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#### OUR VIEWPOINT

##### - Pulpwood Plantations: All roads lead to Rome

Whenever the expression "planted forests" is used, the concept can be traced back to the Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The more the concept is challenged by local peoples and NGOs struggling against plantations, the more the FAO builds up support to maintain it.

The reason is simple: the FAO has chosen to be at the service of northern corporations that benefit from tree

plantations –particularly from the pulp and paper sector. Presenting monoculture tree plantations under the guise of “planted forests”, has proved to be a good marketing tool which serves to hide the social and environmental disaster that large-scale, fast wood, monoculture tree plantations imply.

But the role of the FAO does not stop at the definition level. It has been actively promoting the establishment of such plantations since the 1950s and continues doing so. Between 1990-1995 it even supported research in China on genetically engineered trees, that later resulted in the massive and uncontrolled planting of GE poplars in that country.

The latest case is the FAO-led process that resulted in the adoption of the “Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Management of Planted Forests”, which are now in their implementation stage at country level.

What is the aim of these guidelines? Even before reading the guidelines themselves, it is clear that they are aimed at supporting plantation expansion for the pulp industry. For instance:

- The report’s cover photo is that of a “Planted forests landscape, Bahia, Brazil, courtesy Veracel Company, Brazil”. The negative social and environmental impacts of precisely Veracel’s plantations have been very well documented and local people are campaigning against them. By placing the picture in the report the FAO is providing support to these and similar destructive plantations that are being challenged in the South.

- The acknowledgements. The report says that “FAO wishes to acknowledge its major partners in preparing the early concepts and drafts”. The partners mentioned from private-sector associations are all linked to the pulp and paper industry: “International Council for Forest and Paper Associations, Brazilian Paper and Pulp Association/Sociedade Brasileira de Silvicultura, American Forest and Paper Association, Confederation of European Paper Industries, Portuguese Paper Industry Association, Japanese Paper Association/Japanese Overseas Plantation Centre for Pulpwood, Corporación Nacional de la Madera – Chile, Swedish Federation of Forest Owner’s Associations and New Zealand Private Forest Owners Association.” Why should these corporate associations support this FAO-led process if it were not that they plan to benefit from the resulting guidelines?

- The absences. Not one single Southern organization is mentioned in the “acknowledgement”. Given that the main critics of plantations are based in Africa, Asia and Latin America, this means that the FAO chose to exclude critical voices that would have certainly opposed guidelines for the promotion of “fast wood” plantations –which are the ones needed by the pulp industry.

- The bibliography: Not one single document critical to plantations is mentioned. In the case of WRM, the FAO chose to ignore, not only the countless articles disseminated over the last 10 years –based on local peoples’ testimonies of impacts- but also our published research findings on plantations in Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Ecuador, Indonesia, Laos, South Africa, Swaziland, Thailand, Uganda, and Uruguay. Turning a blind eye on this and other documented evidence about plantations’ impacts proves the FAO’s role in supporting plantation-related corporate interests.

The following quote from the guidelines is also very illustrating:

“Governments should create the enabling conditions to encourage corporate, medium- and small-scale investors to make long-term investments in planted forests and to yield a favourable return on investment” and “facilitate an environment of stable economic, legal and institutional conditions to encourage long-term investment ...”

This is not new. Many southern governments have already created those “enabling conditions” –following recommendations from FAO, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Latin American Development Bank, bilateral agencies such as JICA, GTZ and others- which have resulted in “favourable returns” to pulp and paper corporations and in very painful “returns” to local peoples and their environments.

The pulp industry is at present migrating to the South and planning to dramatically increase its production capacity over the next five years by more than 25 million tonnes. This means that it will need extensive areas of fast-growth plantations to feed its pulp mills. Within this context, the “Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Management of Planted Forests” will assist them in putting governments at their service and in weakening opposition to their expansion.

It is therefore necessary to be aware about this new threat and to oppose the implementation of these guidelines at country level. The FAO should be reminded that its mandate is not to promote tree plantations but –according to its web page- to “lead international efforts to defeat hunger”.

Given that the theme chosen this year for the FAO-created World Food Day –16 October- is “The Right to Food”, it appears to be necessary to remind the Food and Agriculture Organization that pulpwood plantations can not ensure “that every girl, boy, woman and man enjoys adequate food on a permanent basis”, though they will certainly aim at ensuring that every pulp mill enjoys adequate wood supply on a permanent basis.

Unfortunately, when looking at the promotion of pulpwood plantations, all roads continue leading to Rome.

(\*) The full FAO report is available at <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/009/j9256e/j9256e00.pdf>

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## COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

### - Argentina: Chaco – land clearance, undernutrition and death

During the first fortnight of July, a wave of very cold weather crossed Argentina. In the warm lands of the Chaco Province, where the mean annual temperature is around 20°C, temperatures fell below freezing. This abrupt drop highlighted by deaths the full dimension of the health and food emergency affecting Toba, Mocovi and Wichi indigenous peoples in that north-eastern district of the country, where health is undermined by malnutrition, tuberculosis and Chagas’ disease. In a matter of days 10 people had died, by 2 October the toll went up to 16, mainly from the Toba people. All the victims lived in El Impenetrable, a forest region which has been suffering from the ransacking of its quebracho (*Schinopsis balansae*), algarrobo (*Prosopis nigra*) and lapacho (*Tabebuia ipe*) trees for the past hundred years. Over the past decades, they have disappeared under mechanical diggers and the fires of those seeking the high profitability of soybean cultivation.

As from 1995 the Province started selling most of its public land. At that time it had 3 million hectares and presently only some 580 thousand remain. The transfer of public land to large landowners was a prior requisite to its subsequent clearance. The Chaco human rights organization **Centro de Estudios Nelson Mandela** (Nelson Mandela Centre for Studies) reported in November 2006, that over the past years, the Province’s Forestry Office had dismantled its administrative and operational structure. *“The State has a laissez-faire policy regarding the sector. The law is a closed book. Decree 1341, which suspended the granting of land clearance permits until the finalization of the Chaco land planning operation, is neither applied nor respected. Not only does land clearance continue but it is stepped up. It is all a scandalous picture, marked by destruction and impunity,”* warned a public declaration of this same organization on 20 October 2006.

This process mainly affected El Impenetrable forest, which stretches from the west of the Province and is the ancestral land of the Toba and Wichi. The disappearance of the forest has led to the disappearance of animal and plant proteins from the diet of these peoples. *“The algarrobo symbolizes almost everything because the indigenous peoples obtained most of their proteins from its fruit. The disappearance of these trees has meant that they must now sustain themselves with fat, flour, sometimes a little pasta, not always and less and less with some rice, and hardly*

*ever with some meat. So this diet has led to undernutrition, to hypertension and diabetes. Because of malnutrition or undernutrition, of never having enough food or only scantily nourishing food, this has led to infectious diseases, to tuberculosis and Chagas' disease,"* stated **Rolando Nuñez**, coordinator of the **Centro Mandela**, during an interview last August.

Since April last year, the Toba, Wichi and Mocovi peoples have been denouncing this situation and demanding public policies from the Provincial government. They have been blocking roads, camping outside the local Government seat. They have also gone on a hunger strike. After decades of silence, the *'levantamiento'* (uprising) – as they call it – highlighted the extreme poverty and discrimination affecting the approximately 60 thousand indigenous people in the Chaco. They came out of their silence, but the agreements signed with the government in August 2006 were not complied with.

The extreme situation in which the communities find themselves was denounced by the Peoples' Defender, who brought action before the Supreme Court of Justice against the national and provincial States for their responsibility in this situation. The Inter-American Human Rights Commission has requested further documentary information over a report of genocide. Three months after the start of the death wave, the authorities have only bothered to implement temporary food assistance, without addressing the roots of the emergency.

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## **- Cameroon: Community forests in a sea of industrial logging**

I visited Cameroon in December 2006 and again in September 2007. In both trips I was shocked by the sheer number of trucks loaded with huge logs of tropical trees that could be seen on almost any road. Most of them were on their way to the ports from where they would be exported –unprocessed- to mostly northern countries.

Seeing those “ancient forests on wheels” traveling along the roads reminded me of Eduardo Galeano’s book “The open veins of Latin America”. In this case, these are Central Africa’s open veins (Cameroon, Congo, DR, Congo, R., Gabon) and the logs represent the life of Africa’s forests and peoples being mined for northern consumption.

In Cameroon, logging is carried out in an industrial scale by large corporations –national and foreign- linked to foreign capital and export-oriented. Paradoxically, the country appears to be -on paper- quite progressive regarding the promotion of community forest management. In this respect, a community forestry law was passed in 1994 which enables communities to manage their own forests –although with a maximum of 5,000 hectares- under a contract agreed upon with the Ministry of Environment and Forests and valid for 25 years.

However, the government continues to support destructive and lucrative industrial logging, and has apparently no intention of substituting it by community forest management. A visit made to a community forest proved the point.

