induced ecological and social disaster — How much longer?

Philippines: Resisting Land Grabbing and Corporate Oil Palm Plantations

Corridors of Resistance: Stopping oil and gas pipelines
India: Appeal to the government and the UN on indigenous forest communities' rights

RECOMMENDED

Forest fires in Indonesia: Why is the media looking away?
The Corporate cookbook: how climate criminals have captured the UN talks
Mausam Magazine from India: voices for climate justice
Peasant Agroecology for Food Sovereignty and Mother Earth, experiences of La Via Campesina
Outsmarting nature? Synthetic Biology and Climate Smart Agriculture

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The UN climate negotiations in Paris will again put a lot of emphasis on forests, which are seen as mere carbon stores. One of the most recent approaches promising to leave the remaining forest “carbon stores” intact is called “zero deforestation”. Several big industrial plantation companies support the idea and it sounds beautiful: no more deforestation so no more forest carbon emissions are going to be released into the air. But how can businesses that are based on the expansion of industrial plantations and that are most active in tropical forest areas commit to no more deforestation? A look at what is happening in countries like Liberia and Indonesia, where big players from the plantation sector committed to ‘zero deforestation’, shows why such commitments are full of contradictions and serve mainly the purpose of allowing corporations to carry on their activities.

The case of the Golden Veroleum company in Liberia

In July 2015, officials from the Forestry Department in Liberia presented a draft “Manual for Harvesting Trees in Agriculture Plantation Extension and Mining Contract Areas” for review. The manual would facilitate timber extraction from within “agricultural” concession areas, legalizing so-called “conversion timber”. These concessions, for example in the northwest and southeast of the country, are still covered with vast forest areas. Until now, conversion of such areas was not possible, as the current legal framework excludes logging in existing agriculture concessions for export. However, with the proposed “Manual”, possibilities for much more forest destruction would be opened. (1)

One of the biggest “agricultural” concession holders in Liberia is the palm oil company Golden Veroleum Liberia (GVL), with a concession area of about 220,000 hectares. GVL is owned by the agribusiness company Golden Agri Resources (GAR), which announced in 2014 a “zero deforestation” commitment that extends to all its palm oil operations, including those of its subsidiaries. Why would the proposal for a review of the manual for extraction of timber from agricultural and mining concessions in Liberia,

if adopted, cause deforestation? And how does it highlight the contradictions behind the "zero deforestation" commitment of companies such as GAR?

The proposal would allow a company like GAR to claim internationally that the company – in this particular case their subsidiary GVL - is not expanding into forested areas, while in practice, it is doing exactly that. Under the proposed changes, GVL could claim that another company took out the timber from their concession first, so the area is not forested anymore. Whereas, without the changes, only GVL as the concession holder is allowed to take out timber. Thus, if GVL expanded into the forested area, there would be no-one else but GVL to blame for expansion into the forest – something the company pledged at international level it would no longer do.

While GAR promotes its “forest conservation” policy internationally, what the proposed changes in the manual for timber extraction from agricultural concessions implies is the opening of “agricultural” concession areas to industrial logging and thus more deforestation. This is not a new practice: according to the think tank Chatham House, half of the tropical timber being sold nowadays is conversion timber. (2)

The cases of Wilmar and APP companies in Indonesia

For the last few months, Indonesia was once again heavily affected by massive forest fires, a huge problem to which we dedicate an article in this bulletin. Most of the plantation companies that adhered to a “zero deforestation” commitment are active in Indonesia. They include Wilmar, active in promoting oil palm plantations, and APP promoting timber plantations for pulp production.

According to the Indonesian NGO WALHI, recent forest fires are roaring also in the concessions linked to Wilmar and APP. One main cause for the fires is the burning of forests and (peat-)lands for plantation expansion, carried out by companies, including subsidiaries of Wilmar and APP. In Central Kalimantan, for example, forest fires were detected in the plantation areas of 14 Wilmar subsidiaries, while in Riau, fires were detected in the areas of 6 APP subsidiaries. (3) The impact of forest fires on people, territories and the climate are especially severe with an exceptionally long dry period affecting Indonesia.

Zero deforestation can only happen if companies stop promoting large-scale plantations

It is known that industrial agriculture including oil palm and timber plantations represent the most important direct cause of deforestation globally. What is striking, then, is that plantation corporations that adhere to a “zero deforestation” pledge do not spend a word in their pledges on what will be done to actually stop further plantation expansion.

If “zero deforestation” is to be taken seriously, it would mean that in Liberia, for example, with the trend of much more permissive rules for logging in agricultural concession areas, companies like GVL would need to reject such trends and not permit any industrial logging in its concession areas, as it would lead to massive deforestation. Likewise, Wilmar and APP announcing to stop plantation expansion in their existing

concessions would be a necessary step to reduce forest fires and thus deforestation and its tremendous impacts in the region.

At the same time, a huge challenge that remains for local communities is how to deal with the millions of hectares of plantations that already exist. It is important to support communities' efforts to organize and their struggles to take control of those lands, transforming the territories occupied by industrial plantations into other uses that allow communities and future generations to coexist and benefit from the territories.

About this bulletin

Faced again with two weeks of corporate-controlled UN negotiations in France around climate and forests, our response is to expose once again the false solutions that come out of this process and the hardship they provoke on the ground, but also how communities resist these false solutions.

Like “zero deforestation” commitments, there are many other tactics that corporations are using to evade responsibility for the social and environmental destruction they cause. An article on “biodiversity offsets” in Malaysia shows how the mechanism is created to “compensate” for biodiversity destruction, and in practice strengthens the interests of the palm oil and timber industry in the country. Another article reflects on the decision of forest-dependent communities in a forest conservation area in the Brazilian Amazon to reject an NGO proposal for a REDD project in their territory. Another article reports on the very interesting struggle and organization of ex-timber plantation workers in South Africa, dismissed in the process of mechanization and privatization of a decades-old plantation business in South Africa, and now struggling for dignity. Their aim is to convert timber plantations that surround their villages into areas where they can produce crops and start to restore the land as part of their aim towards food sovereignty.

Another persistent claim in greenwashing destruction is that large hydro dams are “green” and produce “sustainable” energy. An article reporting about the recent World Indigenous Summit on Environment and Rivers, which took place in Sarawak, Malaysia, exposes a completely different picture of large hydro dams. The meeting facilitated an exchange of experiences and strengthening of the resistance among communities fighting mega-dams.

