

WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT MOVIMIENTO MUNDIAL POR LOS BOSQUES TROPICALES

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WRM Bulletin # 101
December 2005
(English edition)

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Large-scale monoculture tree plantations are being promoted in the South by a broad array of governments, international institutions and corporate actors. Local communities are being impacted by those plantations and are fighting back to regain control over their territories. Given the negative social and environmental impacts these plantations entail, the WRM organized an International Meeting on Plantations (together with FASE-ES and GJEP) which was held on 21-25 November 2005 in Vitoria, Espirito Santo, Brazil. The meeting brought together experiences from people working in different countries and issues related to plantations. In this bulletin we include a summarized version of most of the meeting's presentations as a means of sharing information and analysis with all the bulletin's readers.

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OUR VIEWPOINT

- Victory of local peoples against corporate plantations

“The city of Vitoria in Brazil, owes its name to the “victory” of the colonialist Portuguese against the original indigenous inhabitants of the land. Today, the same name has a totally different meaning. The indigenous Tupinikim and Guarani peoples have retaken the lands that were stolen from them by the giant pulp mill corporation Aracruz Cellulose. They have been joined in the struggle against the company and its plants by other local communities and organizations from civil society who, through uniting in the struggle, have weakened the company’s power. They have thus become a symbol of victory for peoples all over the world who are fighting against similar corporations.”

The above is the opening paragraph of the “Vitoria Declaration” (see full text in this bulletin), issued on 24 November by representatives of organizations from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and the United States attending an International Meeting on Plantations organized by WRM, FASE-Espirito Santo and Global Justice Ecology Project.

The symbolic significance of the victory of two “weak” indigenous communities against a “powerful” company was decisive in choosing the city of Vitoria for holding this meeting, which brought together people fighting for the rights of local communities throughout the world against the power of similar corporations.

More importantly, the meeting aimed at identifying the reasons for this and other victories as a means of strengthening the worldwide campaign against large-scale tree monocultures.

Apart from learning from the experience of the struggle in Brazil, participants shared the findings of a number of case studies on different types of plantations in South Africa, Uganda, Ecuador, Chile, Cambodia and Indonesia (summarized in the relevant articles below).

The meeting also discussed extensively on strategies to confront the new threat posed by genetically engineered trees, which could eventually result in the use of those trees in industrial plantations (see relevant article). Further issues such as carbon sink plantations, northern campaigns on paper consumption, certification and alternative approaches to community forest use were also addressed.

Even more importantly, participants were able to interact directly with the local people fighting against plantations, including a field trip to visit the Tupinikim and Guarani indigenous peoples in their recovered lands and to a camp of the Landless Rural Workers Movement struggling to access land currently occupied by Aracruz Cellulose (see article on Brazil). After suffering the horrible stink from the huge Aracruz Cellulose pulp mill, those visits provided real hope –as the World Social Forum states- that another world is possible. That new possible world is actually growing in the less expected place: behind the unending and monotonous rows of eucalyptus plantations.

Victory of local peoples against corporate plantations is of course not easy, but the Vitoria example proves that it is possible. It may take years –as it did in this case- but if people are sufficiently determined, victory can be theirs –as it was in this case.

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MOVING FORWARD

- Plantations: Looking back for moving forward

The negative impacts of tree plantations on forests and forest peoples have been highlighted by WRM since its creation in 1986. The 1989 "Penang Declaration" which set out the shared vision of the WRM's members, identified tree plantations as "part of the policies and practices leading to deforestation throughout the world in the name of development".

The above was not an intellectual "discovery" but the result of the identification of local struggles that were being carried out in India against tree plantations. Analysis of and support to those struggles led to include the issue in WRM's agenda.

While at the time tree plantations were still perceived by most governmental and non governmental organizations as something positive promoted under the guise of "planted forests", an increasing number of communities impacted by them began to fight back. WRM was thus involved in supporting anti-plantation struggles in countries such as Thailand, Chile, Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia and others.

In 1993, a South-East Asian Regional Workshop on Plantations was held in the Philippines, bringing together people from the region and from Latin America to jointly strategize future actions. A year later, discussions on plantations at the WRM meeting held in India led to the decision to carry out a detailed study on the actors promoting plantations and on the social and environmental impacts of tree plantations. The end result of the study –the book "Pulping the South"- became the major tool for action regarding opposition to plantations.

At its 1998 meeting in Uruguay, the WRM decided to launch an international campaign against plantations, reflected in the Montevideo Declaration which stated that "In view of these concerns, we pledge our support to an international campaign to:

- support local peoples' rights and struggles against the invasion of their lands by these plantations
- encourage awareness of the negative social and environmental impacts of large-scale industrial monocrop tree plantations, and
- change the conditions which make such plantations possible."

Since then, the WRM has been supporting opposition to plantations in an increasing number of countries including Brazil, Chile, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, India, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Uruguay and others.

Experiences from those and other countries have been documented and analysed by WRM regarding different types of monoculture tree plantations: pulpwood, oil palm, carbon sinks. An extensive list of books, briefings and articles have been produced as a means of sharing those experiences with all people affected by plantations.

At the same time, WRM has actively tried to incorporate the plantations issue at international processes such as the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel and Forum on Forests, the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Major efforts have been carried out on the emerging issue of "carbon sink plantations" promoted by the Convention on Climate Change. In 2000, the WRM summarized its position in the Mount Tamalpais Declaration, which explained the four main reasons for opposing the inclusion of plantations as "sinks" in the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism:

- "Using "sinks" to help Northern countries meet their Kyoto Protocol emissions reductions targets cannot promote a liveable climate since those targets are themselves insufficient to do so.

- Trading emissions for tree carbon would intensify regressive redistribution of world resources.
- Large-scale industrial tree plantations are a threat to communities and ecosystems the world over.
- Using tree plantation projects to "compensate" for the climatic effects of carbon-dioxide emissions is scientifically incoherent and sanctions external political interference in the social policies of host countries."

On that same year the WRM published the briefing "The carbon shop: planting new problems" as a means of providing people with relevant analysis on this until then relatively unknown issue. Two years later, the WRM created Sinks Watch to closely monitor and oppose the promotion of carbon sink plantations within the Kyoto Protocol.

The issue of certification of tree plantations has been another important area of WRM work. Given that local communities' struggles against plantations were being weakened by the certification of those same plantations, WRM began to document such cases and to disseminate analysis and information based on them. The main aim was to influence the Forest Stewardship Council. On September 2004, the FSC launched its Plantation Certification Review, to a large extent resulting from criticism such as that put forward by WRM.

Another new issue emerged: genetically engineered trees. WRM worked together with a number of organizations opposing the release of GE trees, among which the Global Justice Ecology Project and Friends of the Earth International. The book "Genetically Modified Trees: the Ultimate Threat to Forests" was published in 2004.

At the same time that all those activities were being carried out, the WRM actively promoted regional networking activities to strengthen the campaign. The WRM was instrumental in the creation of the Latin American Network against Tree Monocultures. In South Africa, the WRM worked in close collaboration with the Timberwatch Coalition and facilitated linkages with neighbouring Swaziland. In the Mekong region, WRM supported TERRA in bringing together organizations from the region with the aim of creating a sub-regional network. In Indonesia, WRM collaborated with WALHI and others in the organization of a regional meeting on plantations held in 2004.

Moving forward

In spite of all the above activities, the fact is that plantations are still advancing in many countries. At the same time, new threats are emerging: pulp mills are being increasingly built in the South, paper and palm oil consumption are growing, palm oil and plantation timber are being targeted for biodiesel production, carbon sink plantations and GE trees are being officially promoted by the Convention on Climate Change, governments continue to promote the spread of plantations.

However, the situation has dramatically changed in many respects: public perception about plantations is increasingly negative, plantations as "forests" are now questioned, basic information and analysis are readily available, plantation certification is on the defensive, organized opposition is much stronger in many more countries.