On 12 September we visited the COVIMOF (Communauté Villageoise de Melombo, Okekak, Fakele 1&2, Ayos et Akak.) community forest, where the first thing we learnt was that the process for approval of community forest management is very slow. In this case, the five communities involved started the process in 1996 and only in 2004 they managed to comply with all the requirements for the approval and signing of the necessary legal agreement. They complain that even now, when they present the annual management plan, the Forestry Department takes months to approve it, which means that the community is left with a very short period of time (1-2 months) to implement it.

A second lesson is that communities are on their own regarding protection against illegal logging in their forest. While the community was still waiting to receive authorization to begin forestry operations, a group of illegal loggers started cutting trees in the community forest. The relevant authorities were informed but no action was taken. Later on the loggers came back with heavy machinery and piled up the illegal logs beside a road. Pictures and videos of the operation were made available to local authorities, but nothing happened. Finally, the logs were loaded on trucks and taken away –passing through a government forestry control post- without any problems.

Forest restoration is another activity where communities cannot count on government support. This community forest had been already “creamed” of the best trees by previous logging activities. The local people are now replanting native trees, but with no government support. They have established a small tree nursery where they are producing some 5,000 saplings of 12 tree species. Last year they planted more than 1000 trees, with support from CED (Centre pour l’environnement et le développement) and Greenpeace.

A third lesson is that they are also on their own in harvesting, transport, industrialization and commercialization of wood. Technical support and training is not provided by government but by civil society organizations such as CED. The machinery for transforming logs into lumber has also been acquired with NGO support, but much more would be needed for improving the current industrialization process. Commercialization is difficult and subject to frequent abuses from buyers. In all this the government is totally absent.

This example seems to show that in Cameroon community forests need some type of outside support, in this case provided by NGOs. However, NGOs lack the capacity to support many such cases and this role should be played by government agencies. For this to happen there is one basic necessary condition: the government’s political will to shift from industrial logging to community forestry. This is the main issue, which implies seeking answers to the crucial question of how to begin a process for achieving changes in that direction. Success stories –and even failures- from existing community forests can be extremely useful as part of that process.

In the case of the COVIMOF community forest, it is important to stress that, in spite of all the problems, the local people are proud and happy about their achievements. Most of them can already show a technical skill in some forestry-related activity which they lacked before. They are committed to using the forest in a sustainable way and to equitably share the benefits. In their hands, the forest has a real chance of being protected.

By Ricardo Carrere, based on observations and interviews made during a field trip in Cameroon, September 2007

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### **- Ecuador: Major success against mining in the Intag zone**

Intag, the subtropical anti-mining area in the northwest of Ecuador will not find 26 September 2007 an easy day to forget. After months of waiting for a resolution on the issue, the Ministry of Mines and Oil announced suspension of mining activities of Ascendant Copper, the Canadian mining company owner of the concessions in the area. The legal base for Minister Galo Chiriboga’s decision is that the company breached the law when it launched its work, because it had not requested the corresponding authorization and reports from the Municipality of Cotacachi.

This decision affects 9,504 hectares and implies that the mining company cannot carry out mining, administrative or community relations activities. Unfortunately, the decision is not final but, according to Minister Chiriboga, it is to be maintained until the company renegotiates the contract and its presence in the area. Other concessions are also under government scrutiny.

These facts show that when grass-roots have a firm will and political circumstances go along with it, people can succeed in defending their sovereignty and interests. Similar decisions could be taken regarding other mining

concessions in other parts of the country.

The feelings of Intag communities regarding the mining project and the presence of the company were initially pessimistic as, in the words of Councillor Luis Robalino from Intag “this is the fourth time that the same decision has been announced, but the company continues in the area.” Now, following the arrival of government officials in the area to close the company offices, they are more optimistic.

During a press conference called at the beginning of October to show satisfaction over the government decision, some of the circumstances leading to the population’s rejection of mining activity in the area and of the mining company were recalled. According to the Mayor of Cotacachi, the economist Auki Tituaña, together with the President of the Community Council, Polibio Pérez and other leaders from the area, right from the start of the company’s activities, its purpose was to divide the communities to facilitate its entry in the area and its expected operations.

The presence of Ascendant Copper in the area over the past three years involved paramilitary forces shooting peasants, using trained dogs and tear gas. Furthermore, a hundred peasants or so were intimidated through the filing of complaints and legal processes that sought to silence resistance, but they were not successful. Many of them were firmly acquitted by judges from the Province of Imbabura. None were sentenced.

For his part, the Mayor denounced the company’s links with “former military forces, hired murderers, drug traffickers and corrupt politicians.” He also stated that “they thought that with the offer they once made of 60 or 70 million US dollars, they were going to obtain my support, but my price is much higher, it is the value of the mine” (according to the company manager AC, Francisco Veintimilla, a minimum of 110 billion dollars). “But sincerely, I prefer them to leave the trees, the fauna and flora untouched and for them to respect the development model that we have chosen for ourselves in Intag and Cotacachi.”

He refers to the tropical cloud forest of immense biological value that is located precisely over the copper mine. Since the arrival of mining activities, “we have even managed to halt the traditional logging that our parents’ generation was implementing,” stated Polibio Pérez. “Nowadays we grant conservation much more value.”

Ascendant Copper has been in the area since 2004, although anti-mining resistance goes back to 1997. In this period many initiatives have been consolidated in the area, making Intag a model of alternative production: agriculture, tourism, crafts, cooperatives, organizations and other initiatives occupy hundreds of families in the area. Following the incidents caused by this and other mining companies in other locations in Ecuador, a Coordinating Office for the Defence of Life and Human Rights has been set up.

It is estimated that close on 95% of the inhabitants of Cotacachi, including the authorities, are against mining (see WRM Bulletin No. 118). “This is in defence of the interests of the State, the Province, the Canton and the area,” they say. Questioned about the possibility of a grass-roots consultation, they say they are open to it, but obviously this would have to be done in a clear and transparent way, organized by the Ecuadorian State and not by a transnational company.

For the time being, the company is departing, leaving behind it division and conflict among brothers and sisters, family members, neighbours and old friends. According to reports some community members “had a salary of US\$ 300 to play volley-ball.” While the copper deposits remain in the area, the threat of mining is still latent.

Meanwhile, a Constitutional Assembly is being prepared in Ecuador to draw up the new Constitution. Alberto Acosta, who was Minister of Energy and Mines for a brief period during the current legislature, and who will most probably preside the Assembly, has on several occasions firmly stated his desire to make Ecuador a country free from large-scale mining.

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## - Honduras: The reasons for defending the forest

In Honduras, every year between 80,000 and 120,000 hectares are deforested.

Our forests are multi-diverse: pine forests, with a variety of seven species; broad-leafed forests, with 200 species of trees and rich biodiversity, particularly in the lowlands; broad-leafed cloud forests: pine or mixed forests in the highlands; broad-leafed in dry climatic areas; and mangroves.

Forestry policy in Honduras is not formulated by civil society or by citizen power but by the dictates of multinational capital through the World Bank and the Free Trade Agreements linked with the local oligarchy who, through their representatives in Congress and in other State powers, adopt laws and policies aimed at forest exploitation on the basis of imperial and globalizing capital.

In order to implement these policies they have the military forces that are given the power to "look after" the forest. Is it possible that those who destroy the forest during armed confrontations, by art of magic turn into environmental heroes? Furthermore, the "sicariato" – hired murderers – is a concealed way of aggression towards the indigenous, peasant and garifuna\* communities.

In our country, timber exploitation has always been related to corruption, violation of human rights and impunity. The persecution of Father Tamayo and other leaders and the murder on 20 December 2006 of Heraldo Zuñiga and Roger Ivan Cartagena, members of the Olancho Environmentalist Movement by the security apparatus of the State of Honduras, are a reflection of the terror involved in the struggle to defend the forest in Honduras. A recent event is the murder of Mario Guifarro in the community of Parawasito, Municipality of Dulce Nombre de Culmí, in the Patuca Medio, while he was carrying out tasks for the ICADE project for forest demarcation, following the mandate of the Honduran Indigenous Tawahka Federation (FITH).

The governments and most of their technical personnel have always blamed poor people for forest destruction. However, they have never mentioned deforestation caused by mining, shrimp farming, pineapple and banana agro-industries, large sugar-cane plantations, transgenic corn and African oil-palm, (the latter two intended for the new agro-fuel super-business). To these are added accidental forest fires or arson, particularly to justify the exploitations of timber and extensive cattle ranching aimed at beef exports to make hamburgers.

Forestry policies are geared to turn trees into simple merchandise, without considering that, due to deforestation of the river basins and micro-basins, erosion, cave-ins and land slides are on the rise and for this reason the consequences of tropical storms and hurricanes and climatic distortions are more serious and the damage irreparable.