- (1) <http://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/forests-under-siege-liberia-may-intensify-forest-destruction/>
- (2) Ibid
- (3) <http://www.tuk.or.id/2015/10/open-letter-grave-concerns-with-financing-of-companies-link-to-forest-peat-and-land-fires-in-indonesia/?lang=en>

REALITIES HIDDEN UNDER THE "GREEN" DISCOURSES IN PARIS

Burning Season In Indonesia

What have industrial plantations and the Indonesian State done to the islands' forests?

The Scale of Disaster

The forest and land burning madness is going rampant again in Indonesia. Up to November 16, the Global Fire Emission Database (GFED) registered 122,568 hotspots across the Archipelago. The increase in the number of hotspots since January 2015 is the fastest compared to 2003 and 2014. (1) In terms of size, the fires reportedly burned about 21,000 square kilometers of forest and peat lands (2) in just a few months, between June and October 2015. (3)

During that period of time, the massive burnings created long-lasting health problems for more than 43 million Indonesians in the provinces. (4) During the same period, the fires reportedly killed at least 31 people. (5) Nineteen of them, many of whom were school children, lived in the provinces of Riau, South Sumatra, Jambi, West, Central and South Kalimantan. Others got trapped between fires on Java island. It is not at all clear whether the Government will pay medical expenses over the next few years to those millions of people with increased and various levels of health impacts from excessive exposure to the smoke. The government's failure to foresee and handle the fires has even been labeled as a "crime against humanity." (6) Much more could be said about the suffering on the ground.

The Ministry of Environment and Forestry has published a list of more than 286 plantation companies which are responsible in one way or another for the spread of the fire in their concession areas. (7) The number of companies on the Government list is substantially smaller than the independently identified number of involved companies, which is substantially higher than 300. The fires took place in logging concession areas as well. Out of 299 logging companies registered in 2010, 276 remain active. (8) Judging such an underestimation of the number of companies and the open unwillingness of the Government to disclose all companies involved in this year's burning, many critical groups and people in Indonesia expressed serious doubt on whether the Government is going to take any action against those plantation companies.

Why the Sensation of Surprise?

Is such a massive burning unprecedented or unexpected? Not really. The 2015 fires fit a well registered, similar annual pattern of fires at least since 2003. (9) So, where exactly does the spectacular burning take place this year? The hotspot data from satellite imaging and ground observations strikingly fits the spatial distribution of plantation and logging concessions, not only in Sumatra and Kalimantan – the notorious plantation belts, but also many parts of Sulawesi (10), Maluku (11) and Papua (12).

For oil palm alone, in 2003, the Indonesian Government set the total figure of “suitable land” to 32 million hectare. That is almost fourfold of the total occupied land for oil palm plantations in 2014, which is about 8.25 million hectare. (13) The problem that the industry creates entails more than the wild fires and air pollution that has engulfed Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and most regions in Indonesia. In comparison to the costs

arising from the obvious damage to human health and the land, the monetary gain government obtains from export and taxation is meaningless. Oil palm is certainly not the only crisis-perpetuator. Besides the Government allowance for massive logging, Indonesia has seen the rapid rise of other large-scale plantations. The expansion of pulpwood and biofuel plantations over the past two decades is a case in point. Both are officially classified in Indonesian as *hutan tanaman industri* ("forest of industrial plants")—a perfect translation of the FAO's oxymoronic definition of forest. Between 1995 and 2014 the Indonesian Government allocated 8.7 million hectares of forest for pulpwood plantations alone. (14) Last year the Government targeted a jump in wood production to reach 100 million cubic meters through a further expansion of the plantation area to 15 million hectares (15)

This brutality of "development in action" has its North-South dimension as well. For that, it is useful to review the correlation between deforestation and debt (16). Between 1970 and 1989, prior to the debt crisis, the forest loss estimate in Indonesia was between 12-24 million hectares (17). During this period of two-decades, the speed of deforestation increased by 83%, registering the third highest acceleration of deforestation after that of Brazil and Vietnam. (18) From 1989 up to 2011, Indonesia's external debt surged threefold, from US\$ 15.7 billions to US\$ 45.7 billions. (19) The forest cover between 1990-2010 shrank further by another 27.8 million hectares, which is higher than the loss during the previous two decades. (20) To the remedy of industrial deforestation for expansion of export crops came the new proposed remedy of keeping the jewels of forest, funded with grants and loans for REDD+ and similar initiatives that could go hand in hand with the industrial deforestation remedy without one interfering with the other. In this light, both industrial deforestation and "protection of forest carbon" have a connection with "development financing": different schemes for different fiscal regimes.

In a closer examination on the dynamics of deforestation up to the late 1990s, the "Indonesian Working Group on Underlying Causes of Deforestation and Forest Degradation" suggested closely intertwined causes, such as the development paradigm adopted by the government of Indonesia—which is influenced by structural adjustment loans, bilateral and multilateral loans; international and regional trade pressures; and the economic growth prescription under depleted natural resources. (21)

Since the early 2000s, in the aftermath of the Asian economic crisis, a number of new factors thickened the plot. These include, among others, the spatial reorganisation of the State, in tandem with a spatial planning regime that facilitates further acquisition of large tracts of forest land for giga-infrastructure projects such as the "Indonesian Economic Development Corridors" and the "Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate" (MIFEE) project; the privatisation of the energy sector, which helped creating the fossil-fuel "subsidy" problem and a surge in energy and raw material consumption; as well as a further expansion of forest use for mining, biofuel plantation, smelting or large "renewable" power generation projects. These large investments in turn open up nascent markets for carbon offset projects, biodiversity offset schemes, and payment for ecosystem services. The 2015 fires, after all, are a disaster long in the making, and should not be entirely surprising.

Indonesian Burning and the Climate

The 2015 fires occur on the eve of the UN climate negotiations. In the evolving climate-political context, key players in the global industrial and finance capital have managed to divert the spotlight on the effort to mitigate climate change - i.e., from curbing the global fixation on fossil fuel to the financial valuation of the carbon stored in forests and its use in the fictitious offset mechanisms. In consequence, the disastrous fires in Indonesia may provide carbon traders and promoters—including state managers of countries with forests—with a twisted line of argument for more endorsement of carbon offset mechanisms from land use, land use change and forestry, such as REDD, while belittling the impacts of global fossil fuel combustion.