In football terms, in the 1980s plantation promoters were beating us 3-0. Today, the score is 3-2. What is needed to first draw and then pass on to win?

- to strengthen local and national opposition, bringing together all the relevant actors
- more South-South and North-South collaboration
- more and stronger regional and international networking
- campaigns in the North on consumption, on International Financial Institutions, on policies that promote plantations in the South
- campaigns in the South for changing government policies that promote the spread of plantations.

One of the main aims of this international plantations meeting in Vitoria, Brazil was to share the diverse knowledge, experience and ideas of participants from all over the world to make the above possible.

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DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, SIMILAR PROBLEMS

- Brazil: The struggle of the Green Desert Network

The recent international meeting of the World Rainforest Movement to take stock of its activities and to reelaborate its strategies in the struggle against large-scale industrial tree monocultures, chose a symbolic place to be held - the State of Espírito Santo in Brazil.

It was in this State where in 1999 a network of resistance against eucalyptus plantations was born – Rede Alerta contra o Deserto Verde (Alert against the Green Desert Network). It was formed as from the actual struggle of communities impacted by the eucalyptus monoculture, together with a broad group of citizens, entities, social movements, pastoral groups and churches, willing to support this struggle and convinced about the fact that it is necessary to face the current model of development based on huge projects which concentrate income and lands, such as the one of eucalyptus based on the production of cellulose for export. This model that separates the human being from nature creates the so-called 'green deserts', huge plantations of fast-growing trees, but without fauna, flora or people.

The year of 2005 was productive for the Green Desert Network, with important mobilizations against the industrial tree plantations, mainly in the State of Espírito Santo, with the struggle for land of the Tupinikim and Guarani indigenous people and of the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – MST).

In the field visits that were part of the meeting's agenda, the participants visited the Córrego do Ouro village, in the municipality of Aracruz, reconstructed within 11,009 hectares of indigenous Tupinikim and Guarani lands, autodemarcated by the indigenous people themselves in May of this year. Four Tupinikim families already live in the new village, without water or electricity and with scarce food, but with much hope, showing in practice the feasibility of the alternative for which they fight - to replace eucalyptus plantations by food crops and plantations of native trees and to develop conditions to live in freedom.

The indigenous leaders told how the eucalyptus monocultures in indigenous lands altered their culture, their traditions and livelihoods and destroyed the nature on which they depended to survive. These impacts forced them into an "Outgrower Scheme" agreement with Aracruz Celulose. The "Outgrower Scheme" is at global level the more recent strategy of companies of the sector to 'integrate' farmers to the agribusiness of eucalyptus and cellulose.

The Tupinikim and Guarani indigenous people continue to struggle for the official demarcation of their lands, not carried out by the Federal Government yet. They need the support of all of us in this arm wrestling with the largest world producer of eucalyptus cellulose.

In the second field visit, participants shared another experience of actual struggle, now in the camp of landless rural workers linked to the MST at Vila do Riacho, Aracruz. More than 100 families occupy since September an area of Aracruz Celulose of 8,500 hectares in the municipality of Aracruz. They are workers evicted from their lands by the agribusiness, who dream of returning to the rural area to produce their own food.

Only in this area, at least 400 families could be settled. It must be highlighted that at this moment, the federal and state governments are carrying out studies, as they have promised, to identify if this area is productive and how much of the so-called "Terras devolutas" (undocumented lands that by law belong to the State) are within the 8,500 hectares. "Terras devolutas" cannot be delivered to private companies, but they have to be used for social

purposes, that is to say, for the agrarian reform.

The resistance of the MST provides hope to these families. They tell about the persecutions suffered for collecting remainders of eucalyptus in the plantations of the company. With these remainders the families produce charcoal to help support their children. With dignity and firmness, they talk about the importance of the organization to face the struggle against the model of development of the Brazilian rural areas - the one of agribusiness and large estates.

Organization is the way for communities impacted by the green desert to fight for their rights and to show to the society that on one side large industrial projects such as the one of Aracruz Celulose are perverse and without a future, but on the other side there are fair and feasible alternatives that may arise from the articulation and exchange of those people deprived from their lands - indigenous people, landless workers, peasants and *quilombolas* (slave descendants). The Alert against the Green Desert Network intends to be a space that makes it possible to exchange experiences and to strengthen the struggle of those who resist.

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- Cambodia: Plantations and the death of the forests

Proponents of industrial tree plantations argue that plantations are "reforestation", increasing the area of forest, providing jobs for local people, or reducing pressure on natural forests. The reality in Cambodia exposes these arguments for propaganda.

Cambodia's Prime Minister, Hun Sen, has handed out vast areas of land concessions, many to his business acquaintances and friends. While Cambodia's 2001 Land Law limits the size of land concessions to 10,000 hectares, many of the concessions are far in excess of this area.

In November 2004, the United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative for Human Rights in Cambodia, Peter Leuprecht, released a report on land concessions from a human rights perspective. In the foreword, Leuprecht wrote: "The situation I met shocked me. The companies have been given rights over land that are very similar to ownership. Yet they have little or no regard for welfare; and they contribute little, if anything, to overall state revenue. I have concluded that the policies are wrong. They are not reducing poverty in Cambodia, and they are allowing the continued plundering of its natural resources."

Recent research commissioned by WRM in Koh Kong, Pursat and Kompong Chhnang provinces confirmed the problems.

The first that local communities knew about the 18,300 hectare acacia plantation planned for Bokum Sakor National Park was when a convoy of logging trucks, bulldozers and excavators rumbled into the park in March 2004. The company which owns the concession, Green Rich (now known as Green Elite) is owned by Freeland Universal Limited, a company registered in the British Virgin Islands, with offices in Hong Kong. Asia Pulp and Paper Hong Kong offices are listed at the same address as Freeland Universal Limited.

Green Rich set up a logging camp inside Bokum Sakor in an area of mature melaleuca forest on the southern bank of the Prek Khai River. Workers started clearing the forest, building offices and houses and laying the foundations for a wood chip mill. Green Rich did not have the necessary approvals under the Forestry Law, the Law on Natural Resource Protection and the Sub-decree on Environmental Impact Assessments. The company logged several hundred hectares of melaleuca and mangrove forest - inside a National Park.

Conditions for workers were appalling. Green Rich hired logging sub-contractors from the northeast of Cambodia to bring workers and equipment to Bokum Sakor. The sub-contractors inflated the price of food and water for workers. Many found they had to keep borrowing money from the sub-contractors in order to survive. Several

workers fled, swimming across the Prek Khai River at night or walking tens of kilometres through mangrove forest. Human rights workers and local police helped dozens of workers escape.

In May 2004, Mok Mareth, the Minister of Environment, issued an order to the management of Green Rich to cease all activities until it had submitted an Environmental Impact Assessment. Green Rich ignored the order and continued operations. Finally, in December 2004, the Ministry of Environment announced that it was taking legal action against Green Rich for US\$1 million in damages and reparations. The lawsuit was dropped in late 2005 when the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries told the court that it had authorised the company to operate.

2004 also saw the start of Chinese company Wuzhishan's plantation operations in Pursat and Kompong Chhnang provinces. Pheapimex, Wuzhishan's Cambodian partner, was awarded a 300,000 hectare concession for a eucalyptus plantation in 1997, during a period of turmoil shortly after a coup, in which Hun Sen ousted his coalition partner Norodom Ranariddh. Green Rich also signed its concession agreement during the same period. Wuzhishan, Pheapimex and Green Rich all have close links to the Prime Minister or his entourage.

Pheapimex has concessions covering seven per cent of Cambodia and holds the rights to all but one of the gold deposits in the country. Pheapimex's record includes illegal logging, royalty and tax evasion and forcing local people into surrendering the forests on which they depend.

