



Issue 165 - April 2011

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

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

OUR VIEWPOINT

- [Every day should be Earth Day](#)

COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- [India: Ravaged Landscape, Devastated People - Tales of Hydro Power CDM projects in Himachal Pradesh](#)
- [Mexico: REDD+ in Chiapas finances disease, death and intercommunity conflicts](#)
- [Philippines: A call to stop mining in Palawan](#)
- [India: Women take the lead in the fight for their rights over forest](#)
- [Brazil: OAS calls for suspension of Belo Monte dam construction](#)

COMMUNITIES AND TREE PLANTATIONS

- [Mozambique: More denunciations against Chikweti, a company financed by a Nordic “solidarity” fund](#)
- [Brazil: Women in Camp Sister Dorothy Stang – for their right to life, against monoculture eucalyptus](#)
- [Cameroon: Peoples territories being targeted for oil palm plantations](#)
- [Stora Enso makes money out of environmental crimes](#)

CLIMATE CHANGE

- [Women voices in the climate change negotiations](#)
- [“Forest in exhaustion”: A new trick to subsidize monoculture tree plantations](#)

DEFINING FORESTS

- [Lend your voice to the forest!](#)

OUR VIEWPOINT

- **Every day should be Earth Day**

This month, on April 22, Earth Day was celebrated around the world. Earth Day was founded in the 1970s by environmental activists concerned about the effects of pollution and environmental degradation on biodiversity and ultimately the survival of the planet. It is a day aimed at raising public awareness of these issues.

There is no doubt that since the 1970s, the subject of the environment has decisively entered public debate, even at the level of national governments and their structures: What country today does not have a Ministry of Environment? Various international summits and conferences addressing the environment, such as those in Stockholm (1972), Rio de Janeiro (1992) and Johannesburg (2002) have been and continue to be organized, including the Rio+20 conference scheduled for next year.

Nevertheless, it has also become clear that despite all the talk about “sustainability”, awareness of the need to take care of the planet has still not been translated into concrete, structural solutions. This is especially true when it comes to the countries that contribute most to pollution and the exploitation of natural resources. In its analysis of the most recent international negotiations on measures to combat climate change, the GenderCC-Women for Climate Justice network writes from Bangkok, Thailand that “the commitments of developed countries continue to evade their historical responsibility” and condemns the “heavy reliance on false and risky solutions.”

In this month’s bulletin we highlight, once again, a number of these false solutions that are being increasingly implemented around the planet and the ways in which they cause problems for local communities. In this case, we focus specifically on a REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) project in southern Mexico and CDM (Clean Development Mechanism) projects and dams in India. We also look at the attempts to include a perverse new mechanism involving so-called “forests in exhaustion” in international climate change negotiations. The goal behind this mechanism is to promote even further expansion of large-scale monoculture tree plantations, which will lead to even more environmental conflicts in the future.

As pointed out above by GenderCC, the governments that contribute most to environmental degradation, and therefore have the greatest responsibility to put awareness of environmental problems into practice, are still failing to do so. They could and should learn a great deal from the initiatives undertaken by the people through various organizations and movements. In this regard, in this bulletin we want to particularly stress the ever more important role being played by women.

We present as an example the women of the Landless Rural Workers Movement in Brazil who have occupied an area of eucalyptus plantations that exclusively served the uncontrolled consumption of paper by a small minority of the population of Planet Earth, something that these women consider to be unjust and unacceptable. On this land formerly used to grow eucalyptus trees, they have planted food crops needed by the people excluded from mass consumption societies. We should mention that this month is also the month of the International Day of Peasant Struggle, April 17. In the year 2011, there are still countless peasant farmers around the world who do not have access to land of their own, and the false climate solutions mentioned above often aggravate the unfair distribution of land ownership, for instance, by promoting large-scale monoculture plantations for the production of agrofuels.