According to the Global Fire Emission Database analysis, this year's Indonesian fires translate into more emissions than those of Japan's fossil fuel combustion in 2013, almost twice that of Germany and more than treble that of Indonesia for the same year. (22) Throughout the months of September and October 2015, Indonesia's daily emissions from the fires exceeded emissions from the US economy. (23)

The fires, nevertheless, comprised much more than emissions. They burned land, territories and released menacing smokes. What mainstream reports do not show is the connection between the expansion of industrial plantations and the permanent damage of the indigenous lifespace and food regime, the rapid jump in the country's fossil fuel consumption for biomass import, the devastation of vital riparian systems by the enormous use of surface and groundwater for mining and real estate industry, as well as the conflicts and forced evictions. The expansion of plantations has always been a cause of deforestation, not its remedy. If plantations get touted as an example of a "low carbon economy", then we know how bad such an economy can be. The Indonesian burning season demonstrates that such overlooked problems will not get solved by incorporating carbon footprint accounting in the GDP measurement or by acquiring international financial support for voluntary offset projects.

In the *de-facto* anarchic international climate regime at present, whereby in the absence of a binding agreement for all UN member countries, each country produces its "intended nationally determined contribution" (INDC), the fate of the most precarious ecological systems, particularly the forests, largely subsumes under the imperative to maintain the liquidity of capital circuitries through economic representation of the Earth.

The Indonesian INDC document—deemed inadequate by the Climate Action Tracker, an independent assessment of countries' commitments and actions, to address the climate crisis—mentions a moratorium on the clearing of primary forests and conversion of peat lands from 2010-2016. (24) The document fails to mention that even though such a moratorium has been prolonged for the third time since 2011, the largest plantation companies have already amassed hundreds of thousand of hectares of peat lands over time. (25) The systematic draining of the vast peat lands—which facilitated and expedited the land burning—remained untouched by such a moratorium. Likewise, carbon offset and forest financialisation mechanisms and programs such as REDD are glaringly irrelevant in the face of such an alarming level of land concentration and land-based emissions. The fact is that in the province of South Sumatra alone, industrial plantation concessions for timber extraction entail 80 per cent of all peat lands in the province. The concession areas registered 13,348 fire hot spots by October 27 this year, all in the area where the peat dome reaches the depth of 3 meters or more. (26) In fact,

46 per cent of the fires from August 1st to October 26th—which translates into 51 thousand burning events—took place on peat lands. (27) In other words, conservation and devastation of peat lands both proceed under the same legal and political framework.

Some Lessons from the 2015 Indonesian Fires

What can we learn from the 2015 burning season in Indonesia? First, the Indonesian fires revealed that the problem did not start at the first flare of fire. The burning is bound to happen again—probably with the same or worse results—any year in the future, because it is a much cheaper method to prepare the land for crop planting. Think of it as a corporate slash-and-burn.. Second, the same prescription for disaster has been evolved over more than four decades, at the expense of the self-regenerating capacity of the islands' terrestrial and marine ecological systems and the human security of Indonesian citizens. While forest dependent peoples across the Archipelago have been hit the hardest, the fires dramatically reduce the resilience of the islands' ecological systems and the unborn generations. The absence of adequate corrective actions runs contrary to the country's pledge to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation. In the light of what the State has/has not done since the early years of the UN climate negotiations, the mention of "targets" of emission reduction in the Indonesian INDC document hardly veils the "show us the money" attitude of the state managers in dealing with their mitigation responsibility, and in anticipating a larger flow of international funds for a long track-record of abysmal commitment.

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(1) <http://www.globalfiredata.org/updates.html>

(2) <http://qz.com/538558/indonesias-fires-have-now-razed-more-land-than-in-the-entire-us-state-of-new-jersey/>

(3)

<http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2015/10/30/13070591/LAPAN.Tahun.Ini.Dua.Juta.Hektar.Hutan.Hangus.Terbakar>

(4) Ministry of Environment and Forestry, various dates.

(5) <http://www.jpnn.com/read/2015/10/28/335432/Ini-Jumlah-Korban-Meninggal-karena-Kabut-Asap-versi-Mensos->

(6) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/26/indonesias-fires-crime-against-humanity-hundreds-of-thousands-suffer>

(7) <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/09/19/govt-looks-suspend-licenses-forest-burning-companies.html>

(8) [http://www.hutan-](http://www.hutan-aceh.com/system/publications/documents/000/000/059/original/Daftar_IUPHHK-HA_tahun_Mei_2014.pdf?1416937132)

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(9) <http://www.globalfiredata.org/>, *ibid.*

(10) <http://manado.tribunnews.com/2015/10/14/luas-hutan-sulut-yang-ludes-terbakar-capai-5683-hektar>

(11) <http://www.antaraneews.com/berita/524055/menteri-siti-nurbaya-konfirmasi-kebakaran-hutan-di-seram>

(12) <http://pusaka.or.id/potret-kebakaran-hutan-dan-lahan-di-merauke-2/>

- (13) USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (2009). *Indonesia Palm Oil Production Growth To Continue. Commodity Intelligence Report.*
- (14) FWI, Jikalahari, WALHI Jambi, WBH (2014). *Lembar Fakta 2014.*
- (15) *Ibid.*
- (16) George, Susan (1992). *The Debt Boomerang: How Third World Debt Harms Us All.* Pluto Press, particularly *Ch. I*, pp.1-34.
- (17) Sunderlin and Resosudarmo (1996), quoted in in Anne Casson; Muliastira, Y.; Obidzinski, K. (2014). *Large-scale plantations, bioenergy developments and land use change in Indonesia, Working Paper 170.* Technische Universitat Darmstadt and CIFOR., p.49.
- (18) *Ibid.*, p.11.
- (19) Current USD. <http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/indonesia/external-debt-stocks>
- (20) Miettinen et al (2011), quoted in Anne Casson; Muliastira, Y.; Obidzinski, K. (2014). *Ibid.*
- (21) <http://wrm.org.uy/oldsite/deforestation/Asia/Indonesia.html>
- (22) http://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/overview.php?v=CO2ts_gdp1990-2014
- (23) <http://www.vox.com/2015/10/30/9645448/indonesia-fires-peat-palm-oil>
- (24) <http://climateactiontracker.org/indcs.html>
- (25) <http://sains.kompas.com/read/2015/05/13/18530831/Moratorium.Hutan.Positif.Diperpanjang>
- (26) <http://www.mongabay.co.id/2015/10/30/jokowi-cegah-kebakaran-lahan-gambut-akan-dihutankan/>
- (27) http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2015/10/151029_indonesia_data_perusahaan

Malaysia: Indigenous groups from around the globe adopt anti-dam declaration

Indigenous peoples fighting the construction of dams in many parts of the world stand in solidarity with the second year anniversary of the blockades against the Baram Dam in Sarawak, Malaysia. The blockades have successfully stopped the works on the Baram Dam as well as its access road for the last two years. The World Indigenous Summit on Environment and Rivers released a declaration, which, among others, acknowledges the widespread suffering and destruction caused by dams, asks to halt ongoing projects that are in conflict with local groups as well as demands that dams should no longer be presented as “climate neutral”.