In 2000, when Pheapimex started to clear an area of community forest in Ansar Chambok Commune in Pursat Province, villagers successfully resisted by filing lawsuits challenging the government to uphold the law and by physically blocking the road to the forest. For three years Pheapimex carried out no further work on site.

In November 2004, however, hundreds of Wuzhishan workers arrived in Ansar Chambok. They started logging the forest, building roads into the forest and set up a tree nursery. Similar scenes took place in neighbouring Kompong Chhnang Province.

"I have eight children. If the forest goes and they take my land I will have nothing for them," a villager told researchers. Once again, villagers from Ansar Chambok attempted to stop the destruction of their community forest. They organised a watch of the machinery, to prevent the bulldozers from entering the concession area. One night someone threw a grenade into a group of sleeping villagers, injuring eight of them.

Local police accused villagers of throwing the grenade at themselves. The Prime Minister dismissed it as a publicity stunt: "The purpose of the grenade attack, in which some people were injured and nobody died, was just aimed to make their propaganda voices louder."

Resin tapping is one of villagers' most important sources of income. Wuzhishan has cut villagers' resin trees. "I am worried that I will lose everything. I have three hectares of land, but the village chief told me that they are all in the concession. I had 50 resin trees, but now only 20 are left. Thirty of my trees were cut in the last week," a resin collector told researchers.

Work has stopped once again, at least for the time-being. In March 2005, Wuzhishan dismissed its workers and removed heavy machinery from its sites in Pursat and Kompong Chhnang.

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- Chile: The infinite thirst of forestry companies

Lumaco (which means "Moon water") is a community of passage located in a large area of tree plantations and impoverished communities. Very little about it invites you to stay. Lumaco is part of the communes known in Chile as forestry communes. The community's future vision set out in its 2000-2006 Plan for Communal Development

states that it hopes for "a commune where poverty has been overcome, clean and orderly, fruitful and progressive, with development and unity, with expectations, with intercultural and diverse education, with a good quality of life for its Mapuche and non-Mapuche inhabitants." We will take a brief look at its history.

Lumaco, located in the central southern part of the country was known as the "granary of Chile." The degradation of decades of intensive agriculture, the economic transformation following the 1973 military coup that implemented the so-called "export model" no longer made agricultural activities socially or economically viable. It was an appropriate context to impose a new productive model. Macro-economic conditions in addition to government subsidies encouraged the development of the timber industry, based on monoculture tree plantations for export.

However, Lumaco, with an area of 111,500 hectares, has suffered important reductions in its population over the past thirty years. While in 1970 it had 16,184 inhabitants, by 2002 there were only 12,792 left, a fact which should be compared with the increase of 68% in the national population in general. Presently, 65 per cent of the population is rural and 70 percent are indigenous Mapuche people. There is a strong migratory process linked to the search for better living and working conditions.

Lumaco also shows high poverty rates, being one of the poorest communes in Chile. Thus 60 per cent of its population are under the poverty line and 33 per cent live in extreme poverty. Relevant social indicators show: 23.7% illiteracy, 26.3 per cent school drop-outs, and an infant mortality rate of 17.5 per thousand. This questions the so-called benefits of the forestry model prevailing in the country.

The expansion of plantations has been an explosive process. In 1988, 14 per cent of the area of the commune had plantations on it, while in the year 2002, this figure reached 52.5 per cent, all this to the detriment of soil for agricultural use and of the native forest. The transformation in ways of using land brought with it as a consequence drastic changes in life, culture and ecosystems.

If we analyze land distribution, we find serious problems of inequality. Fifty percent of the plots occupy 10 percent of the communal area where 80 per cent of the rural community live. In contrast, 10 per cent of the largest plots represent 55 per cent of the communal area. If we were to incorporate the analysis of the quality of the land, this inequality increases even further. Eighty-five per cent of the small properties are located on soils scantily suited to agriculture and that are highly fragile from an ecological standpoint.

As in other areas of intensive plantations, severe environmental impacts may be observed generated by this activity: destruction of the native forest (there is 13 per cent of the original area left) decrease in biodiversity; health problems in the surrounding communities; contamination of water from pesticides and pine pollen, and soil degradation among others. A critical aspect is the disappearance of sources of water in this sector. The rural communities are left with no water supply from the end of the spring until the beginning of autumn. The springs disappear, as do surface water courses, the level of the wells descends and finally the rural communities do not have sufficient water for their agriculture or their livestock or for that matter, for human consumption. The Government and the Municipality, faced by this emergency situation, are obliged to allocate a large portion of public funds to distribute and supply water for basic consumption to the families neighbouring the plantations.

In the case of the indigenous community, the effects take on other dimensions, including territorial, cultural and spiritual dimensions, as the deterioration of the natural Mapuche world affects humans living in harmony with spiritual considerations. Structural changes in Mapuche culture change the balanced way of living and of solving problems.

The loss of territorial space, exacerbated by the strong impacts and environmental degradation caused by the expansion of the plantations, have opened up a conflict between the Mapuche community, the forestry companies and the Government. The processes for land recovery by the Mapuche people as from 1997 have made apparent their precarious living conditions. They have also been an appropriate forum to highlight their historic political demands, both regarding territory and recognition as a people.

Response by the State has been to provide propitious legal and social conditions to enable the forestry companies to fulfil their production goals and continue their expansion. On the one hand, repression and criminalization, on the other, the specific solving of some problems causing the communities to rise and criticise the forestry model. The modification of decree law 701, rerouting subsidies formerly aimed at the large forestry companies towards small farmers and indigenous land owners, and the Origins Programme, of assistance aimed at the indigenous community and financed by the Inter-American Development Bank are a step in this direction. Additionally, local projects are promoted that de-naturalize public incentives and oblige former farmers to reconvert to forestry activities. Thus the strategy for expansion becomes more complex, operating through political and economic blackmail that leaves no alternatives. The obligation of thinking about its survival and future in the framework of the plantations is imposed on the population.

Presently the commune of Lumaco is living in conditions that are contrary to the expectations expressed by the community at the beginning of this article. However, in this area the Mapuche people have shown that cultural safeguarding can become a relevant strategy to face the forestry model, defending their right to think out the landscape and nature from their own criteria and to denounce the presence of forestry companies as an invasion of their territories and ways of life.

Prepared by Lucio Cuenca B. from the case study "Contexto económico y social de las plantaciones forestales en Chile: el caso de la comuna de Lumaco Región de la Araucanía". WRM – OLCA, August 2005. E-mail: l.cuenca@olca.cl

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- Ecuador: Impacts of the Eucapacific Company on people and their environment

In Ecuador three models of monoculture tree plantations coexist: the erroneously called "carbon sinks" belonging to the Dutch foundation FACE, the pine tree plantations in Andean communities promoted by organizations linked to the Church and the pulpwood plantation model. In this article we shall concentrate on this latter and more recent model.

In the Province of Esmeraldas, the Eucapacific Company (Eucalyptus Pacifico S.A.) is actively planting eucalyptus trees. It is a new company that was set up at the end of the year 2000 to carry out a major eucalyptus plantation project. The project involves four Japanese companies (Mitsubishi Paper Mills, Sumitomo Corporation, Electric Power Development and Environmental Engineering Service) and Waltz International and the idea is to plant thousands of hectares of Eucalyptus trees.

The objective is to produce pulp and paper from eucalyptus trees. The timber will be turned into wood chips in the port of Esmeraldas and later exported to Japan where they will be turned into pulp and paper.

Eighty per cent of the investment was provided by the Japanese government as a loan. The consortium obtained this loan from the Japanese Government under the reasoning that it is an "ecologically sustainable" project. According to them, the plantation of eucalyptus will fulfil the function of absorbing greenhouse gases generated by the Electric Power Development Company.