Unfair trade treaties and the immoral and unjust capital rationale promote the promulgation of laws and the application of forestry policies divorced from water and energy policies and from those foreseen regarding climate change. These are the laws that impose privatization of forests, energy, water, education and health. The National Congress shamefully allocates over one third of the national territory to the mining industry which destroys the forest and affects animal, plant and human health.

The loss of biodiversity due to deforestation and heavy metal pollution caused by mining and pesticides from agro-industries favour dengue, malaria, parasitic and mental disorders which, in addition to producing disease and death, cause multimillionaire losses to the country.

The development of human, comprehensive and planetary policies is an urgent challenge for each and every Honduran. The linking of the forest, health and human rights in an educational programme for young people is an important strategy in the training of leaders to create awareness about deforestation in the country and to set up forest protection laws.

Consequently, at the level of the Mother Earth Movement (a member of Friends of the Earth International) and the organizations Central America is Not for Sale, Oilwatch International and the Honduran Committee Action for Peace (Comité Hondureño Acción Por la Paz - COHAPAZ), we are suggesting that one million trees should be planted and continuously tended in Honduras. Our urgent task is to unite the whole social and environmental movement against predatory policies and companies. Let us incorporate all our awareness to this splendid task in defence of the life, dignity and health of our people!

By Juan Almendares, e-mail: [juan.almendares@gmail.com](mailto:juan.almendares@gmail.com)

\*Black-Carib culture

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### **- Laos: Damming the Sekong Norconsult wipes Cambodia off the map**

A series of large dams are currently proposed for the Sekong River Basin in southern Laos. In addition to the tens of thousands of people in Laos who would be affected by these projects, the livelihoods of 30,000 people living along the Sekong River downstream in Cambodia are also under threat. Yet the dams are being planned with no consideration of the impact on people and the environment in Cambodia.

In June 2007, the Norwegian consulting firm Norconsult completed two initial environmental examinations for two of the proposed dams: Sekong 4 and Nam Kong 1. A recent report, written under the pseudonym of Anurak Wangpattana, welcomes the fact that the studies recognize many of the impacts that these dams will have on people, forests and fisheries in southern Laos, but criticises Norconsult for completely ignoring the impacts of these projects on people living downstream in Cambodia.

The two dam projects, which are both being developed by the Russian Region Oil Company, are about 100 kilometres apart. The 600 MW Sekong 4 dam would flood 150 square kilometres of land, including forests and other land used to collect non-timber forest products, grazing land and land used for rotational swidden agriculture. About 5,000 people would be evicted from their homes to make way for the reservoir, of whom about 98 per cent are Indigenous Peoples. The Katu and Nge ethnic minorities make up 80 per cent of the population in Kaleum District, the capital of which would be flooded by the reservoir.

The importance of the forest to villagers living in Kaleum District is clear from a 2004 report written by Charles Alton, a UN consultant, and Houmphan Rattanavong, of the Lao National Science Council. The report notes that in four Katu villages in Kaleum District, about 76 per cent of villagers' income comes from collecting non-timber forest products and a further 16 per cent from raising livestock.

The 150-200 MW Nam Kong 1 dam, planned for a tributary of the Sekong River, would flood 21.8 square kilometres. Anurak Wangpattana notes that more than 1,600 people living downstream of the proposed dam would suffer the impacts of the dam. Many of these people used to live in the reservoir area, but were moved out by the Lao government during the 1990s.

Fish provides an important part of diet of villagers living in the reservoir area of the proposed Se Kong 4 reservoir. "All villages in the reservoir flooding area have robust fisheries primarily for subsistence, contributing a large part of the protein in their diet," reports Norconsult. Constructing the dam will wipe out these fisheries.



Communities living downstream of the dam will also see severe impacts to their fisheries. The reservoir behind the Sekong 4 would take 14 months to fill. Once the dam is operating, the flow of the river would be completely changed. "There is potential for a loss of aquatic biodiversity and productivity in the Se Kong River downstream due to these changes in flow," in the dry language of Norconsult's experts.

Anurak Wangpattana explains that Norconsult's Initial Environmental Examination is the first step in the environmental impact assessments of the Se Kong 4 and Nam Kong 1 dams and suggests that a cumulative EIA would be possible. But what's missing so far from Norconsult's studies, Anurak points out, "is an explicit recognition that these impacts will extend along the Sekong River in Cambodia."

For ten years, villagers living along the Sesan River in northeastern Cambodia have seen the devastating impacts of dam construction upstream in Vietnam. Dozens of villagers have drowned following sudden releases of water from the Yali Falls dam. Villagers have lost livestock, crops and fishing equipment. Poor water quality has caused skin rashes and stomach problems. More than 3,500 people have now abandoned their homes near the Sesan River and moved upland to get away from the river's floods and unpredictable flows, according to recent research by the Cambodian NGO 3S Rivers Protection Network ("3S" refers to the Sekong, Sesan and Srepok Rivers). "Villagers have lost their hopes and dependencies on this river, because nearly all of the river resources are gone," Roman Mal, an Indigenous Jarai village chief, told the researchers.

Many of the 30,000 people living along the Sekong River in Stung Treng province, Cambodia, belong to Lao, Khmer Khe, Kavet, Lun, and Kuy ethnic groups. The Sekong River's fisheries and riverbank vegetable gardens are a vital part of their food security and livelihoods.

Anurak Wangpattana warns that "The experience with the trans-boundary impacts of large hydroelectric dams elsewhere in the Mekong Region clearly indicates that the impacts of the Sekong 4 and Nam Kong 1 dams on Cambodia and in Laos must not be ignored, and should not be allowed to happen, no matter how easy it is for the proponents of dams per se to dismiss these impacts."

By Chris Lang, <http://chrislang.org>

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### **- Paraguay: So the forest does not become extinguished – the struggle of the Isolated Ayoreo Groups in the Paraguayan Chaco**

In March 2007 a national and international appeal was launched against the imminent clearance and total destruction by the company UMBU S.A. of 24,000 hectares (240 Km<sup>2</sup>) of untouched pristine forest in the heart of the area known as "Amotocodie" in the North of the Paraguayan Chaco. Amotocodie is part of the ancestral territory of the Indigenous Ayoreo People and continues to be inhabited permanently by two Ayoreo groups living in voluntary isolation. They are groups that have never had contact with modern society and live in their traditional way, in a close relationship of interdependency and mutual support with nature and the forest.

It should be borne in mind that the North of the Paraguayan Chaco is almost entirely in the hands of private owners who are acknowledged by the law and modern world practices to have the right to alter or destroy the Chaco forest, practically with no restrictions or control. The company's project for land clearance –which is a representative example of many others presently being implemented or in the pipeline in the area- overlaps with and ignores – as if they did not exist –the particular features and contours of the sensitive nature of the Chaco forest and, in this case, interrupting one of the two greatest river courses of Northern Chaco. At the same time, the project overlaps with another nationally and internationally recognized legal right in force: that of the indigenous ownership of this territory

as originating and prior to that of modern states. Amotocodie is indigenous territory. However, the all embracing national and international society has chosen to ignore indigenous territorial rights. If they were to do so, vast stretches of the Chaco forest in Paraguay – presently some 10 million hectares remain intact and pristine – would have the chance to survive our predatory present and would have a future. The Ayoreo are vehemently distant from the wasteful and destructive use that white people have made of Ayoreo territory. “We look after it better. We know how to care for it.”

The onslaught of forest clearance for cattle-raising has increased over the past few years as a result of international markets opening up for Paraguayan beef. Additionally, over the past few months, pressure generated by the calamitous expansion of soybean and agro-fuel crops in the Eastern Region of Paraguay, has displaced the expansive interests of the cattle ranchers towards the Western Region, the Chaco, where “available forest still exists.”

The national and international appeal against UMBU S.A.’s project for forest clearance has encouraged numerous people, eminent persons, networks and entities - mostly foreign - to send letters to the Paraguayan authorities asking them to suspend the corresponding clearance permits immediately and to adopt strong and forceful measures to ensure protection of the area and the integrity and rights of the isolated indigenous groups that live there. However, international pressure has had no effect: since the month of August UMBU is clearing the forest at a fast pace. Two months after the onslaught of the bulldozers, 3,000 hectares – 30 Km<sup>2</sup>., had already been devastated and wiped out.

These 3,000 hectares wiped out were forest areas previously untouched - and still less, violently transformed - by human activities. The river course crossing them brought in abundant water in the rainy season, water that not only gave life to the zone but also to an extensive river basin that stretched from the West of Amotocodie to the Paraguayan Pantanal in areas close to the Paraguay River in the East. This forest clearance has cut off this river flow over a stretch of more than 5 km. With this cut, the flow has been interrupted and stopped functioning as a vital artery of a whole ecosystem condemned to dry up and with it, the wide areas that it irrigated. The violent intervention of the water course also left without its life base a numerous population of very varied water fowl that visited the area and nested in the gallery forest on both sides of the water course.