Indigenous dam fighters from around the world came together on October 23rd 2015 on the banks of the Baram River in Sarawak, a Malaysian state on the island of Borneo, to stand in solidarity with the people fighting against the proposed Baram Dam. On that day, the two blockades against the Baram Dam celebrated their second year anniversary. The Baram Dam would submerge over 400km² of forest and displace up to 20,000 indigenous people, while its electricity is not even needed: Sarawak already faces a power glut. Thanks to the blockades, the works on the Baram Dam as well as its access road have been stopped completely for the last two years.

The indigenous delegations from Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia, Brazil, the United States, Honduras, and from around Malaysia gathered in Sarawak to share their experiences, strengthen ties between their communities and make a common statement on dams. The week-long event was called the World Indigenous Summit on Environment and Rivers (WISER) and was hosted by Sarawak's grassroots network SAVE Rivers (1).

Baram for all, all for Baram

The participants of WISER visited various places of importance to the resistance against the Baram Dam, such as the two blockade sites and the proposed dam site. Peter Kallang, chairman of SAVE Rivers and host of WISER, explained: "We of SAVE Rivers wanted the participants to experience our culture and to see the beauty of our Baram River themselves, so that they better understand what is at stake and why we struggle."

At the proposed dam site, which was reached by boat, Peter Kallang told an anecdote: "In 2012, Sarawak's power company and dam builder Sarawak Energy organized a traditional indigenous prayer ritual at the proposed Baram dam site to bless the dam construction. Immediately, the local communities reacted with protests on boats at the site to this abuse of their traditional prayer. That was a key moment in the mobilization against the dam."

The story of the defence of the Baram River symbolically stands for the destiny of many indigenous groups threatened by dams. Berta Cáceres, 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize (2) winner from Honduras, was struck by the similarities between the threats the communities are faced with and stressed the importance of WISER: "This summit on indigenous peoples and rivers has a special value in that its actions give strength to the historic resistance of our peoples and makes visible the grave aggressions and conflict generated by the privatization of rivers and the construction of dams within Indigenous communities and regions."

The WISER Baram 2015 declaration

Workshops were held at the village of Tanjung Tepalit, one of the 26 villages to be flooded by the Baram Dam. The participants discussed their motivations to fight against dams, challenges to their campaigns as well as successful strategies to mobilize people and to advance in their respective struggles.

James Nyurang, former headman of Tanjung Tepalit and host of the international delegation, is confident that the Baram people gained strength through the summit to continue the struggle: "Being together with all the delegates sharing and discussing about various strategies to encounter the challenges of how to stop all the unnecessary dams in the world, I have gained a lot of experience from all of the delegates. And with such information, I am confident enough such experiences will be fundamental to us - the Baram People - and our strategies to continue to fight and stop the proposed Baram Dam."

The discussions culminated in the adoption of the "[WISER Baram 2015 Declaration on Dams and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)". The declaration acknowledges the

widespread suffering and destruction caused by dams. Governments, companies and investors are asked to not proceed with projects that have not obtained the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of the impacted communities, to ratify and enforce the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as well as the ILO Convention 169 and to implement small-scale renewable energy alternatives in rural contexts. The declaration also demands reparations for communities that have suffered from dams as well as to conduct studies on the removal of dams.

The participants stress that dams should no longer be presented as climate neutral. “We make a strong call to the next Climate Change Summit in Paris to listen to and respect Indigenous peoples and the alternatives to climate change our communities offer”, said Berta Cáceres, who is fighting the Agua Zarca Dam in Honduras, at the final press conference of WISER in the town of Miri.

Struggles and hopes

All participants share the suffering caused by loss of culture and heritage as well as the natural environments they and their communities are part of, the exclusion from decision-making and even the criminalization and militarization.

But there are also stories of success: Kundy Doeam and Dinith Yoen from Cambodia told how they reached a moratorium on the Areng Dam early this year after intensive campaigning with blockades, a bicycle campaign, amongst others. Sammy and John Luke Gensaw of the Yurok tribe in California, United States, explained that while the four dams on the Klamath River are still standing and threatening the salmon, the base of livelihood for the Yurok tribe, the US government has started to decommission dams in other places. Subsequently, ecosystems are recovering surprisingly fast.

People in Baram are also more and more hopeful that the dam will be stopped. First of all, the resistance has considerably grown and the blockades have been effective in stopping the project. In June, Peter Kallang and Daniel Kammen, professor of the University of California, Berkeley, met with Sarawak’s Chief Minister Adenan Satem to discuss alternative energy sources to dams. In September, Sarawak’s Chief Minister Adenan Satem announced a moratorium on the Baram Dam.

However, Daniela Da Silva’s story about the Belo Monte Dam in the Brazilian Amazon reminds us that successes are fragile. She spoke about how the predecessor of the Belo Monte Dam, the Kararao Dam, was defeated by widespread protests in the late 1980s, but renamed and revived by the government later on. Even several court rulings against the project couldn’t stop its completion. Sadly, dam projects presumed dead are often revived by unimaginative governments.

Read the declaration: http://www.stop-corruption-dams.org/resources/WISER_Baram_2015_Declaration_Signed.pdf

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- (1) SAVE Rivers was founded four years ago as community network to fight against a series of at least 12 dams proposed by the Sarawak government. The Baram Dam quickly became the most controversial project out of the series.
- (2) The Goldman Environmental Prize honours grassroots environmentalists and recognizes them for their efforts to protect the natural environment, often at great personal risk.

Brazil: Forest Carbon Demonstration Project in the Tapajós-Arapiuns Extractive Reserve

The carbon credit market, a mechanism of the so-called "green economy", has been under debate in Brazil for about a decade, and there are many concerns and varying perspectives on this issue. Governments and companies currently see the mechanism as a possible way to generate financial return. Meanwhile, traditional communities are concerned that the mechanism, among other risks, could expose them to loss of their rights and territorial security. For this reason, communities and leaders from the Tapajós Arapiuns Extractive Reserve (RESEX) – together with social movements from the neighboring city of Santarém, in the state of Pará in the Amazonian region of Brazil – have opposed a forest carbon demonstration project proposed by ICMBio. ICMBio is the government body responsible for managing Conservation Units, including RESEX. RESEX is a category of Conservation Unit that allows people who inhabit and depend on forests to use them sustainably.