We also give the floor to the Asian Rural Women’s Coalition, which condemns falsely labelled “clean” energies like nuclear energy, the subject of considerable debate since the recent disaster in Japan. The Coalition highlights the fact that nuclear power

plants, which continue to spread throughout Asia, are built in rural areas or on the outskirts of capital cities, “putting the risks and expenses on the lives of people in those areas.” In addition, they stress, the power generated by nuclear plants “is used to promote industrial and economic growth, the materialistic lifestyle of some people and the hegemonic power in the world, which has been maintained at the expense of people in rural areas.”

Every day of the year should be Earth Day. Every day, women and men around the world should be increasingly aware of and alarmed by the situation of crisis and danger we are facing. This awareness is crucial in order to confront the false solutions promoted by corporations and governments in the most highly polluting countries, and to prevent their deadly consequences.

[index](#)

COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- India: Ravaged Landscape, Devastated People - Tales of Hydro Power CDM projects in Himachal Pradesh

India continues to be one of the ‘hottest’ locations for carbon ‘offset’ projects despite the global carbon market slump: as of now, about 1700 projects claim to have achieved emission-reduction, and hence eligibility to sell carbon credits. Large Indian corporations control most of these projects irrespective of sector and geographical location, and instead of cleaning up the atmosphere the projects almost uniformly pollute people’s lives and the environment.

Hydro-power projects are prominent in India’s Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) kitty: 176 Dam projects in various parts of India have applied for CDM status. More than half of these are in the Himalayas, perhaps the biggest ones. The tiny state of Himachal Pradesh to the North of the India alone hosts 55 projects.

How clean are these ‘clean’ projects? Most of the CDM projects in Himachal Pradesh have led to direct and indirect displacement of local people and triggered of disastrous environmental impacts: around the project areas mudslides have become more frequent, water table is going down, and perennial springs are drying up. The wholesale damming of important rivers and dam builders’ ownership control over river water inevitably mean less or no water for river valley agriculture. Besides, there are socio-cultural impacts: large number of outsiders flocking to the hitherto closeted mountain villages and irreversibly disturbing the fabric of community life.

In Himachal Pradesh, a paradise of rich biodiversity and beautiful mountain landscape, there is a plan to set up more than 850 hydroelectric projects. With loans from agencies like the Asian Development bank and the World Bank, these projects are being established with huge infrastructures involving many private sector companies. The story repeats itself from one project to another: tall promises of village development and plentiful jobs for the locals during the time of land acquisition, all conveniently forgotten once the project works start.

People living in Sawra Kuddu in Shimla District of Himachal Pradesh are angry with the hydroelectric project (111 MW) on the Pabbar River: "We have lost everything to the project and yet have not even given any decent compensation". The Dam badly affects several villages where digging of tunnels through mountainsides have made the entire area unstable and yet people living in these villages do not fall under the PAP (project affected people) category. Villagers of Bhadot have been living in constant fear of their village collapsing because of such a tunnel right beneath their village. This area witnessed massive devastation caused by an earthquake few years back: the huge boulders in the mountain still threaten to tumble down anytime. People here equate the tunnel underneath with a ticking time bomb that can explode any moment. The villages on the banks of the river had to bear the brunt of the heavy construction work: the dust and muck affected the production of cash crops like apple, pear and peach.

The environmental clearance to the project was given in 2007 but local residents say that work began much before the clearance in 2004, which means that the project is clearly non-additional ['additionality' refers to the condition that a project should only be eligible for carbon credits if it would not go forward without the benefits it receives from these credits]. The project will inundate 45 villages in 9 Panchayats (local self-government) and the government claims (evidently falsely) that all project-affected people have been compensated.

By far, the largest among registered CDM hydro projects, the Allian Duhangan Hydro Electric Project (2 x 96 MW) in Kullu district is expected to generate around 4.94-million Certified Emission Reductions (CERs), a type of 'carbon credits'. The project is built on two tributaries of the Beas River: Allain and Duhangan, both are surrounded by biodiversity-rich alpine forests and meadows. The project, funded by the World Bank, had its environmental impact assessment in 1996. The central electricity authority gave the 'in-principle' techno-economic clearance only in 2002.