However, most importantly with these 3,000 hectares, the forest clearance has touched the very heart of one of the most esteemed territories of the Ayoreo People: the *Chunguperedatei* – a region stretching into the forest on both banks, along the river course. It contains legendary lagoons that never dry up, even during the worst droughts. From time immemorial various local Ayoreo groups spend lengthy periods in this territory, when they interrupt their constant nomadic wandering to plant their summer crops in the fertile sandy soil of the river sediments on both sides of the water course. The 5 km that have been cut, eliminate numerous *amotoco* – the small natural clearings that are used for these plantations – and annul 5 well-known *simijnai*, waterholes with fish and ponds which, in the dry season, can be vital for survival.

A land thus annulled, left empty, becomes “extinguished” according to those Ayoreo who had already been deprived of territories with similar forests and who today live precariously in the belts around modern society. With 3,000 hectares already cleared now, part of a whole population’s living places, not only previous ones, but current ones, are becoming extinguished, and with them the paths that marked the migratory routes, the areas to hunt turtles or boars, those to collect honey and those of the caraguata fibre with which the women weave their dreams and visions of life, converting them into bags. Many forest huts used for camping and shelter are extinguished and also the places that marked their lives and told the story of generations: the tree where Orojoide\* – former leader of a forest group contacted by force in 1986 – found twenty years later the mark that he had made with his axe when he lived in the forest, before contact, will now also disappear. The living and material references of the life and history of a whole people are being extinguished.

With such extinction, once again the delicate and irreparable unity formed between humans and the world – we call it nature – is broken. It was, or is, a vital unity for both parties.

While this text is being written – 12 October – the isolated groups must have withdrawn to places further West or further South that still have life and are intact. However a look at the satellite map of Amotocodie shows that there are various forest clearances going on, and even with a compact centre of intact forest, there must be few places left where the forest Ayoreo people do not hear the distant noise of the bulldozers working day and night. They still determine their wanderings, but in an increasingly conditioned way. Modern society is gradually eating away their self-determination.

From the “outside,” from our world of the all-embracing society, the UNAP (Union of Paraguayan Ayoreo Natives) and the OPIT (Organization of the local Ayoreo Totobiegosode group) are unrelentingly struggling for the protection and legal recognition of the territories that are theirs because they always have been theirs. And they endeavour to give strength to their invisible brothers and sisters, who are carrying out the same work “from the inside”: preventing the forest from becoming extinguished.

\*name changed by the author.

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### - Latin America: Redmanglar International Assembly

Between 8 and 13 October, fisher-folk organizations, artisanal gatherers, environmentalists and academics from 10 Latin American countries organized in Redmanglar International, met in the locality of Cuyutlan, State of Colima, Mexico.

During a whole week of work, it was reported that a policy for appropriation and use of coastal and marine spaces is being reaffirmed and strengthened worldwide, placing the economic interests of a few before ecosystem conservation sustaining the life and fundamental rights of local communities.

During the first day, representatives from each of the Redmanglar International member countries presented the current local situation of marine-coastal ecosystems and the work carried out in their defence. The efforts made by countries such as Guatemala, Peru and Venezuela are noteworthy as they have achieved, over the past year, to set up national networks of organizations linked to the Redmanglar International mission: that of defending mangrove ecosystems and marine-coastal ecosystems, guaranteeing their vitality and that of the ancestral user populations who live in association with them and are faced by threats and impacts likely to degrade the environment, alter the natural ecological balance and/or violate the local communities' human rights.

On the following days the presentation by Fernando Lopez, Professor at the Central University of Ecuador on the present political and economic situation and on the natural and cultural heritage of Latin America, launched the discussion of general issues affecting the region. “The situation we are facing is enormously complex due to the intertwining of powerful global interests, the magnitude of the hazards threatening populations and the environment and to the political and social communities and organizations' scant capacity for resistance,” explained Fernando Lopez. He also made an analysis of the Integration of South American Regional Infrastructure (IIRSA), showing how this implies market integration and a serious threat to the peoples.

Subsequently, at the University Picture Gallery in the city of Colima, a talk was given on “Marine-Coastal Ecosystems, Water and Food Sovereignty” by Jorge Varela Marquez, delegate of the World Forum of Fisher-Folk Peoples, Dolores Gonzales of the Central University of Venezuela and Alberto Villarreal from Food and Water Watch.

Sessions continued throughout the week, with reports on the network's participation at international fora, campaigns, mobilizations and signing of declarations as effective and legitimate tools for ancestral coastal peoples. A statement was also made against coastal privatization and governments were required to guarantee access by fisher-folk and artisanal gatherers to their territories. At the same time, joint rejection of the commercialization of environmental goods and services was proclaimed.

An analysis of shrimp farming certification made by Jeovah Meireles from the Federal University of Ceara, Brazil, moved the Assembly to ratify its position against organic certification of industrial shrimp farming, regarding it to be a green masquerade, which attempts to conceal environmental, social and economic crimes committed by the shrimp industry.

Furthermore, the Assembly made statements on various specific issues regarding the member countries of the network. One of these was a request to the President of Mexico, Felipe Calderon, to cancel the project for the Manzanillo Liquid Gas Terminal, considering it to be highly hazardous for the Cuyatulan Lagoon ecosystems.

As a result, during their last day in Mexico the participants at this III General Assembly of Redmanglar International paid a field visit to the Cuyutlán Lagoon and also met with the fisher-folk from the community of Ventandas to find evidence of how this project is a threat to the lagoon system and mangrove ecosystem.

Lider Gongora Farias, outgoing Executive Secretary and the Ecuadorian C-CONDEM team installed Juan José López, in representation of the Colombian Association of Producers for Community Development of the Bajo Sinu Ciénaga Grande (ASPROCIG), as new Executive Secretary of Redmanglar International for the three-year period 2008-2010.

The Declaration of Cuyatlan was signed at the end of the Assembly and it's available at:  
[http://redmanglar.org/imagesFTP/8221.declaracion\\_cuyutlan.pdf](http://redmanglar.org/imagesFTP/8221.declaracion_cuyutlan.pdf)

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## COMMUNITIES AND TREE MONOCULTURES

### - Brazil: Women and Eucaliptus; stories of life and resistance

The invasion of local peoples' territories by Aracruz Celulose S.A.'s agro-industrial project, established in the sixties and seventies in Espirito Santo, caused enormous material and symbolic losses to the indigenous and quilombola peoples. Some are irrecoverable.

*"They are my cousins. When Aracruz came here and evicted them... it arrived by invading. When it arrived, they were afraid and abandoned their lands and left. It arrived with a lot of tractors and rode over their little houses. The houses were made of mud and straw, where they lived. So, they are my cousins who would like to come back to the village again." (Maria Loureiro, from the Tupinikim village of Irajá).*

The arrival of this agro-industrial project was demolishing for the local peoples: out of 40 indigenous villages, today only seven are left. According to information from the Quilombolas (\*), of the 100 communities existing in the northern region of Espirito Santo - comprising some 10,000 families - only 1,200 families are left, distributed in approximately 37 communities, surrounded by eucalyptus trees and sugar cane for the production of alcohol.

Many of these peoples became scattered. A group took refuge in the margins of their old territory, others sought out a place to live in the cities of the metropolitan region of Vitoria (the State capital). The new territorial conformation drastically interfered with the division of work by sexes, and as a consequence, in the social and family roles of men and women. Indigenous people and Quilombolas had to suffer the dispersion of their relatives. The families that

managed to remain in their territory crowded together in small plots of land.

Paradoxically, with the sadness of the violence and genocide that these peoples have had to support, there is also a beautiful story of resistance over the past six centuries. The most evident proof of this resistance is the presence of Indigenous people and Quilombolas in all the regions of Brazil.

With modern and developmental components, the relationship between the traditional peoples of Espírito Santo and Aracruz Celulose S.A. replays colonial history and imposes irreparable material and symbolic losses on the Indigenous and Quilombola communities.

In this new context, men and women experience both common and different impacts. With the loss of territory, women have lost their space to plant, rear domestic animals and produce medicinal plants.

*And for us, women, it was also a very strong impact. We have this feeling, this feeling of loss of our wealth.*  
(Maria Loureiro, Commission of Indigenous Tupinikim and Guarani Women).

The replacement of forest by eucalyptus plantation caused the loss of foodstuffs that previously had come from fruit-gathering, fishing and hunting. The end of the tropical forest also caused the extinction of rivers and streams, which had been places where women used to gather and provided a privileged opportunity to exchange feminine knowledge.

*It was very hard for us because we lived off it...we used the river to fish. Now, this difficulty... the river dried up because of the eucalyptus, right? And we can only blame the eucalyptus. It was very hard for us. But we women always suffer with this, with the lack of water. Before, there was channelled water, but it did not reach our houses properly and we suffered a lot.* (Marideia, Pau-Brasil Tupinikim village).