The RESEX Tapajós Arapiuns carbon credit project first came up at a Conservation Unit Advisory Board meeting in July 2014, and the issue was again addressed at subsequent Board meetings. However, a significant portion of the RESEX population only became aware of the discussion in early 2015, after hearing some board members' concerns about the lack of understanding of the issue and its complexity. According to the minutes from the board meeting that took place in the community of Vila Franca, these members requested further clarification on the issue; at that time, the information available was that ICMBio planned to develop a pilot "Forest Carbon" project in RESEX.

For this reason, the community of Surucuá held a workshop on March 28, 2015 to better understand REDD project methodologies. The workshop was organized by concerned community leaders who wanted to better understand the issue. Residents of the villages of Pajurá, Paricatuba, Vila de Amorim, Muratuba, Aldeia São Pedro, Retiro and Mangal also participated, along with members of social movements from Santarém, who contributed to the discussion by providing information. At that meeting, community members identified several needs, and demands to broaden the discussion to include other RESEX inhabitants. Among their demands were that other workshops with the same content be held in other communities, that the Board of Directors of the Tapajós-Arapiuns Extractive Reserve Associations (TAPAJOARA) actively participate in said meetings, and that strategies be in place to guarantee the participation of RESEX inhabitants in a transparent public consultation process.

Later, the Rural Farm Workers and Family Farmers Union (STTR) of Santarém held a workshop on June 8, 2015 with main RESEX leaders to clarify questions and concerns. The workshop was coordinated by the Federation of Social and Educational Assistance

Organizations – FASE Amazonia – and by academic Marcela Vecchione of the group “*Carta de Belem*”, with the support of the human rights organization *Terra de Direitos*. On that occasion, RESEX inhabitants' main concerns and questions were clarified. At this meeting, a representative from the indigenous community of Aningalzinho handed the President of STTR Santarém a signed declaration stating the community's opposition to the forest carbon project in RESEX.

Following that meeting, an alternative discussion group formed to oppose the proposal. The group comprised representatives of STTR-Santarém, *Terra de Direitos*, FASE, *Pastorais Sociais*, [the Social Pastoral] *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* [Pastoral Land Commission] (CPT), TAPAJOARA, the National Council of Extractive Populations (CNS), Community Action Project Support Center (CEAPAC) and RESEX leaders. Simultaneously, the indigenous movement was discussing the issue with great concern, as they had received news and alerts about other projects being implemented on indigenous lands, which potentially threatened their autonomy.

On August 4, 2015, ICMBio held a meeting with all organizations that were part of the group, organizations with activities in RESEX, and the Federal Public Ministry. The Ministry suggested that discussions be renewed with strong participation of RESEX inhabitants, and everyone agreed. The meeting highlighted the needs for the project to comply with all applicable international protocols; for it to respect the constitutional, statutory and customary rights associated with land ownership; for occupied lands to receive official titles; for local communities to be represented; and for the rights of indigenous communities and small landholders to use natural resources. Moreover, the meeting stressed the need for full compliance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Labor Organization Convention 169.

On August 11th, ICMBio held a meeting at STTR headquarters in Santarém with Brazilian company Biofílica, the company responsible for developing the project – which, according to their webpage, “aims to market environmental services.” Their strategy was to convince participants that the project was necessary in order to make implementation of RESEX's Management Plan programs and subprograms financially viable.

On August 13th, the indigenous movement occupied ICMBio's headquarters in Santarém with several demands, the principal one being cancellation of the carbon project. As an immediate result of this movement and after much negotiation, ICMBio National temporarily suspended discussions until further clarification took place. The movements continue being alert and oppose implementation of the project. They argue that this kind of project is not really aimed at solving the global environmental crisis, as it threatens the autonomy and territorial security of traditional communities who live and coexist in harmony with the best preserved places on the planet. They also assert that another kind of human development is possible, outside of the financial perspective and market logic.

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Forestry Community Forum: Community mobilisation in plantation forestry

The Forestry Community Forum is an organisation of dwellers and labour tenants residing in plantation forestry / worker villages in the Boland region of the Western Cape Province, South Africa. The overall goal is to achieve land reform and local economic opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. Constituted in 2011, when villagers started to organise and mobilise, the Forum has a total of fourteen participating villages. Its mission is to organize and mobilize villagers for fairness, equality, redress and transformation of the tree monoculture plantations sector that continue to benefit a few at the cost of villagers, i.e. tenants and workers.

Background

Tree plantation workers have been historically accommodated in workers' villages within plantations, because plantations are often located far away from residential areas and because of the need to have workers onsite to fight fires. Many plantation worker villages were established during the 1960s and 1970s in the Western Cape Province, which became the permanent home for generations of families with current or historical ties to employment in the plantation sector. In the past, the villages of plantation workers commonly had family housing, communal kitchens with cooked meals provided twice a day, clinics, schools, crèches and recreational facilities.

During the 1990s, the condition of these villages, the standard of services, and provision of amenities began to decline. Meals were phased out and clinics were closed. The shift away from direct employment to the use of contractors had a major impact on the villages. Entire villages or portions of them are now leased to Plantation contractors, who are expected to maintain the villages themselves. In many instances, this has led to a deterioration of the local infrastructure and services.

All the villages in the tree plantations in the Cape used to be on State Forest land and under the authority of the forestry department. After the first phase of restructuring the department, villages began to split and now they fall under a number of different management authorities. The composition of residents also changed over the years, whereas former villages comprised inter-generational close-knit communities as a result of their remote location and historical ties with employment in the plantation companies, today these workers comprise probably a minority, the remainder being families and descendants of former plantation workers, retirees, and private tenants.

Some of the contextual factors that are impacting villagers include:

- legacies of apartheid and lack of redress;
- impact of restructuring, privatization and unilateral exit-strategies in the tree plantation sector on dwellers in the communities inside the plantation areas;
- land use planning continues to be unilateral and based on race and class. Planning frameworks frequently lack proper community participation and consultation and is affected by how the poor is perceived and treated;
- lack of a political will and impact of party politics at the grassroots level;
- lack of information and transparency on the restructuring and privatisation in the

tree plantation sector that continue to be centralized and elusive. Communities need this information to understand their local context, i.e. institutional arrangements, responsibilities, plans, etc. Should they take initiative for their own development, this information is crucial. Communities continue to grapple with a range of questions as restructuring affects them directly.