Eucapacific is being installed through an aggressive process of buying up land, initially from the owners of medium-sized plots of between 500 and 2000 hectares and later from smaller property owners. They are offered good prices for their lands and promised employment. In order to expand its control over the whole zone, Eucapacific put pressure on the peasants to sell the farms that were isolated in the middle of the Company's properties. They did this by enclosing the land and placing security guards to prevent free circulation of the peasants along local public roads that the transnational company had already obstructed with its plantations.

There have been frequent cases in which the peasants have been obliged to accept ridiculous prices for their lands simply by preventing them from having access to their properties by the purchase of adjacent land. Thus,

at the same time, the company makes the passage through their domains illegal. There are also other types of pressure exerted by Eucapacific. They include open boycott of peasant production, theft from their property, death of their animals and non-compliance with specific agreements. To this is added intimidation by death threats and harassment of the communities' children, a situation that has been denounced in the community of Matambal.

Work promised to the local population is notoriously absent. During the 2003 planting "300 people from outside were employed." Of these 300 people, today there are only 10 left. Help promised at the time of purchasing lands, in particular referring to the creation of sources of labour has been reduced to "zero so far."

Furthermore, the company has found a way - through the mechanism of outsourcing - of freeing itself from labour responsibilities towards the workers.

Labour conditions are deplorable. Approximately 400 people work in a farm of 400 hectares, living in a single camp if the farm has access to roads. If not, they are distributed in 3 or more camps in the plantation areas. The camps with access to roads are usually large, separated into barracks for thirty or forty men, with three-story bunk beds. They are made out of poor quality timber with tin roofs and usually have no sanitary facilities. Those that do include six to ten barracks with septic tanks that are full after a week, causing a serious health problem: the faecal waters overflow, turning into breeding sites for mosquitoes transmitting typhoid fever and malaria.

The chemical inputs (weed-killers, insecticides, fertilizers) are located close to the dining areas and in the camps, exposing the workers to contamination. The camps scattered in the forest have plastic roofs and walls and measure no more than five metres by five where six people live. They have no basic services. The houses of the former owners of the farms are used and in populated areas, communal housing.

There is no drinking water in the work place, neither medical care of any type, no access to medication nor means of transport to the nearest health centre in the event of an emergency. Illness caused by intoxication from chemical products is frequent. Tree logging causes frequent work-related accidents that are not treated by the bosses under the slogan of "cure as you can." Each plot sees two or three sick workers leaving per day. In Eucapacific people have died, such as in the camp of the contractor Tito Zambrano in the Quitito plot. A contractor called Ramón Zambrano also died.

There is no job continuity. Many people are hired for the initial phases of the plantation. This involves an average period of between three and four months, followed by mass dismissal of the workers. Remuneration for 22 days of continuous 8-hour per day work is between five and six dollars, with an average of 133 dollars, less than the minimum wage. The days of rest are not remunerated. Sick leave is not paid. The cost of food is deducted from the salary and the food itself is of very poor quality.

To the above are added other impacts from the plantations. Shortly after the plantation of the eucalyptus trees, their impact on water started becoming evident. The people say that "the rivers are drying up completely; there are no fish or anything." To this is added contamination and now the water is dirty and contaminated by chemicals. This has led to diseases among the local population. At certain times the "river stinks," because "they have poisoned the river and dead fish and shrimps stink."

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that Eucapacific, in spite of having identified zones for the protection of biodiversity and the hydrographic basins in its properties, has installed plantations thus destroying the stated protection objectives.

Various water courses located in the Eucapacific plantations flow into the mangroves and the reproduction and survival of endemic species to the mangrove system are affected.

They spray weed-killer that, when it rains, ends up in the rivers and swamps due to leaching, killing the shrimps and all it finds in its way. It is also known that the spray tanks are washed in the rivers. There have been cases of poisoning, for example in Las Delicias (Quinindé), where the company purchased 40 hectares that it planted

with eucalyptus trees. To avoid the ants eating the plants they sprayed bananas with the poison called NUBAN and placed them around the trees. Many domestic animals eat them and died.

Due to the use of agro-chemical products, cases of intoxication caused by bathing in the rivers Peninsula and Tortuga have been reported. An important point is that the population of Tortuga consumes the water from the river of the same name, where poisoned dead fish are always to be found. Banana plantations among others get infested due to lack of water because the eucalyptus trees dry out the springs and rivers.

On decreasing the flow of water, various crab species have almost disappeared. The people of Tortuga say "We have had two plagues, two enemies, the shrimp farms in those times and now the eucalyptus."

The result of this model is there to be seen: in the plantation zone the people describe the situation by saying that "life there is dreadful. It is sad." Those who did not sell their lands live in fear of threats, of losing their means of survival (in particular game), migration to the cities, the closing down of routes used by their ancestors (and consequent "fencing in" in the plantations), and the lack of job opportunities.

By Ivonne Ramos, Acción Ecológica, e-mail: cbosques@accionecologica.org

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- Indonesia: The insatiable appetite of the pulp industry

Asia Pulp and Paper (APP) is one of the world's largest pulp and paper companies. The company is responsible for large-scale deforestation of Indonesia's forests. APP has also generated a number of not-yet-settled conflicts with local communities in Indonesia.

Forthcoming research by Rully Syumanda, Friends of the Earth Indonesia/WALHI's forest campaigner and Rivani Noor of the Community Alliance for Pulp Paper Advocacy (CAPPA) documents the company's grim record in Sumatra.

"We in Indonesia are facing so many battles about forest destruction, including tree plantations and the oil palm industry," said Syumanda at the start of his presentation. There are seven pulp mills, 65 paper mills and 10 pulp and paper mills in Indonesia. We are focussing on the biggest - APP's pulp and paper mill in Riau. "We face problems because of APP's plans to become the world's biggest pulp and paper exporter," said Syumanda. "The Indonesian government supports the growth of this industry."

Foresters working in APP argue that the company is rapidly developing plantations in order to supply its pulp mills without continuing to cut down old-growth forests. "APP is the golden boy of the Forest Department," said Syumanda, "because logging, plantations, pulp and paper dominate all."

But this industry is not serious about developing plantations. Plantations still supply only 30 per cent of the raw material needed. Destructive logging and/or illegal logging provides much of the rest. APP is converting forest to plantations. The company has used subsidies from the rehabilitation fund, which should have been used for recovering forest areas. Vast areas of APP's concessions overlap with community lands.

The main problem, Syumanda explained, is the over-capacity of the industry. The sheer scale of the industry means that land tenure conflicts cannot be resolved equitably. There is no protocol for solving the problems caused. But the government is not concerned about overcapacity. Instead it likes to keep the attention on illegal logging. "This has impacts," explained Syumanda. "Several peasants and farmers have been arrested for clearing their farmland for their own needs."

Any idea of restructuring the industry, including reducing its size, has been brushed aside by the need for fast money, at least partly to repay the company's huge debts. APP's debt, at almost US\$14 billion, is the largest debt of any company in Southeast Asia.

Violence, human rights abuses, water and air pollution, forest fires and floods have become business as usual for the pulp and paper industry in Indonesia.

"Now we face the next challenge", said Syumanda. The government plans to develop another five million hectares of acacia pulp wood plantations. This is in addition to the two million hectares it plans to plant to oil palm in the middle of Borneo, and perhaps another eight million hectares of oil palm around the archipelago. "It's crazy," Syumanda concluded.

During the 1970s, the Indonesian government declared 140 million hectares of land as state forests, "thus asserting state control over forest resources traditionally managed by tens of thousands of local communities," added Patrick Anderson, Policy Advisor at WALHI. As with industrial logging concessions, the government gives out concessions to the pulp and paper industry regardless of who lives there and who traditionally used the forest.

One of the few rules by which the pulp and paper industry operates in Indonesia is that you build the pulp mill first - the plantations follow. "So for at least the first ten years, while the plantations are planted and growing, the mill will use natural forests as raw material," explained Anderson.