Indigenous and Quilombola people had to live with environmental pollution due to the agrochemical products used by the monoculture industry.

*Then they started to spray the pesticides, as this young woman said, they started to finish everything off. The pesticides killed the animals we used to hunt, the birds; the water also became polluted, killing fish, crabs such as those in Pau-Brasil. There is a little river there that went up to Barra do Sahy. So, that river disappeared. The fish also disappeared because of the poison they put down; they killed our fish, our crabs. Nothing is left in the mangrove. You can go and look and you will see nothing, crabs, blue land crab, all this was our food, what fed us. We lacked nothing, we fed our children* (Rosa, Pau-Brasil Tupinikim village).

The disappearance of the forest also caused the end of the raw material used in making utensils and crafts which, in the case of the Indigenous people, is an activity mainly carried out by women.

The loss of biodiversity meant the loss of a considerable number of medicines derived from forest plants, roots and animals. In the case of Guarani indigenous women, who had previously used herbs to stimulate or to reduce fertility, this meant the loss of their right to family planning and becoming hostages of contraceptive devices and having their tubes tied. Indigenous and Quilombola women no longer find the lianas, the trees and the fat from animals they used in practicing their medicine.

Without the ecosystems that ensured reproduction of the way of life of these traditional peoples, the masculine role, within the family and the community/village, was undermined. Great hunters, farmers and fishermen, the indigenous men found themselves forced to sell their work-force to Aracruz Celulose's outsourced companies and in the case of

Quilombola men, they were also forced to work for companies producing alcohol, such as the Disa- Destilaria Itaúnas S.A. However, most of them became unemployed as the companies' have a policy of not hiring indigenous and quilombola labour, as a means of forcing those who stayed in the region to leave. The weakening of the male role has exposed women to live with their partners' alcoholism and with domestic violence.

*[...] So, it ruined part of our lives, our freedom and our culture, our daily harmony, our health. This arrival of the large companies here ruined everything, it took away a piece of ourselves, it is like a piece, as if we had one part alive and another dead, as if we were living-dead, do you understand? Due to the large companies that came here. We were happy, not now, we are unhappy with this life, we need to fight for what is ours, for our territory, for what they have snatched away from us, and with that everything left, everything that was ours, so all that is left is for us to protest, that's right, on behalf of us all, of all the community. (Eni, from the Quilombero Community of São Domingos).*

Some indigenous women, bearers of a rich knowledge of the fauna and flora, became maids, daily workers, nannies and cooks for the officials of Aracruz Celulose. The obligation to carry out new tasks has affected the exercise of motherhood, obliging mothers to stop breast-feeding earlier and to leave their babies in order to look after the children of city women.

Faced by these transformations in their lives, these peoples have established alliances with movements and NGOs supportive of their struggle. Today, they are joined in a network, seeking to increase their capacity to resist.

*Thus we have been struggling, uniting with the other 36 communities to fight for the issue of our lands; lands that were taken from our people, from our predecessors, today in the hands of Aracruz Celulose. So the struggle that unites us today is against the expansion of eucalyptus plantations within our communities. (Katia from the Divino Espírito Santo Community).*

The women, who are also protagonists in these struggles, have started a process of organization in specific spaces, with the objective of discussing the impacts of eucalyptus monoculture on them and the ways of contributing to recompose the way of life of their people. They intend to take up their place in this process of struggle in an increasing way. When "[...] *the environment starts to affect their children, many women will take action.*"

The process of women organizing in specific spaces is recent. For example, in the case of indigenous women, there are organized groups in each village devoted to the production of crafts and recovering knowledge and use of medicinal herbs. Some are in a more advanced process of organization, others are just starting. In order to strengthen their process of organization, a little over a year ago they set up the Commission for Indigenous Tupinikim and Guarani Women, which seeks to link indigenous women from all the villages and to develop activities and struggles in their interest.

It is noticeable that the organizational movement involving women has encouraged public recognition of the various tasks they carry out: on the battle-front, in the self-demarcation of the territory, in confrontation with the police on occupying the Aracruz factory (in 2005), in the kitchen, on preparing food for the large indigenous assemblies. In this way, they are increasingly broadening their opportunity to socialize, and seek partial replacement of the spaces that were taken from them. Organization has also contributed to increase their self-esteem.

Indigenous and Quilombola women, who for so many decades shared the impacts of eucalyptus monoculture plantations, now want to share their experience of organization and to discover together the path of freedom. They are women who are increasingly united, fighting against the oppression of agro-business and patriarchy.

Excerpted from "Women and Eucalyptus, stores of life and resistance", WRM's research committed to Gilsa Helena Barcellos, e-mail: [gilsahb@terra.com.br](mailto:gilsahb@terra.com.br), and Simone Batista Ferreira (members of the Alert against the Green Desert

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\* Quilombolas: the descendents of runaway slaves

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### - Colombia: Is the FSC Seal Applied to Blood-Stained Timber?

Between 2001 and 2005, plywood panels manufactured by *Pizano S.A.*, one of the largest timber companies in Colombia, could be purchased in the U.S. The panel was manufactured in part using timber from one of the plantations certified by Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and in part from the natural forests in northeast Colombia, forests in which guerrilla organizations, paramilitary groups and the army fight for control of the territory and its natural resources. Consequently, these plywood panels were stained with blood.

How is it possible that the FSC permitted itself to be tainted with blood? The *Pizano S.A.* group is a major shareholder in *Maderas del Darién, S.A.*, a timber company which heavily exploits forests in the watersheds of the Río Atrato tributaries in the Department of Chocó, which crosses the Colombian Pacific Reserve, a region noted for its high level of biodiversity. Forty percent of the timber supplies with which *Pizano S.A.* manufactures its plywood panel comes from these forests of such high ecological value. Moreover, illegal and destructive exploitation has significantly reduced the natural areas of "cativo" (*Piora copaifera*, sometimes referred to as Spanish walnut), a threatened species used to manufacture the plywood.

This company has worked at the same time and in the same space in which armed conflicts and military operations have taken place, causing the displacement of thousands of people beginning in 1997. Human rights violations, including murder, have been frequent and remain unpunished. Illegal logging is a serious problem and ownership of the land is the object of disputes frequently settled in court. With all of these ingredients, logging and the armed conflict have caused destruction to communities of African descent, deforesting their lands or turning them into oil palm plantations.

In 2000, during a preliminary evaluation of *Pizano S.A.*, Smartwood met with *Iniciativa Nacional de Colombia*, and members of its executive board questioned the possible certification of this company. At that time, *Pizano S.A.*, was already implicated in the conflict in the Department of Chocó. In the follow-up evaluation of 2005, the inter-ecclesial *Justicia y Paz Colombia*, an organization committed to defending human rights throughout Latin America, filed a formal complaint in which it stated that *Maderas del Darién* was responsible for human rights violations and environmental destruction in Darién, citing various documents and court rulings.

The complaint filed by *Justicia y Paz Colombia* was supported by numerous social and environmental organizations in Colombia and Spain (Greenpeace Spain and *Ecologistas en Acción*, among others). Later in 2005, these organizations asked Smartwood not to renew FSC certification for *Pizano S.A.* In addition, we informed FSC Executive Director Heiko Liedeker of these facts.

The links of *Pizano S.A.*'s subsidiary to the conflict have been made public in recent months. In May 2007, several news media outlets in Colombia published the accounts of former members of paramilitary groups who acknowledged that they had received financial support from *Maderas del Darién*. Smartwood was immediately informed of these facts.

However, all of this was not enough. On 17 July 2007, Smartwood informed the complaining organizations of its intentions to grant the FSC seal to the plantations of *Pizano S.A.* again. According to Smartwood, there is no evidence that the reported activities "have been carried out in the present or recent past." This statement makes it clear that neither Smartwood nor the company deny that these activities did occur in the "non-recent" past," such as in 2005,

when the company also had the FSC seal and Smartwood turned a deaf ear to the complaints of civil society.

According to Smartwood, *Pizano S.A.* has now pledged to adopt the FSC controlled wood standard under which timber of illegal origin, timber from forests of high conservation value or timber exploited in violation of traditional and civil rights, is unacceptable.

Smartwood's failure to keep illegal and destructive wood out of the FSC supply chain in Colombia is another hard blow to the credibility and prestige of the FSC. To date, no Smartwood auditor has visited the Darién region and there is still no established mechanism, registry or system to ensure that timber resulting from the destruction of forests of high ecological value, illegal logging or violence, is not mixed with timber from the certified plantations of *Pizano S.A.* to manufacture the plywood panels – plywood panels on which the FSC label may be stained with blood. Furthermore, FSC International has failed to give clear guidance on the exclusion of highly controversial companies such as Pizano, from the FSC system.