Concerns articulated by villages' residents

There are many concerns and challenges that villagers in the plantation areas experience. These include the lack of secure land tenure. Residents do not own land or houses. Even though the government promised these rights to residents when the villages were established, in some cases residents are evicted and/or threatened. As they do not have alternative land, they rely on government support and intervention. Wooden houses deteriorate fast when they are not maintained and, in some instances, they are becoming dangerous to live in. Residents are willing and want to care for the unmaintained houses should they be upgraded and transferred to them. Besides, service provision is poor and in some cases absent. Residents are being referred from one government department to the next. Some households pay enormous electricity rates. Additional fuel and food hikes add an extra burden that contributes to deepening poverty and social degradation. Water quality is poor and residents fear the outbreak of water bourn deceases.

Moreover, many workers have been retrenched with the restructuring programme of the tree plantation sector. Today, many are unemployed despite having the skills, knowledge, experience and physical ability to work. Much of the work – in the plantation, conservation and fire protection activities, etc. – is performed through contractual agreements. Local communities generally do not benefit through these mechanisms as they do not have access to information nor do they have the means (resources) to do the work.

Local government institutions do not integrate plantation worker communities in their planning frameworks and villages are generally referred to other government departments and agencies. This continues to marginalise and discriminate against these communities. Programmes such as the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) for economic development, which include community plantations, participatory management of plantations and community based natural resource management, are not benefiting communities. Despite an extensive government awareness and information programme, these economic opportunities continue to evade local communities.

Community organisation and mobilization

Residents in the forestry worker villages of the Western Cape Province have joined forces and have mobilised for government intervention and support in response to their increased vulnerability brought about by privatization and the exit-strategy in the plantation forestry sector. A list of concerns and demands has already been communicated to different government departments during demonstrations and stakeholder meetings. The demands include the participation of forestry dwellers in all decision-making that affects them; no evictions; information, transparency and access to tendering process; access to and ownership of sufficient land for household food

production; quality and affordable services provision; etc.

A leader represents residents in each of the villages and a strong women leadership component exists. The Forum has its own Constitution that guides decision making and operations and it is driving and coordinating its own initiatives and activities. Many of the Forum's affiliated villages have also joined forces with the Right to Agrarian Reform for Food Sovereignty Campaign: a social movement aimed to develop a critical mass for mobilization and pushing government reforms.

The Forum proposes that the approach for dealing with tree plantation villages must be done through an integrated planning of all involved agencies and with a lead agency to coordinate, implement and monitor activities. The process must be community driven, with real community participation in the decision-making, and with a holistic approach – considering the diverse needs (livelihoods) of local communities, i.e. tenure insecurities, housing, income, transport, education, income generation, skills and knowledge given the historical context.

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Banking on biodiversity in Sabah, Malaysia

The trade in biodiversity credits has been positioned as a solution to the problem of biodiversity loss (especially orang-utan habitat) in Sabah. This approach, however, fails to recognise Malaysia's international political economy of palm oil and timber, the problems associated with the large-scale, export-oriented monocultures that replace Borneo's rainforests, overconsumption and corporate greed, high-level corruption and industrial logging. Local (indigenous) peoples, depicted as hunters and poachers, are made to appear as the "real threat" to Sabah's wildlife. In turn, biodiversity offsetting enables the positioning of corporate and state actors as "saviours of nature".

The theory of biodiversity banking is simple: Nature doesn't have a price and humans therefore have no incentive to conserve it. As long as the degradation of biodiversity is without a monetary value, the destruction of nature is free, and its negative effects absent from corporate balance sheets and cost-benefit analyses. Ironically, it was environmentalists advocating to incorporate nature into decision making processes to "save nature" that served as justification for the introduction of cost-benefit analyses in the environmental realm in the United States in the 1980s. Ever since, biodiversity banking and similar market-based instruments have proliferated worldwide. They are promoted as progressive solutions to the ongoing loss of species and habitats by corporate social responsibility spokespeople, policy makers, some conservation NGOs and environmental economists alike. Market-based mechanisms, in the form of mandatory legislation (e.g. planning laws requiring biodiversity compensation) or voluntary instruments (e.g. offset purchasing), are used to price nature, and thereby "account for" the previously unaccounted effects of corporate business operations.

Yet, studies have shown that more often than not, offsetting mechanisms which allow for the compensation of the destruction of nature in one place with the restoration or

conservation of nature elsewhere, don't actually lead to "no net loss of biodiversity". Beliefs in the restoration of degraded nature (often used to offset destruction of intact habitat elsewhere) are overly optimistic. What is usually ignored by those pushing for marketisation of nature is that biodiversity is unique and interconnected, not fungible or exchangeable; it forms part of a complex ecosystem and is embedded not only in an ecological, but also a social context, and holds non-monetary values for local communities who tend to be ignored in offsetting policies.

The Malua BioBank – forests, palm oil, politics and orang-utans

The Malua BioBank is one example of a voluntary biodiversity offsetting scheme in Sabah, Malaysia, and the first tropical conservation bank, set up in 2008. By purchasing Biodiversity Conservation Certificates that represent 100 square meters of rehabilitated and protected orang-utan habitat in the Malua Forest Reserve, corporations and individuals can compensate for their destructive biodiversity impact (caused by, for example, logging operations or palm oil agriculture). (1)

Malaysia is one of the world's leading palm oil exporters, and has lost much of its primary forest to deforestation and forest conversion. The BioBank was set up by the Sabah forestry department in cooperation with an Australian investment manager (New Forests Pty Ltd., which manages investments in environmental markets and, together with the US-based asset management firm Equator LLC, manages the Eco Products Fund, a US\$100 million investment fund) and a Malaysian-American NGO to protect habitat for the last remaining orang-utans on Borneo. The Biodiversity Conservation Certificates are registered at TZ1 Limited (now Markit), an infrastructure provider for environmental commodity markets. The state government is known for its "innovative approaches to conservation", but simultaneously criticised for (illegal) timber extraction, premature (re-)logging and forest conversion for timber and palm oil revenues, even reclassifying 'protected areas' as 'production forests' to allow for additional logging, and sacrificing orang-utan habitat for export-oriented palm oil agriculture. Additionally, the state is often viewed as too lax in regards to enforcement of regulation on air and water pollution vis-à-vis palm oil corporations, infringement on indigenous peoples' rights, and abuse and exploitation of (foreign) workers.