Indonesia has about 50 million indigenous people, with about 1,000 different languages. Although in theory indigenous land rights are recognised in Indonesia, the government does not follow its laws that recognize customary rights. Now that the plywood industry is in decline due to lack of big trees, the government is doing all it can to create an export economy in the pulp and paper sector.

Rivani Noor pointed out that on Sumatra there simply isn't enough forest left for the pulp industry to keep expanding. So APP has started pulp mills and plantation operations in China. But as with the mills in Sumatra, APP failed to secure raw material supplies before starting up its mills in China. As a result, woodchips from Sumatra's forests will be exported to supply APP's operations in China. APP also has a new concession in Kalimantan.

There are an additional three pulp mills proposed for Kalimantan. The South Korean Korindo Group has produced a feasibility study for a pulp and paper mill in Central Kalimantan. A group of Indian and Malaysian investors have filed a proposal with the Ministry of Forestry for a US\$1.3 billion pulp and paper mill. If it goes ahead, the project would convert about 300,000 hectares of forest into plantations. Singapore-listed firm United Fibre Systems (UFS) is planning a project for South Kalimantan and is looking to secure European financial support. UFS is also in the process of taking over the existing Kiani Kertas mill in East Kalimantan, with Deutsche Bank acting as financial advisor to the company.

Not willing to limit its forest destruction to the island of Sumatra, the pulp and paper industry is busy planning its expansion into Kalimantan. If it does so, the results will be predictable and disastrous for people and forests.

By Chris Lang, e-mail: chrislang@t-online.de

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- South Africa: Plantations - Green gold or green deserts?

"Rural people are very knowledgeable, but they don't have degrees. Neither do they speak the 'right' language. This study helps me to empower the community. I see myself as a voice of the voiceless, committed to the struggle for the advancement of the dignity of our people," John Blessing Karumbidza said, opening his presentation in Vitória. Born in rural Zimbabwe, Karumbidza is a Junior Lecturer in Economic History at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban. He was commissioned by Timberwatch to carry out research into the impacts of tree plantations on rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa.

Although the environmental impacts were not a specific part of the research, Karumbidza noted that "environmental considerations and impacts are over-arching issues, relevant to social, cultural and economic impacts. In typical rural community life in the area, it is difficult to separate social, cultural, economic and political issues from each other and the environment."

The South African plantation industry claims to be creating new jobs. When it sacks workers and hires subcontractors to do the work (at lower wages) it calls this "empowerment". It claims to be developing infrastructure, such as roads. It claims to be putting money in rural people's pockets and making a substantial contribution to the national economy. It claims to be preserving the environment.

Karumbidza's research uncovered a different story, of evictions, resettlement and dislocation. Communities who were evicted to make way for plantations received inadequate or no compensation. Their new settlements had insufficient land.

The Sabokwe community in Richards Bay is today completely surrounded by eucalyptus plantations. "A sea of nothingness", as one community member described the plantations. "We feel trapped being located so close to such huge plantations," a Sabokwe villager told Karumbidza.

"We cry because our children have no clothes and no shoes," another villager said. "Life has been difficult since the trees came."

Villagers are concerned that they do not have enough land. They cannot grow enough food to live off and young people are concerned that when they grow up, their fathers will not be able to pass on any land to them.

Mrs. Ziqubu, one of the senior women in Sabokwe, told Karumbidza about the problems they have with water: "The thing is that we compete for water with these plantations. They use up a lot of water. I remember when we got here in 1996 the stream close to our garden was running perennially because the eucalyptus trees were not here."

"The problem of water is as crucial as the access to land itself," she continued. "You may get land, but without water there is very little one can do with the land. So we are here in the middle of a desert created by the plantation industry."

Slovoville is a squatter camp near the town of KwaMbonambi. It is home to about 2,000 people who live in tiny houses built from timber off-cuts, black plastic, car tyres and anything people can lay their hands on. There is only one water stand pipe for the entire community.

The first people to settle in Slovoville did so in the 1980s, when pulp and paper corporations Mondi and Sappi went on a land buying frenzy. White farm owners sold their land, took the money and moved away. Black people who had worked on the farms were left with nowhere to go except to squatter camps like Slovoville. Since then other people have joined the settlement, including people from Mozambique who came to South Africa in search of work while others fled political violence in Zululand.

Both Mondi and Sappi shirk their responsibility toward the people living in Slovoville. After a fire raged through the settlement, neither company provided any help, not even timber poles to help rebuild the houses.

Timberwatch organised a meeting with representatives from communities and local NGOs in November 2005 to discuss Karumbidza's research. After presenting his findings, Karumbidza asked whether there were any benefits to communities from tree plantations. None of the people present could think of any benefits. "Plantations have caused starvation not benefits," said a villager. "There should be no plantations close to the community or close to the village," another added. They produced a list of problems caused by plantations, including the impact on water, the reduction of grazing and arable land, the impact on soils, the reduction of indigenous and fruit trees, the reduction of medicinal herbs and the fact that plantations provide a hiding place for criminals.

In the discussion that followed, a villager explained that even people who have worked for 20 years for the plantation companies have not benefited. "They cannot show you good things and assets they have from the salaries, from the contract they have made, there is nothing," she said. "We should do away with these plantations."

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- Uganda: FACE Foundation, carbon conflict and FSC certification

In 1994, the FACE Foundation signed an agreement with the Ugandan authorities to plant trees on 25,000 hectares inside Mount Elgon National Park in Uganda. FACE is working with the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), which is responsible for the management of Uganda's National Parks.

The FACE Foundation (Forests Absorbing Carbon dioxide Emissions) was set up in 1990 by the Dutch electricity generating board with the aim of planting trees to absorb and store carbon, supposedly to compensate for the greenhouse gas emissions from a new power station to be built in the Netherlands.

The UWA-FACE project is planting a two to three kilometre wide strip of trees just inside the 211 kilometre-long boundary of the Mount Elgon National Park. The project was certified as well managed by the Forest Stewardship Council in March 2002, after assessments in December 1999 and January 2002 by SGS Qualifor. According to SGS's Public Summary Report of the assessment, when the assessors visited the Mount Elgon area a little over 7,000 hectares had been planted.

Fred Kizza, FACE's project coordinator, told Timothy Byakola of the Ugandan NGO Climate and Development Initiatives that the project has improved income and standards of living in the communities near the project area. SGS says the same thing: "The project has provided significant amounts of paid labour and training to the surrounding communities in an area where there are very few other sources of paid labour." But local council officials told Byakola that most of the jobs are only during the planting period and employ very few people. The project has taken away what little local communities had, they said. Byakola reports that forest materials required for cultural functions and firewood are hard to find. People have stopped preparing certain foods like beans that take a long time to cook. Villagers can no longer graze their goats and cows in the forest. As a result, areas near the forest are subject to overgrazing and vulnerable to soil erosion.

When Mount Elgon was declared a National Park in 1993, the people who lived within the boundaries of the National Park lost all their rights. The government evicted them from the Park, "without due compensation - something that is outrightly against the constitution of Uganda", Byakola pointed out.

SGS's Public Summary acknowledges that there were "disputes over park boundaries in some areas". However, according to SGS's assessors, "The encroachers have never had legal rights to farm the land and UWA are legally entitled to evict settlers from inside the boundary."

UWA park rangers receive para-military training in preparation for their duties. David Wakikona, Member of Parliament for Manjiya County told New Vision in June 2004, "The boundaries were made unilaterally, displacing over 10,000 people. The wildlife people who operate there are very militarised, and have killed over fifty people. People feel that the Government favours animals more than the people."

In July 2002, a team working on demarcating the boundary of the Park found two schools and two trading centres inside the Park. UWA's then-chief warden, James Okonya, told the Ugandan newspaper New Vision that the encroachers would be evicted.

SGS would approve. SGS's Public Summary acknowledges that in order for the UWA-FACE project to continue, more people will have to be evicted. SGS recommends that "more speed may be required to ensure the evictions are carried out successfully."