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### - Kenya: Pan Paper plans to expand its polluting operations

Earlier this year, in an attempt to discourage the use of plastic bags, the Kenyan government slapped a 120 per cent tax on plastic. While the tax may look like an environmentally friendly decision, it could result in severe impacts on the environment. One of the beneficiaries of the decision will be the partly government-owned Pan African Paper Mills.

Pan Paper has reported huge losses in recent years and has debts estimated at US\$100 million, according to The East African. Much of the debt will mature in the next two years. In April 2007, the company appointed a new management team after the company's lenders hired consultants McKinsey to suggest ways of reviving the company's fortunes. The plastic tax could provide a lifeline to Pan Paper.

Packaging company Tetra Pak is already expanding production in Kenya. "We would like to increase our sourcing of raw materials from Pan Paper. We are discussing with them to find if they can produce more of the raw materials that we need," Anders Lindgren, Tetra Pak's managing director told Business Daily in July 2007. Pan Paper recently announced plans to spend US\$1.19 million planting six million trees over the next year.

Pan Paper currently has a production capacity of 120,000 tonnes of paper a year at its mill in Webuye. Established in 1974, the company is a joint venture between Orient Paper and Industries (part of India's Birla Group) the Kenyan Government and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation.

The involvement of the IFC means that, in theory at least, the pulp and paper mill should meet the IFC's social and environmental guidelines. But IFC's own staff admit that there is a conflict of interest between protecting the environment and the economic interests of company's in which IFC is a shareholder.

In 1996, when IFC lent a further US\$15 million to Pan Paper for an expansion of the pulp and paper mill, IFC did not demand a full environmental assessment. Instead IFC relied on information provided by the company. IFC noted that Pan Paper "has made commitment to fully comply with World Bank policies and guidelines".

IFC promised to "monitor Panafrican Paper's ongoing compliance with World Bank policies and guidelines during the life of the project." In 2003, IFC promised more financial assistance for the restructuring of Pan African Paper Mills. Unfortunately, IFC's monitoring of Pan Paper only involves reading reports submitted by the company and "periodic



site reviews during project supervision".

Pan Paper is, of course, keen to keep its problems hidden. For example, at a conference on "sustainable consumption and production" in 2004, Pan Paper's John M. Khaoya talked about "maintaining a delicate balancing between environment and profits". He talked about best available technologies, best environmental practices, pollution prevention and waste minimisation. He talked about employee training and awareness. He talked about corporate social responsibility and the community projects Pan Paper has funded. He talked about sustainable use of renewable resources. He talked about compliance with environmental regulations and of working "hand-in-hand" with the promoters of cleaner production. He talked about a "'win-win' situation for industry and environment".

Michael Ochieng Odhiambo, of the Kenyan NGO RECONCILE, has a different view of Pan Paper's operations. Writing earlier this year in the newsletter of the Western Kenya Environmental Law Centre he describes the "noxious stench" from the mill: "Many regular travellers on this route will close the windows of cars or buses as they approach the factory in order to avoid the stench. But for the residents of the town this is something they have to live with."

Odhiambo lists the health problems that residents of Webuye complain of as a result of the pollution from Pan Paper's operations: "irritation of the eyes and respiratory tracts, dry mouths and scratchy throats, gross accumulation of fluid in air spaces impairing the functioning of the lungs, cancer of the lung and throat, asthma, bronchitis, bronchial pneumonia, conjunctivitis, hepatitis, dermatitis, tuberculosis, impotence, babies born with stunted reproductive organs, retarded intelligence among children, and high levels of respiratory diseases."

But pollution from the pulp and paper mill is not the only problem that Pan Paper creates. Further problems come from the supply of raw material to the mill. In 2001, the Ogiek people living in the Mau mountain forest accused Pan Paper of logging in their forest areas. For the last four years, the problems caused by Pan Paper's mill, logging and plantations operations have been raised in the Kenyan Parliament.

Today, industrial tree plantations cover about 160,000 hectares in Kenya. Three-quarters are planted with cypress and pine trees but eucalyptus trees are increasingly planted in Kenya - using seedlings from South Africa. A recent article in The Nation (Nairobi) notes that "eucalyptus and other exotic species are fast replacing indigenous trees in many . . . parts of the country". The result has been drying up springs and streams. The article suggests that eucalyptus plantations have made droughts in the country even more severe.

By promoting the polluting pulp and paper industry, the government's plastic tax will end up having some very unpleasant environmental and social impacts.

By Chris Lang, <http://chrislang.org>

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### **- Papua New Guinea: Women and Oil Palm**

Oil palm is now a major cash crop in the South West Pacific island nation of Papua New Guinea (PNG). The demand for biofuel has prompted speculation of a spike in demand for palm oil which in turns has sparked a rush to growing oil palm in many developing countries in the tropic. In PNG, the World Bank has recently provided another loan under its Smallholder Agriculture Support Services Project which will facilitate further expansion of oil palm there. Whilst there are serious environmental issues such as broad-scale clearing of rainforests, pollution of waterways and severe sedimentation of coastal region from oil palm, its social and health impacts are yet to be understood.

The information contained in this article is based on several field trips in Oro and West New Britain Province between 2003 and 2007. Literature reviews of relevant documents, reports and articles on oil palm were also carried out.

According to an article published in Focus, the magazine of the Australian Government's Overseas Aid Program, "The oil palm industry is one of Papua New Guinea's rural success stories. High growth in oil palm exports over the last decade has lifted the incomes of many smallholders, particularly women."

The increase in incomes for women is primarily facilitated through a scheme known as the *mama lus fruit scheme*. Until the introduction of this scheme, payment for oil palm harvest often ended up with the men even though women and children were all involved in the production of oil palm. Under this scheme, women are provided with harvest nets and their own payment card called the 'mama card', which allows them to collect the fruit, sell it and receive their own payment directly. Their job is to collect loose fruit that have fallen onto the ground at the time of the harvest which is usually carried out by a man.

Proponents of oil palm hailed the *mama lus fruit scheme* as an outstanding success for increasing loose fruit collection, bringing women into oil palm production and increasing their income. Nevertheless, it is more a scheme to increase palm fruit harvest to ensure better efficiency and throughput achieved at the mill than a women empowerment exercise. Until the introduction of the scheme, the loose fruit wastage among smallholders account for up to 14% of the harvest representing a loss of revenue which is a key concern of the industry with an estimated oil losses valued at US\$300 million (PGK1.2m) per year.

Locally, the *mama lus fruit scheme* has a different connotation – one which is associated with prostitution. According to a PNG researcher who interviewed numerous people for a study, the scheme was reportedly supporting a thriving sex trade because.

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• women who are desperate for cash provide sex to men in exchange for more loose fruit to be left by the men for them to pick.

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• there are now more women working in the oil palm grove offering an opportunity for a sex trade to take place.

This situation has dissuaded genuine women pickers, who fear being tarnished with the same brush, from taking part in the scheme. Some village women interviewed said they would not pick fruit unless they had a male escort.

At the end of August 2001, 3,271 women had their own mama cards, representing 67% of all smallholder blocks. Yet they received a disproportionately low income - only about 26% of the total smallholder oil palm income. In 2000 their average weekly income is a mere US70c (PGK27.75) per woman for carrying out the back breaking second rate task of picking left over loose fruits from the ground. It is true that the scheme gives women an opportunity to earn some money, enabling them to provide for the family. However, it is hardly to be hailed as a success story for women and least of all for their empowerment!

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#### **- Swaziland/South Africa/Uganda: The illusion of storing carbon in tree plantations goes up in smoke**

Wild fires blazed through parts of Swaziland and eastern South Africa in the end of July. The fires had a death toll of over 20 people, killed thousands of cattle and wild animals, incinerated homesteads and destroyed crops and plantations. In both countries, fire fighters and emergency personnel were being overstretched. It was a huge catastrophe.

Reports from IOL (Independent Online) informed that about 80 percent of the countryside surrounding the South African northern KwaZulu-Natal town of Paulpietersburg - one of the worst-affected areas and with many timber plantations - had been devastated.

According to FSC-Watch, the fires in Swaziland started in the FSC-certified plantations of the Mondi company --now apparently bought by the US based Global Emerging Markets Forestry Investors LLC-- in the Piggs Peak region, and also affected part of an FSC-certified plantation owned by another South African pulp and paper conglomerate, Sappi.

The environmental and social damaging impacts of plantations in the region have long been denounced (see WRM bulletins at <http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/SouthAfrica.html#articles>) and many feared that a disaster was in store for them. Now that the disaster has arrived, fingers point also at the FSC for having validated a plantation scheme which renders people nothing else than havoc.

Quoting FSC-Watch, "80% of the 19,500 hectare Mondi plantation is reported to have gone up in flames, and around 7% of Sappi's." "Mondi's certifier, SGS, noted in their original certification assessment that *'Inherent in good silvicultural practice is the physical management of fire risks and the implementation of fire controls supported by well-trained and well-equipped fire-fighting teams.'* Now that one of Mondi's plantations has burned to the ground, claiming several lives, SGS will no doubt have to conclude that they were *not* managed according to 'good silvicultural practice'."