The Malua BioBank was envisaged as a for-profit business model "to translate forest conservation into a tradable product so that biodiversity conservation could compete with other land uses on a commercial basis through the selling of Biodiversity Conservation Certificates". Investment into nature was supposed to yield "competitive returns" to investors. Yet, rather than "accounting for" the multiple environmental impacts of the palm oil and timber industries – or indeed addressing the systemic problems of overconsumption –, the project resembled more of an opportunity to improve or greenwash the image of companies that purchased Biodiversity Conservation Certificates. Credits are being marketed and promoted internationally. Initially, one of the major investors interested in purchasing credits had been Shell International (who pulled out during the 2008 financial crisis).

Why and how has the Malua BioBank been set up?

The Sabah state government is dependent on palm oil agriculture, its 7.5% sales tax represents almost half of its GDP, and palm oil has become transnationalised capital,

supported by international organisations such as the World Bank and the United Nation's agency FAO. Since colonial times, the timber industry has entertained close relationships with the government; it is based on networks of political patrons granting timber concessions to key individuals in return for political support. Million-dollar scandals around illegal timber concessions, often at the cost of local people and involving high-level state officials, continue to be exposed. At the same time, the importance of the timber business is declining, as many areas of natural forest have been converted into oil palm plantations, and the forestry department is losing a significant source of income. The formerly very powerful and rich forestry department has thus been in need of new ways to secure finance, (international) legitimacy and power – while being under international pressure to conserve orang-utan habitat. Increasing taxation, regulating, or even enforcing and implementing existing legislation to stop further expansion of oil palm plantations is politically difficult. These historical circumstances, structural dependences as well as individual relationships of the forestry department with the Malaysian-American NGO that proposed the setup of the BioBank, as well as the individuals involved in the forestry department with an interest in conservation for financial and image reasons, made the creation of the BioBank so attractive. Yet, even businesses were not convinced by the idea, and the forestry director himself had to phone up timber corporations and ask them to purchase conservation certificates – allegedly in return for a laxer handling of environmental regulations and a celebratory handshake at the festive launch of the BioBank.

But how did the BioBank come to be seen as a solution to the problem of biodiversity loss (especially orang-utan habitat) in Sabah? It required a re-framing of the issue itself. Rather than recognising the international political economy of palm oil, the problems associated with the large-scale, export-oriented monocultures that replace Borneo's rainforests, overconsumption and corporate greed, high-level corruption and industrial logging, positioning the BioBank as solution is based on the depiction of local (indigenous) people as hunters and poachers, and therewith the “real threat” to Sabah's wildlife. This plays into the broader modernisation discourse and the positioning of indigenous peoples as “backwards” and “opposed to development”. In turn, it enables the positioning of corporate and state actors as “saviours of nature”. The very same oil palm businesses that are known to ignore environmental legislation, infringe indigenous peoples' land rights and accept (if not support) the exploitation abuse of their workers, as well as the Australian investment company come to be seen as the “good guys”.

What does this do?

In effect, the Malua BioBank protects a piece of orang-utan habitat which had previously been protected, but was threatened due to lack of funding by/of the forestry department. At the same time, the possibility to offset may legitimise environmentally and socially destructive ‘business as usual’ by logging and oil palm companies, among others. Therefore, it fails to address the underlying reasons for biodiversity loss in Sabah – or indeed contribute to poverty alleviation, as often envisaged by the architects of neoliberal environmental governance makers. Local people lost access to a small river previously used for fishing (and armed rangers are now patrolling the borders of the BioBank), while the image of the state department as progressive, development friendly, yet environmentalist is strengthened both abroad and at home.

See further information at: <http://www.e-ir.info/2015/07/23/biodiversity-banking-from-theory-to-practice-in-sabah-malaysia/>

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(1) It is important to point out that when purchasing Biodiversity Conservation Certificates, buyers agree that, formally, these “do not represent an offset against clearing or degradation of [additional] other forests”. However, interviews have shown that the purchases are indeed understood to represent compensation for previous damage, and that companies’ motivations are to secure regulatory goodwill and a good relationship with the government to be awarded more (logging) concessions in the future. There is no reason to assume that current practise of companies will not continue in the future.

PEOPLES IN ACTION

Keep fossil fuels in the ground: a declaration for the health of Mother Earth

A declaration to be launched during the UN climate negotiations aims to draw attention to the need to keep fossil fuels in the ground and unburned, while supporting a just transition toward a clean energy future. The declaration recognizes that “the extraction, transportation and consumption of fossil fuels has caused severe damage to the earth, air, water, and all forms of life; and is the number one contributor to climate change and massive species extinction. The damage is disproportionately borne by people who do not benefit from the economic and political systems that have caused them, who are not responsible for the crisis and who lack the adequate resources to adapt to a changing climate.”

You can read the declaration in Spanish and add your signature here:

<http://www.oilwatchesudamerica.org/documentos/3-documentos/5035-2015-11-05-17-28-10.html>

Brazil: a mining-induced ecological and social disaster — How much longer?

On November 5th, one of the largest environmental disasters in the history of Brazil occurred. Two dams operated by mining company Samarco burst in the state of Minas Gerais, dumping sludge with the company's toxic waste in an area where hundreds of families lived. The disaster killed dozens of people, destroyed hundreds of homes, and destroyed the life of one of Brazil's major rivers, the “*Río Doce*.” This in turn has affected the water supply of hundreds of thousands of people and the livelihoods of thousands of peasants and fisherfolk, has caused the contamination of mangrove forests and has led to the loss of tourism in the region. The affected communities, along with social movements, environmentalists, students and others, have mobilized in recent weeks to demand justice. They are demanding, among other things, that the owners of Samarco, a subsidiary of Vale and BHP Billiton, be held accountable for the damage caused. The disaster is forcing Brazil – and indeed the whole world – to reflect deeply on the urgent need to reverse neoliberal adjustment policies and processes, which are

imposed by multilateral agencies and countries where major corporations – including mining companies – are located. Policies benefiting free market and private interests have led to the relaxation of environmental and mining legislation, in order to facilitate extractive activities. With their laxness in the permits and regulatory processes, further weakened by mining companies' financing of electoral campaigns, Brazil and the rest of the world are at the will of large corporations, whose public discourse of “best practices” contradicts the reality that leads to tragedies like this one.

Read the joint international statement by People Affected by Vale here:

<https://atingidospelavale.wordpress.com/>

And an account, in Portuguese, by the Movement of Dam-Affected People of the impacts felt by women here: <http://www.mabnacional.org.br/noticia/lama-da-samarco-valebhp-atinge-vida-das-mulheres>

Philippines: Resisting Land Grabbing and Corporate Oil Palm Plantations

In early November, a gathering of peasants and indigenous peoples from Mindanao, Bohol and Palawan, denounced the government's plan to devote eight million hectares of land to oil palm by 2023. Oil palm plantations in the Philippines cover almost 55,000 hectares. The Philippine Coconut Authority's (PCA) 2014 to 2023 road map has identified about a million hectares for potential oil palm farms. A participant from the gathering, held at a makeshift tent in front of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, criticized the Department for “pimping agricultural and ancestral lands to oil palm plantations and mills under the guise of reforestation.”