In the same month that FSC issued its certificate, March 2002, several hundred families were camped in a trading centre after UWA had evicted them from their homes and land in Mount Elgon National Park. Although they had lived on Mount Elgon for over 40 years, to UWA's armed park rangers they were squatters without land rights. Rangers destroyed houses and crops. The people evicted had to take shelter in neighbouring villages. New Vision reported that several families were living in mosques and caves. UWA evicted more than 500 families from the National Park, before being ordered to stop the evictions by the Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry, Edward Rugumayo.

The Benet people (also known as Ndorobo) are indigenous to Mount Elgon. Having been evicted in 1983 and 1993, they decided to take the government to court to claim their land rights. In August 2003, the Uganda Land Alliance started proceedings against the Attorney General and the Uganda Wildlife Authority on behalf of the Benet. The Benet accused Uganda Wildlife Authority of constantly harassing them. The government meanwhile cut off all education and health service in the area and forbid the people from doing anything with the land.

In October 2005, Justice J.B Katutsi ruled that the Benet people "are historical and indigenous inhabitants of the said areas which were declared a Wildlife Protected Area or National Park." He ruled that the area should be de-gazetted and that the Benet should be allowed to live on their land and continue farming it.

SGS states in its Public Summary that "The project is not planting in areas where the boundary is under dispute and the project is not engaged in any significant disputes." But the Uganda Wildlife Authority is a part of the UWA-FACE project. It is simply not possible to separate the act of planting trees along the boundary of National Park from the management of the rest of the Park.

In February 2004, New Vision reported that police were holding 45 people "suspected of encroaching on Mount Elgon National Park and destroying 1,700 trees". The trees were planted in 1994 under the UWA-FACE Foundation project.

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CORPORATE "SOLUTIONS": CARBON PLANTATIONS AND GE TREES

- WRM and Carbon Trading

From its beginnings in 1986, the World Rainforest Movement has been concerned about how forests, land and rural peoples' lives are affected by industrial production of a whole range of commodities – soya, paper pulp, petroleum, timber, palm oil, maize, bananas, coffee and many more.

So it was only fitting that, in the mid-1990s, WRM began sounding alarms about another, brand-new export market that could also come to have severe effects on forests and the people who depend on them: the trade in biological carbon-cycling capacity.

How did this particular "environmental service" become a new Third World export product?

Much of the responsibility rests with the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. On the surface, the main point of this UN climate treaty was to require over 30 Northern countries to reduce their industrial emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases – now generally acknowledged to be the major cause of global warming – by about five per cent by 2012.

But in fact the agreement encourages Northern countries to avoid some of these reductions by planting trees – either on their own territory or on that of other countries – or engaging in other “compensatory” projects.

By taking carbon dioxide out of the air and depositing carbon in tree trunks, the argument goes, plantations produce a climatically-valuable commodity that can be sold to the world’s heaviest fossil fuel users.

Economists and businesses had been laying plans for this trade for years. Beginning as early as 1989, far-sighted consultants had been fanning out across the globe to promote experimental carbon dioxide-absorbing forestry projects in countries like Guatemala, Malaysia and Bolivia.

After 1997, when attempts to create the new commodity market shifted into high gear worldwide, WRM began to take more serious action. Producing a series of publications and WRM bulletin articles pointing to the probable deleterious environmental and social effects of a new global carbon plantation economy, WRM and its network helped form an alliance of many non-governmental organizations, large and small, opposing international plans to press Southern land into service as cheap “carbon sinks” for the industrialized North.

As with many other such campaigns, success was only partial. In 2001, in the face of considerable European scepticism, the parties to the Kyoto Protocol officially approved the use of plantations in the South as carbon sinks for the North.

But they held off from allowing carbon-sequestration rights in existing Southern forests to be sold to the North. The EU decided, moreover, not to allow credits from forestry projects to be swapped for emissions in its EU Emissions Trading System.

In addition, as WRM had predicted as early as 1999, investors in specific carbon forestry projects began to suffer from bigger and bigger headaches when faced with grassroots and NGO resistance, as well as the scientific impossibility of proving how much carbon biomass projects actually “save” over their brief and uncertain lifetimes.

At a recent corporate conference on carbon trading, for example, one European private banker expressed regrets that his firm had ever got involved in a World Bank-backed proposal of the Plantar company, Brazil, to generate carbon credits from plantations and from not switching its industrial fuel for producing pig iron from plantation charcoal to coal (see WRM Bulletins N° 60 and 92). “We ran into a big storm,” the banker lamented. “We had a lot of . . . rocks thrown at us. It was like stepping into a stream full of piranhas.”

For many, however, the idea of carbon forestry remains seductive. Many industrial plantation companies are still hoping to sell carbon credits to top up their finance. The World Bank continues to support biotic schemes through its carbon funds. Corporations and big, Washington-based conservation NGOs are pushing projects that would encourage local communities or national governments to sell rights to their native forests’ carbon to polluting corporations.

All this poses many strategic challenges for WRM and its allies.

For example, what advice might be shared with communities, particularly in Latin America, who are tempted by what looks like easy money for continuing to take care of their own forests? What are the best ways of encouraging discussion among communities and governments about the resulting:

- Invasions of lawyers, consultants, accountants and complicated contracts that communities will have to deal with?
- New rules that will give companies private property rights to the carbon in community forests and may restrict forest use?
- Low prices communities will get for their carbon?
- Political conflicts that may be provoked with other communities who are battling the fossil fuel extraction or pollution that the sale of forestry carbon credits encourages?

- Expanded local exchange economies?

Another question is what role WRM and like-minded networks should play in broader movements concerned with climate change and other social and environmental problems.

WRM's pioneering role in challenging the carbon trade – played largely by the Sinks Watch initiative associated with its Northern office – was based largely on its concrete criticisms of carbon forestry and the institutions promoting it, ranging from the World Bank to plantation companies to intellectually corrupt technical consultancies, as well as the experience of specific local rural communities.

But over time, as is so often the case, this work has become inseparable from that of movements with broader or more diverse concerns.

For example, closer contacts have become inevitable with groups concerned with the carbon market as a whole, which includes the trade in emissions and in credits from non-forestry projects. These include organizations such as Carbon Trade Watch and Clean Development Mechanism Watch.

Closer ties have also resulted with groups concerned with fossil fuel exploitation and indigenous land rights (such as Oilwatch and Indigenous Environmental Network); with market approaches to other environmental problems; with industrial pollution; and with neoliberalism and antidemocratic trends more generally. Since 2003, WRM affiliates have participated in international network-building gatherings on carbon trading in the UK, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil and Montreal, in all of which “forest” issues have played only one part. Further meetings are planned for India and elsewhere in 2006.

As alliances have broadened, so has common analysis of environmental markets and new trends in international investment. Increasingly clearly, WRM's work on carbon trading, while remaining rooted in local struggles, has become – like its other work – part of a wider search for social and political alternatives that ranges far beyond forest and land issues.

And at the same time that WRM builds new alliances with social justice movements and groups not specifically concerned with forests, it is being forced to evolve new strategies for tackling “forest-oriented” NGOs who do not share its overall social experience and vision. These include not only backers of corporate or colonialist carbon “offset” projects such as Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy, but also carbon-trading enthusiasts such as WWF and Greenpeace.

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- GE Trees at the meeting in Vitoria

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports outdoor field trials of GM trees worldwide in 16 countries. While the majority are located in the United States, there are also GE tree test plots in France, Germany, Britain, Spain, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, Indonesia, Chile and Brazil. China is the only country known to have developed commercial plantations of GM trees, with well over one million trees planted throughout ten provinces.

Most of the research is being focused on Poplars (47%), Pines (19%) and Eucalyptus (7%). The main traits being studied are herbicide tolerance, insect resistance, wood chemistry (including reduction of lignin content), and fertility.