This tragedy also exposes the infeasibility of the concept of planting trees to store carbon, further reinforced by what has been happening in Uganda, where farmers cut down considerable part of Dutch CO<sub>2</sub> "forests".

The conflict goes back to an agreement signed in 1994 by the Dutch FACE (Forests Absorbing Carbon dioxide Emissions) Foundation and the Ugandan authorities to plant trees on a two to three kilometre wide strip on 25,000 hectares inside the 211 kilometre-long boundary of the Mount Elgon National Park, a highly contested zone.

Allegedly to absorb and store carbon to compensate for the emissions of Dutch firms and those of air traveling, approximately 9,000 hectares of trees were planted since 1993. They had to remain standing for one hundred years.

The tree planting played havoc with local villagers who not only were evicted from their land but also lost access to the forest. For the project to be implemented, people living along the boundary of the park were beaten and shot at, barred from their land which was added to the national park, and had their livestock confiscated by armed park rangers guarding the 'carbon trees' inside the National Park. They were left landless and jobless (see World Rainforest Movement report 'A funny place to store carbon', at <http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Uganda/book.html>, and WRM Bulletin N° 115).

All along the past year, evicted farmers have retaken their old land, chopped down the trees and turned them into charcoal, converting 1,300 hectares into farmland. Jeroen Trommelen from the Dutch *De Volkskrant* reports that FACE has stopped the sale of CO<sub>2</sub> credits from the Ugandan tree plantations until the conflicts concerning the land rights have been solved.

Last year the credits were sold to a Dutch energy firm to compensate the climate effect of the use of fossil fuel. FACE does not want to say the name of the company. Until last year CO<sub>2</sub> credits from the Uganda tree plantation were also sold through the organisation Greenseat, a Dutch company with clients including Amnesty International, the British Council and The Body Shop.

Currently, of the 3.4 million trees planted, the carbon stored in some half a million trees has already been released into the atmosphere (estimated at some 182,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>) following their conversion into charcoal. As Trommelen put it, "The carbon dioxide that was stored in the wood to compensate the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, has now therefore partly gone up in smoke."

In the face of the global catastrophe of accelerating increase of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels -from about 280 parts-per-million in preindustrial times to about 380ppm in the current day - with the potential for future temperature increases, the market-based approach fix has proved not only not to solve the problem but even to worsen it.

Article based on information from: "Swaziland: fires in certified plantations spark national emergency", FSC-Watch, [http://www.fsc-watch.org/archives/2007/08/28/Swaziland\\_fires\\_in\\_certified\\_plantations\\_spark\\_national\\_emergency\\_](http://www.fsc-watch.org/archives/2007/08/28/Swaziland_fires_in_certified_plantations_spark_national_emergency_); "South Africa Fires", IOL (Independent Online), [http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GFMCnew/2007/07/0730/20070730\\_sa.htm](http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GFMCnew/2007/07/0730/20070730_sa.htm); "Farmers in Uganda cut down considerable part of Dutch CO-2 forests", Jeroen Trommelen, *De Volkskrant*, disseminated by Simone Lovera, Global Forest Coalition, email: [simonelovera@yahoo.com](mailto:simonelovera@yahoo.com), <http://www.globalforestcoalition.org>

## - Uruguay: Labour conditions in two FSC certified tree nurseries

For years now WRM has been documenting the social and environmental impacts of monoculture tree plantations. However, so far we had no information on the starting point in this chain: the nurseries where millions of plants intended for plantation are produced. Recently research has just been concluded on the labour conditions and use of agrochemicals in the nurseries of the two main forestry companies in Uruguay certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC): Eufores (Ence-Spain) and FOSA (Metsa Botnia-Finland). (1)

Both companies' nurseries use the most advanced technology in this area and basically produce eucalyptus clones. Cloning is done from branches of the so-called "mother-plants" using them to produce cuttings, small stalks with a pair of leaves. This production is carried out using specialized equipment and once the saplings are produced they remain in the nursery until they are well rooted, subsequently to be moved outdoors for weathering for the plantations.

Although the technology for plant production is "advanced" (including modern irrigation installations, greenhouses and a broad agrochemical package), it is not quite so "advanced" regarding labour conditions.

The first thing to draw attention is outsourcing. Approximately 80 percent of both companies' workforce, occupying 50-70 people (Eufores) and 130 people (FOSA), work under this system. Outsourcing is an externalization of labour that implies breaking the direct labour relationship with the company that takes on production. In this "triangular labour relationship" people are hired by a company (contracting company) but in fact work for another company, on their premises, under their direction and discipline, thus diluting the figure of the real employer.

According to the workers, "outsourcing is a way of avoiding possible problems with the union and with the workers in general" as it divides them, both regarding benefits and labour projection, thus conspiring against the possibility of worker organization. Insofar as outsourcing condemns those hired to seasonal work, labour insecurity and functional tenure – they will always be "unskilled workers" and paid as such although they may be carrying out specialized tasks such as cloning eucalyptus – among the workers the illusion persists that they will become direct employees. On occasions this leads to their withdrawal from trade union activities for fear of being "pinpointed."

Union organization has been difficult in both companies. At Eufores, the union was only established four years ago, in spite of company opposition. However, once established, Eufores unleashed its persecution against the trade union leader, who reported that he felt "personally victimized." Even so, Eufores was certified. It has only been during the past year that the company seems to have accepted the fact and the leader reinstated to his normal workstation.

In FOSA the creation of the trade union is very recent (August 2006), but its members are almost all workers from the contractor company. However pressure is felt and some do not join for fear of being considered as "trouble-makers" by the company and that this might eventually prevent them from becoming direct FOSA employees. In spite of this situation, this company was also certified.

Another aspect showing the companies' lack of social responsibility is that, as a principle, the health of the eucalyptus plants comes before people's health. In order to avoid the saplings from becoming infected by pests and diseases, a very high amount of agrochemicals is applied. In Eufores, two products banned by FSC are applied: Fundazol (Benomil, an endocrine disruptor, producing genetic mutations, which is probably carcinogenic for humans) and Flonex (Mancozeb, banned because it is carcinogenic). Both nurseries use Captan, a fungicide banned in Finland in August 2001 because it is extremely toxic: it is considered to be carcinogenic, produces contamination of soil and groundwater table, and is very toxic to fish, also affecting frogs, birds and water fowl.

The workers are continually exposed to agrochemicals in a closed environment impregnated with such products. Furthermore, the water from washing out the backpacks or other implements used for spraying agrochemicals is spilled out in the same place. Because they are unable to take a shower before going home as the restrooms have no showers, the workers spread contamination to their family insofar as they go home with the same clothes they worked in. In this regard, workers reported that over 90 percent of the children of women working in the nursery suffer from allergies, spasms and asthma.

As for medical checkups, these are nonexistent in FOSA. Eufores does do some, but the workers do not trust the results and are trying to get monitoring done by an organization that is independent from the company, such as the Ministry of Public Health.

Some noteworthy labour conditions in the Eufores and FOSA nurseries are: the isolation of the location – preventing displacement during the lunch break that, in the case of FOSA is not paid – the difficult access to the restrooms – they are distant from the workplace – and their capacity is totally inadequate in addition to the above mentioned lack of showers; the absence of extractors in enclosed places – only the plants have air-conditioning – and the high temperatures there, in addition to the omission – on the part of FOSA – of providing articles necessary for the job, such as latex gloves – the company only provides rubber gloves as they are cheaper, but this hinders manipulation.

Cases of skin, eye, hand and neck allergies and allergies in other parts of the body, with rashes, itching and swelling, are frequent in workers exposed to toxic products such as fungicides, insecticides, hormones and chlorine.

The issue of female labour warrants special mention. The forestry companies emphasize the generation of jobs for women, but the jobs they offer are mostly for unskilled labourers which, as we have seen, are outsourced with no prospects for betterment. There are some administrative posts, but few women hold managerial positions – they are generally clerks.

Maternity is hard to sustain under the nurseries' labour regime. There are no day-care centres and the distance and lack of transport lead to very long working hours away from the children. During pregnancy these harsh working conditions prevent workers from reaching the authorized term for leave – 7 and a half months pregnancy – even though they prefer to work as long as possible because prenatal leave implies much lower income. However, the prevailing conditions – temperatures that can rise above 40°C and long working hours either sitting or standing – oblige them to take prenatal leave at between months 4 and 6 of their pregnancy.

It is interesting to note that the certification of these two companies had already been questioned in an investigation carried out by WRM (2). Now this investigation on these companies' nurseries is added to such questioning. In fact, in her summary on the issue, the researcher concludes that "these two certified companies in no way show themselves to be 'environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable' (as defined in the FSC mandate). On the contrary, they enjoy this seal at the cost of the work and health of their workers and of the environment of all Uruguayans.