Read the article at:

<http://bulatlat.com/main/2015/11/05/farmers-indigenous-peoples-thumb-down-expansion-of-oil-palm-plantations/>

Corridors of Resistance: Stopping oil and gas pipelines

The Unist'ot'en camp in North-Western British Columbia, Canada, has since 2011 been maintaining a check-point to control access through their territory to stop government and industry plans to build several gas and oil pipelines. These pipelines form part of an energy corridor that will serve to unlock the vast energy reserves of the tar sands in the neighbouring province of Alberta and transport fracked gas with disastrous implications for the communities, local habitats and climate. The camp was established to oppose these projects, to defend the sacred headwaters, the salmon that spawn there and to maintain their autonomy. A video from the EJOLT network, a research project for environmental justice of civil society and academic groups, reveals how the Unist'ot'en camp is succeeding in their struggle and keeping millions of barrels of fossil fuels underground. As of Fall 2015, the camp continues on high alert amidst multiple incursions from the companies trying to build the pipelines. As this video highlights, the Unist'ot'en form part of a networked "corridor of resistance" of justice movements who are increasingly willing to take action to oppose extreme energy projects and who are building energy sovereignty from the ground up.

You can see the video here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDR1l_Xw7ts&feature=youtu.be

The video accompanies the EJOLT report “*Climate Justice: Refocusing resistance for climate justice. COPing in, COPing out and beyond Paris*”. Access the report here: <http://www.ejolt.org/2015/09/refocusing-resistance-climate-justice-coping-coping-beyond-paris/>

India: Appeal to the government and the UN on indigenous forest communities' rights

The Indian government is producing many proposals to make more profit from the country's forests. These include wider application of their huge Compensatory Afforestation Fund and private leasing plans. India's Orissa state is trying again to start mining bauxite for the aluminium smelter of Vedanta Ltd, despite long-standing protests and opposition. All these plans would lead to evictions and other violations of forest communities' rights as well as the degradation of biodiversity, as the proposals foresee replacing forests with monocultures, mines etc. More than 15 international organizations appeal to the Government of India, to the UN Human Rights bodies and others, to halt the threatening plans.

Read the appeal here: [\(see dropbox: PeA_Appeal India\)](#)

RECOMMENDED

Forest fires in Indonesia: Why is the media looking away?

An article from “The Guardian” highlights how despite fire raging across over 5,000 km in Indonesia, the media “dominated by corporate press releases, photo ops and fashion shoots” is not paying attention. This catastrophe is having severe effects on many levels. Children are being prepared for evacuation on warships. Populations of species, including threatened species, are going up in smoke at an untold rate. Much of the forest sits on great domes of peat, releasing clouds of methane, carbon monoxide, ozone and other gases. The plumes extend for hundreds of kilometers, causing impacts even on neighbouring countries. So why is this happening? Indonesia's forests have been fragmented for decades by timber and farming companies. Canals have been cut through the peat to drain and dry it. Plantation companies move in to destroy what remains of the forest to plant monocultures of pulpwood, timber and oil palm. The easiest way to clear the land is to torch it.

Read the article here:

http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/30/indonesia-fires-disaster-21st-century-world-media?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Facebook?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Facebook

The Corporate cookbook: how climate criminals have captured the UN talks

The market-based and techno-fix solutions on the table for the 2015 UN climate talks are diverting attention from the real culprits and delaying real action. Most political leaders have been happy to choose measures that suit existing business models and continued corporate profit-making. There's little prospect of the deal that's being

cooked up in Paris delivering anything for the climate. But it could still be an important turning point in terms of de-legitimising the dangerous and destructive role that corporate climate criminals are currently playing in climate policy-making. A recently released briefing from the Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) shows just when, where and how corporations are trying to capture the agenda of the UN climate talks.

Access the briefing here:

http://corporateeurope.org/sites/default/files/attachments/the_corporate_cookbook.pdf

Mausam Magazine from India: voices for climate justice

The India Climate Justice Collective has released the fifth issue of the “Mausam” magazine. This time the focus is on India’s Intended Nationally Determined Contribution, submitted to the UN Climate Convention in October, to which they say: “We think it was not nationally determined... Nor does it contribute in any way towards solving the climate crisis: if anything, it can only help worsen the crisis.” Eight articles and the editorial analyse India’s coal industry, nuclear power, the water sector, renewable energy, carbon offset projects and climate finance regarding the country’s proclaimed contribution for addressing climate change. They also include a detailed highlight of the official texts and a final poem that voices the contradictions.

Access the magazine here: [\(see link in dropbox Rec_Mausam\)](#)

Peasant Agroecology for Food Sovereignty and Mother Earth, experiences of La Via Campesina

The collective efforts of various organizations from Africa, America, Europe and Asia have resulted in the study booklet: “Peasant Agroecology for Food Sovereignty and Mother Earth, experiences of La Via Campesina”. From their distinct territories, 10 articles share experiences in agroecology training, organizing, production and marketing of healthy foods. This set of experiences represents a dynamic range of practices and knowledge, both for training within the movement and as a mechanism for additional knowledge exchange and rural-city dialogue. La Via Campesina proposes Peasant Agroecology as a way of production for rural communities, where Food Sovereignty constitutes a principle of life.

Access the booklet in English here:

<http://viacampesina.org/en/images/stories/pdf/CUADERNO%207%20LA%20VIA%20CAMPESINA%20INGLES.compressed.pdf>

Outsmarting nature? Synthetic Biology and Climate Smart Agriculture

Many of the world’s largest agro-industrial corporations are part of the new Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture. Public- and private-sector advocates of Climate Smart Agriculture are embracing tools of synthetic biology (“Syn Bio”) as the latest, greatest game-changing technology to combat climate change. A report from the ETC Group and the Heinrich Boell Foundation briefly examines agriculture-related Research & Development (R&D) involving synthetic biology’s microorganisms and crops being developed in the name of climate-change mitigation and adaptation, including high-tech

approaches to enhance photosynthesis (e.g., engineered pathways regulating nitrogen fixation and environmental stress tolerance).

Read the report here: <http://www.etcgroup.org/content/outsmarting-nature>

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