The projected social and environmental impacts from the release of GE trees commercially include the increased native forest conversion to plantations; the increased use of toxic herbicides and pesticides; and the loss of wildlife and water sources. Additionally, the contamination of native forests with engineered pollen from GE trees

is predicted to lead to impacts such as the increased susceptibility of native forests to disease, insects and environmental stresses like wind and cold; disruption of forest ecosystems which depend on insects; the exacerbation of global warming due to increased forest mortality; and the loss of forest-based foods, medicines, fuel and traditional cultures. Scientists at Duke University in North Carolina in the US have created pollen models that demonstrate tree pollen traveling for over 1,000 km. Because scientists admit that 100% guaranteed sterility in GE trees is impossible, if GE trees are released into the environment, the widespread contamination of native forests cannot be prevented.

With the exception of China, the most rapid advancement toward GE tree commercialization seems to be taking place in the Americas: in the US, Chile and Brazil.

In Chile, research is being carried out on radiata pine to engineer it for insect resistance by inserting the gene for Bt production. Pine plantations currently comprise 80% of Chile's plantations and the area of land covered by plantations in Chile continues to grow. Industry in Chile has projected a release of Bt radiata pine by 2008. Monsanto Corporation predicted that Chile would be the first country to commercialize GE trees, although China has won that race. Because many of the plantations in Chile are concentrated on the traditional lands of the Mapuche indigenous people, there are widespread health problems in Mapuche communities due to the chemicals used on the plantations and also due to the very heavy pollination from the pine plantations, which completely encircle some Mapuche villages. The introduction of Bt pines into these plantations will greatly exacerbate these health problems.

In Brazil, Aracruz Cellulose and Suzano are involved in research into GE trees. Suzano, which manages over 3,000 square km of timberland in Brazil is partnered with Israel-based CBD Technologies on a project to increase the growth rate of eucalyptus trees. "Regular eucalyptus trees are usually cut down after seven years, during which they grow to a height of 20 meters. Trees treated with CBD can reach that height in 3 years or less," stated Dr. Seymour Hirsch, CEO of CBD Technologies. CBD and Suzano plan to set up a joint company to market their GE eucalyptus following the completion of their field trials. CBD also insists its fast-growing GE trees will help stop global warming. "A one hectare forest consumes 10 tons of carbon annually from the CO₂ that the trees breathe. Clearly a forest that grows twice as fast consumes twice as much and contributes to the shrinking of the hole in the ozone." [sic]

International Paper, which has 200,000 hectares of land in Brazil is also involved in GE tree experimentation there. In addition, IP is a partner in Arborgen, the world's leading GE tree corporation. The other two partners are Rubicon, based in New Zealand, and US-based MeadWestvaco. Arborgen recently announced that it was shifting its focus from research and development to the marketplace. Specifically, Spokesperson Dawn Parks said Arborgen will be looking to hire a handful of engineers and production workers to design and run machinery capable of turning out larger quantities of the lab-altered seedlings the firm has developed.

Arborgen, headquartered in Summerville, North Carolina in the southeast US, is focusing much of its attention to eucalyptus in Brazil, which Arborgen considers to be its "most important geography." Arborgen has established a Brazilian office and previously projected that they would have full field-testing in place in Brazil by 2005 on customer land.

In 2002 Arborgen hired former Monsanto executive Barbara H. Wells as their new chief executive. She had previously been the vice president for Latin America for Emergent Genetics and prior to that had been commercial biotechnology manager in Brazil, which may explain why Arborgen moved its field trials from New Zealand to Brazil after Wells came on board.

Arborgen is working to develop "improved pulping" [i.e. low-lignin] eucalyptus as well as cold-tolerant eucalyptus. Development of cold-tolerant eucalyptus is of interest for plantations in both Chile and the Southeast US.

Rubicon CEO Luke Moriarity in his July 2005 address to shareholders emphasized the critical role Brazil plays in Arborgen's commercialization of GE trees. He emphasized the potential of GE low-lignin eucalyptus plantations

in Brazil. "...by reducing the amount of lignin actually produced by the tree itself, a huge reduction in the total cost of wood-pulping can be achieved. Pulp operators can be expected to pay a significant premium for successful low-lignin treestocks."

He went on to calculate the potential profit that could be made, "the value accruing annually to the treestock provider is [projected to be] some 38 million US dollars post tax. Repeating this level of sales year after year, without any assumed growth in market share, or penetration into other markets, translates into a value for this one product of some 475 million US dollars post tax."

He continued in this vein, "however when you begin to look at the possibilities more closely you can see that the value potential is actually huge. Rather like human health, although much lower profile, the annual unit sales of forestry seedlings are well into the billions, recur every year, and span the globe. And unlike human health, where competition is intense, there are no global competitors to ArborGen in this space. Of course, ArborGen is still some years away from selling commercial product, so naturally the equity market discounts this prospective value fairly aggressively at present. However, as the chart behind me illustrates, as ArborGen continues successfully along the commercialisation path - as it has done to date - we can expect this "time to market" discount to decrease, and the value of ArborGen to ramp up accordingly."

In conclusion he stated, "So I hope that illustrates the nature of this undertaking, and gives you some insight into its huge potential. As the saying goes - "it is only a matter of time."

Researchers working on genetic modification of trees surveyed for their opinions about risks associated with GM trees raise two concerns most often: environmental threat of escape of GM pollen or plants into native ecosystems and forests and their impacts on non-target species; and negative public perceptions of GM trees. This well-founded concern about public reaction to GE trees provides an important strategic opening for the campaign to stop GE trees.

In the US and Canada, thirteen national, regional and local organizations have come together as the STOP GE Trees Campaign, whose goal is to ban genetically engineered trees. To accomplish this goal, the group builds economic disincentives, social pressures and legal barriers against GE trees. Their activities include public education, community organizing, media outreach and distribution of a new documentary video on GE trees ("A Silent Forest: The Growing Threat, Genetically Engineered Trees"), narrated by Dr. David Suzuki.

Global Justice Ecology Project is also reaching out to organizations and movements around the globe who are fighting plantations in regions where GE research and development is occurring, in order to provide information about this looming threat and offer support for efforts to prevent the introduction of GE trees into plantations. GJEP has established its first pilot program in Chile with the Mapuche group Konapewman that coordinates efforts to reclaim traditional Mapuche lands and oppose threats such as industrial timber plantations and GE trees. GJEP plans to use the experiences from this pilot program in their effort to reach out to additional communities and groups in other regions threatened by GE trees.

Internationally GM tree and forest protection groups have spoken at United Nations meetings around the world about the threat from GM trees. Groups such as the Peoples Forest Forum of Finland, Global Justice Ecology Project of the United States, World Rainforest Movement and Friends of the Earth International have spoken at the UN Forum on Forests in both Geneva and New York City to inform delegates of the dangers GM trees pose to native forests around the world.

With little to no indication of help, however, from either the UN Forum on Forests or the U.N Convention on Climate Change, the international GE trees campaign is now turning to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to see what kind of international regulations on GM trees might be achieved through the CBD.

Even the UN Food and Agriculture Organization seems to be in favor of such international regulations. Their July, 2005 report on GM trees concludes,

"new biotechnologies, in particular genetic modification, raise concerns. Admittedly, many questions remain unanswered for both agricultural crops and trees, and in particular those related to the impact of GM crops on the environment. Given that genetic modification in trees is already entering the commercial phase with GM populus in China, it is very important that environmental risk assessment studies are conducted with protocols and methodologies agreed upon at a national level and an international level. It is also important that the results of such studies are made widely available."

Internationally renowned geneticist Dr. David Suzuki points out that

"We have no control over the movement of insects, birds and mammals, wind and rain that carry pollen. GM trees, with the potential to transfer pollen for hundreds of miles carrying genes for traits including insect resistance, herbicide resistance, sterility and reduced lignin, thus have the potential to wreak havoc throughout the world's native forests. GM trees could also impact wildlife as well as rural and indigenous communities that depend on intact native forests for their food, shelter, water, livelihood and cultural practices.