(1)"Labour conditions and use of agrochemicals in two tree nurseries", August 2007, RAPAL-Uruguay (only in Spanish) <http://www.quayubira.org.uy/trabajo/viveros.pdf>

(2)"Greenwash. Critical analysis of FSC certification of industrial tree monocultures in Uruguay", April 2006, World Rainforest Movement, <http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Uruguay/book.html>

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## GE TREES

### - ArborGen – the world's biggest GM tree research company plans to get bigger

In August 2007, ArborGen signed an agreement which brings the company's aim of being "the pre-eminent player in the global development and marketing of bio-engineered trees to the forestry industry" another dangerous step closer to reality.

When this US\$60 million deal goes through, ArborGen will take over the tree nursery and seed orchard businesses from its three owners: MeadWestvaco and International Paper in the USA and Rubicon Limited in New Zealand and Australia. ArborGen will become the world's largest producer of tree seedlings, with operations in 20 locations in four countries. ArborGen estimates the combined yearly sales at 350 million tree seedlings, bringing in about US\$25 million a year. So far, ArborGen's GM trees are not commercially available, but when ArborGen starts to sell its GM trees, this deal will give the company a huge, ready-made market.

Rubicon's Horizon2 will become part of ArborGen under the deal. Horizon2 produces tree seedlings for the plantations industry in Australia and New Zealand. Horizon2 is also carrying out research into GM eucalyptus and radiata pine, aimed at producing trees with less lignin, faster growth, insect resistance, stress tolerance and altered flowering behaviour.

Also in New Zealand, ArborGen has signed a research and development agreement with Scion, a state-owned forestry research organisation. The research is aimed at identifying the genes responsible for faster growth and other characteristics of interest to the plantations industry.

Rubicon's CEO, Luke Moriarty sees the potential market as ever expanding. "The annual unit sales of forestry seedlings are well into the billions, recur every year, and span the globe," Moriarty told Rubicon's shareholders in July 2005. What's more, ArborGen has so far cornered the market in GM trees. "There are no global competitors to ArborGen in this space," says Moriarty.

ArborGen is hoping to cash in on the biofuels boom and this year the company expanded its research to include biofuels. "Renewable energy can create new markets for green products," says ArborGen's CEO, Barbara Wells. ArborGen is one of the partners in the BioEnergy Science Center, a US\$125 million project funded by the US government and led by Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

The company anticipates that its GM trees with reduced lignin content will be ArborGen's "first 'next-generation' treestock product to be commercialised". Trees with less lignin content are easier to pulp. But lignin is what holds wood cells together. It is what makes trees stand up. Reducing the amount of lignin in trees makes them more vulnerable to storms and more at risk to pests, fungi and disease.

ArborGen is currently carrying out field trials of reduced lignin GM trees in Brazil. The company set up operations in Campinas, Sao Paulo state three years ago. ArborGen started its GM tree trials in Brazil in 2005. This year, ArborGen won approval from Brazil's regulatory authority (CTN-Bio) to carry out a second full-rotation field trial of GM eucalyptus trees.

So far, the company does not have permission to market its GM trees in Brazil. "We have submitted all the required forms and met the government's guidelines for establishing trials. Information from these trials will be used to obtain the necessary authorization for commercial use," Fabio Brun ArborGen's director South America, told the forestry industry website RISI in May 2007. ArborGen is working in partnership with "some of the largest forest product companies in the region," according to RISI.

ArborGen is also researching a GM cold-tolerant eucalyptus which the company hopes will provide a source of raw material for the pulp and paper industry in the US South. Earlier this year, ArborGen won a controversial approval from the US regulatory authority (the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, APHIS) for a full rotation field trial in Baldwin County, Alabama. APHIS decided that the trial would have "no significant impact" and that ArborGen need not even prepare an environmental impact statement.

In December 2005, Rubicon stated that "ArborGen has been active with both the Brazilian and US authorities to ensure that any issues associated with the launching of biotechnology products in plantation forest trees are understood and that the regulatory regime implemented is science-based and workable in practice."

ArborGen's cosy relationship with the regulatory authorities seems to be paying off. The experts that APHIS turns to for advice about the risks of such trials are forestry scientists employed in academia or in pulp and paper corporations. APHIS even turned for advice to scientists working for two of the companies that own ArborGen: International Paper and MeadWestvaco. These experts all have one thing in common: an interest in trials of GM trees going ahead. Not surprisingly, in their advice to APHIS, they play down the risks and do not mention the precautionary principle.

By Chris Lang, <http://chrislang.org>

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#### - European Forest Institute chooses to ignore the "overwhelmingly negative" social effects of GM trees

The European Forest Institute recently announced a statement in favour of research into genetically modified trees. Several of EFI's 131 member organisations (consisting of research institutes, universities and companies) are involved in research into GM trees. EFI's chairman from 2004 to 2006 was François Houllier, a scientific director at the French National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA) which is carrying out research into GM trees. Other EFI members involved in GM tree research include the Finnish Forest Research Institute (METLA) and the Federal Research Centre for Forestry and Forest Products (BFH) in Germany.

EFI's pro-GM statement starts with the claim that the research on GM trees is needed, "In order to provide the relevant public authorities with sound and unbiased scientific data and information." This might make sense, except that the GM tree research that is being carried out is not "neutral" science aimed at providing information for public authorities. GM tree research is carried out on behalf of industry, mainly the pulp and paper industry, but increasingly the biofuels industry.

EFI's statement was produced after a two year discussion within the organisation. In 2005, EFI commissioned a discussion paper titled "Biotechnology in the Forest? Policy Options on Research on GM Trees". The lead author of the paper was David Humphreys, a senior lecturer in Environmental Policy at the Open University and the author of "Logjam: Deforestation and the Crisis of Global Governance".

While the discussion paper states that "No clear, unambiguous arguments emerge either for or against GM trees," it does put forward several strong arguments against the commercial planting of GM trees and therefore against continued research into GM trees.

"Trees live longer than agricultural crops," the discussion paper states, "which means that changes in their metabolism might occur many years after they are planted. At the same time, trees are different from crops in that they are largely undomesticated, and scientists' knowledge about forest ecosystems is poor compared to their knowledge of agricultural ecosystems. The ecological and other potential risks associated with GM trees could be greater than those of GM crops."

The paper notes the threat that GM trees pose to forests (although the concern seems to be the impact on the forestry industry rather than forests and people): "The use of GM trees could, over the long term, seriously damage the forestry sector itself due to genetic contamination that results in weaker forests that are increasingly unable to fend off natural stresses, such as attacks from pests that have become resistant to the insecticides produced by GM trees."

The patents involved in scientific research will make GM trees expensive. The production and commercialisation of GM trees is an expensive and highly specialised process. The paper points out that "If the use of GM trees becomes popular and widespread the forestry sector itself is likely to become increasingly dependent on biotechnology companies and GM seed companies."

The introduction of new technologies generates winners and losers. With the introduction of GMOs in the agricultural sector, the winners "include large GM and seed corporations, while the losers include many small farmers", notes the paper. Sterile GM crops mean that farmers have to buy new seeds each year. The seeds are more expensive because they include royalties to the corporations that developed the GM species. "The net result is a revenue flow from poor Southern farmers to rich Northern corporations, with many small agricultural producers going out of business."

Many of the research organisations and companies promoting GM tree technology are based in the North. But the GM tree plantations, if they are ever established, will be predominantly in the Global South. "The result is likely to be a social inequality", notes EFI's discussion paper, "both in the division of risk, which will fall mainly on developing countries, and in the division of the financial benefits, which will accrue primarily to the developed world."

Humphreys and his colleagues point out that the impacts of GM tree plantations would be similar to those of the large-scale industrial tree plantations that have already been established in the South: "Pulp tree plantations in the South have tended to overuse available land and water resources, and to pollute the surrounding environment with fertiliser and pesticides. GM tree plantations can be expected to place even greater demands on the environment, since GM varieties are engineered for faster growth."

The discussion paper concludes that "There are considerable economic and environmental benefits to GM trees, but also potentially serious economic and environmental disadvantages. The anticipated social effects of introducing GM trees are overwhelmingly negative. The legal situation on GM trees is unclear. The whole question of introducing GM trees raises serious ethical questions to which there are no obvious answers."

The explanation for EFI's decision to support GM tree research may be found in EFI's 2005 discussion paper. "Most scientists with expertise in GMOs are employed by research institutes and industrial corporations," notes the paper. "These scientists, it can be argued, have a vested interest in emphasising the benefits of biotechnology, and in minimising the associated risks."

One sentence from the conclusion to the discussion paper provides a clear, unambiguous argument against GM trees: "The anticipated social effects of introducing GM trees are overwhelmingly negative." In supporting GM tree research, EFI is ignoring these overwhelmingly negative social effects.

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