"As a geneticist, I believe there are far too many unknowns and unanswered questions to be growing genetically engineered plants—food crops or trees—in open fields. GM trees should not be released into the environment in commercial plantations and any outdoor test plots or existing plantations should be removed."

By Orin Langelle and Anne Petermann, Global Justice Ecology Project, e-mail: globalecology@gmavt.net

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LINKING WITH FOREST PEOPLES RIGHTS

- Mumbai-Porto Alegre Forest Initiative: Linking the struggle against plantations with alternative local uses of forests

The Mumbai-Porto Alegre (MPA) Forest Initiative is intended to serve as a platform for the joining of forces and for the building of solidarity between actors working on a wide spectrum of issues related to social and environmental justice and forests. As economic globalisation is increasingly affecting local communities, the need to create a global movement for ensuring peoples' rights and forest conservation became an imperative that a number of participants to the World Social Forum decided to set in motion. This young and diverse movement currently comprising some 80 organisations, networks and individuals supports all levels of resistance against plantations. Though plantations are not forests, the conceptual paradigm and operational reality of large scale tree monoculture plantations are antithetical to the struggle to ensure peoples' rights and forest conservation. The struggle against the spread of that type of plantations is therefore an essential part of the struggle of community rights over forest lands.

During the international plantations meeting held in Vitoria, Brazil on building support for local communities against large-scale tree plantations and genetically modified trees, the relevance of the struggle against plantations to the movement for peoples' rights was highlighted in numerous occasions. Various members of this movement (FASE, FOE-CR, WRM, WALHI, Rede Alerta Contra o Deserto Verde, Accion Ecologica) who participated bore witness to a wide range of denunciations made by indigenous peoples, local and landless communities, international organisations and including many other countries on the profound violations to human and community rights brought about by plantations. In addition, the devastating effects of plantations on floral and faunal biodiversity, water and soils provided an ever repeating constant in all specific country cases analysed and local experiences narrated.

Principles 1 and 2 of the MPA Forest Initiative state that “Communities that live in and depend on their forests for their survival needs are the true protectors and governors of those forests and forest protection demands that their rights be ensured”. As highlighted by the Green Desert Network from Brazil, plantations in the states of Espírito Santo and Southern Bahia have converted fertile, formerly food producing, lands to green deserts of eucalyptus, whilst in the process expelling many communities and peoples. This land conflict caused by the vast intervention on the regional landscape by plantations held by companies such as Aracruz Cellulose, Suzano and Veracel is now in an inspiring stage where local communities are initiating their own processes for reclaiming their lands and rights in order to be able to survive. The Mumbai-Porto Alegre movement fully supports the struggles of the indigenous peoples, quilombola communities (slave-descendants) and landless communities against plantations.

The MPA Forest Initiative opposes the commodification of nature (Principle 12), as is exemplified by the reductionist attempt to see the carbon absorbing property of trees as the main function of those organisms and use this as a justification for the further spread of plantations.

The role that governments can and should play in this respect is to safeguard the interest of all the citizens within their territory, making sure that all peoples’ and communities are faced with an environment that is conducive and encourages own participation and own articulation of needs and necessities (Principles 5 and 6). Regretfully, as case after case demonstrated, governments often play a catalytic role in promoting the spread of plantations and disempowering local populations vis-à-vis corporate interests.

An often occurring common theme that case studies examined shared is the systematic involvement of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization and other International Financial Institutions in promoting and financing of plantations around the world. The Mumbai-Porto Alegre movement for peoples’ rights, taking into account the long histories of human and environmental destruction for which such actors are responsible, opposes all their further involvement in any policies or projects that promote the spreading of plantations. (Principle 11)

The Mumbai Porto Alegre Forest Initiative is relevant to the struggle against plantations also because it provides a vision of the alternatives that could be beneficial both for local communities as for forest ecosystems. These institutional mechanisms for the social control by local communities over forests or other converted use lands need to evolve according to the needs of each and every community and the ecological characteristics of the local and regional ecosystems in which they live (Principle 3). Alternatives to the industrial forestry model that are developed and implemented by local communities themselves, profoundly challenge the core of the model that breeds tree monocultures, for they put local peoples’ needs back at the centre of importance over their future and the conservation of their forests.

Forest destruction and substitution by plantations result in differentiated impacts on women and it is therefore necessary to recognise “the historical role and positive contribution of women in the governance and nurturing of forests” as well as ensuring “their full participation in decision making” (Principle 4).

The struggle to ensure the rights of local peoples over their lands and forest ecosystem conservation are closely linked to the struggle against plantations. The Mumbai-Porto Alegre Forest Initiative can provide a nexus point between these struggles and others related to forests and forest dependent peoples’ rights uniting them on ideological and political common ground, facilitating the exchange of experiences, promoting the adoption of common strategies and ensuring feedback on good practices.

We appeal to all of you to join this process.

The full text of the Mumbai Porto Alegre Forest Initiative can be accessed at:
<http://www.wrm.org.uy/statements/Mumbai/index.html>

If you want to show your solidarity with the principles of this movement or require further information please contact: antonis@wrm.org.uy

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THE VITORIA DECLARATION

- The Vitoria Statement in Support of the Struggles of Local Peoples Against Large-Scale Tree Plantations

The following Statement was issued on 24/11/05 in Vitoria, Espirito Santo, Brazil at an international meeting on building support for local communities against large-scale tree plantations and GMO trees. This meeting was co-sponsored by World Rainforest Movement, FASE-ES and Global Justice Ecology Project.

The city of Vitoria in Brazil, owes its name to the "victory" of the colonialist Portuguese against the original indigenous inhabitants of the land. Today, the same name has a totally different meaning. The indigenous Tupinikim and Guarani peoples have retaken the lands that were stolen from them by the giant pulp mill corporation Aracruz Cellulose. They have been joined in the struggle against the company and its plants by other local communities and organizations from civil society who, through uniting in the struggle, have weakened the company's power. They have thus become a symbol of victory for peoples all over the world who are fighting against similar corporations.

Peoples throughout the world are also uniting at the local, national and international levels to put pressure on large scale tree plantations that have been depriving them of their livelihoods and destroying their lands.

These struggles have brought us together in Vitoria, in Espirito Santo, Brazil to strengthen the local peoples' movements against corporations that are advancing large scale monoculture tree plantations.

With that aim:

We support the struggles of local peoples for land rights and access to land

We support the struggles of local peoples who are defending their right to water, biodiversity, soils, foods, medicines, fuel, etc that come from the land.

We support the struggles of local peoples for autonomy and self-determination.

We support the struggles of local peoples against pulpwood plantations and pulp mills.

We support the struggles of local peoples against oil palm plantations.

We support the struggles of local peoples against carbon sink plantations.

We support the struggles of local peoples against biomass plantations.

We support the struggles of local peoples against the certification of large scale tree plantations.

We support the struggles of local peoples against genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and opposition to the introduction of GMO trees which would greatly exacerbate the impacts on local communities from large-scale tree plantations. We therefore call for a global ban on the release of GMO trees into the environment.

Large scale tree plantations, whether GMO or not, are the end result of a set of global economic mechanisms put into play by a series of international actors that make it possible for corporations to take over peoples' lands, water and biodiversity in order to increase profits. In addition to the pulp and paper corporations, the international entities working to disenfranchise local peoples in support of corporate profits and the neoliberal model include International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and Asian Development Bank; organizations such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization; commercial banks; and forestry consulting firms, all of whom act with the support of national governments.

We therefore demand that national governments end this destructive development model and act to support the rights and livelihoods of local peoples, rather than repressing them.

We call on the people of the world to join the struggles of local peoples who are defending their rights, lands, water, and biodiversity.

Signed,
(see list of signatories on WRM's web site, under "Statements")

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