In a glaring display of non-additionality, the Environment and Social Impact Assessment for the project done in May 2003, states (page 7) that "The project would be one of the cheapest sources of power generation in the Northern Region as compared to alternative of thermal and nuclear generation." Why should a project that is supposed to be the cheapest source of power be even considered for CDM credits that are supposed to help make relatively unviable projects viable?

The entire project area is fortified and anyone who wants to go in has to take permission from the company. The local people have their orchards and villages inside. Though access to the area has become easier now because of the road built by the company, no other benefit has come from the company. The locals who live inside the project area describe how their livelihood is affected as outsiders are not allowed to come in. Most of them earn a living from tourism as it is an area known for skiing and trekking. The project work has already destroyed most of the pristine meadows and forests in the locality.

The Hydro Electric Power Project by Sutej Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN) Ltd located at Rampur is a 412-MW project on the Sutej River. Huge tunnels are being built: the Local Area Development Authority (LADA) is implementing the project and has given construction contracts to large private companies. More than ten thousand people

were affected and 220 families already lost fertile lands to the project; the statutory public hearings were held as a matter of formality in 2005 as only 125 people attended it from among a population of at least 15 thousand. The entire mountain landscape has turned into huge dumps of muck and dumping yards for raw materials or machines. The locals no longer have access to the project area.

People raised their voices against the projects although there has been no organized resistance. In June 2010, the local residents of Averi village had staged a demonstration demanding compensation for damages caused by the construction work. The protests were met with severe brutalities – physical violence – by police who did not spare the young girls and women either.

An area which was once a self-sustained economy, the state of Himachal Pradesh is hit by the skewed notion of 'development'. It is hard to find a place without an earth-moving machine digging the earth – to build a dream that caters to the rich and the powerful sitting somewhere else. The CDM projects signify neither cleanliness nor development: at least for the local communities they constitute an unmitigated curse.

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[index](#)

- Mexico: REDD+ in Chiapas finances disease, death and intercommunity conflicts

In Mexico, deforestation is advancing at a rapid rate alongside various megaprojects: the expansion of industrial monoculture plantations of oil palm and jatropha for biofuel production, the building of dams, mining concessions, the creation of resettlement centres of prefabricated housing complexes strategically established in locations of resource extraction and land conversion, large-scale tourism development, and highways to facilitate these projects.

This so-called “development” is impacting not only on the country’s forests but also on autonomous indigenous communities and peasant communities whose resistance to being expelled “physically and culturally” from their lands, as they describe it, has been violently repressed, resulting in a dramatic toll of imprisonment, injuries and deaths.

The search for new sources of profit has now turned to the exploitation of the serious problem of climate change, one of the causes of which – although not the main cause – is deforestation.

The interests who are bound and determined not to change the economic system that has given rise to this global threat have turned the problem into an opportunity and come up with, among other false solutions, a mechanism known as REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation). This strategy, which assigns a financial value to the carbon stored in trees – in the form of “carbon

credits” – is presented as an economic incentive that will make it more profitable for developing countries to protect forests than to cut them down.

The other side of the coin is that, on the one hand, the wealthy countries that purchase these carbon credits will continue polluting, while on the other hand, communities that depend on forests for their survival will be evicted from them and denied access to what they have always considered to be their lands.

The Mexican government has aligned itself with this market-based vision of forests, viewed as mere carbon reservoirs, and enthusiastically embraced REDD. As noted by Gustavo Castro Soto (1), the state of Chiapas “has thrown itself head-first into the race for climate change business, placing its forests, jungles and monoculture plantations at the service of the carbon market. Once again, in the climate change business, government subsidies for private companies are materialized with the participation of corporate transnational conservationist NGOs at the service of environmental profiteering. For instance, in 2009, the government of Chiapas began work on the Climate Change Action Programme for the State of Chiapas (PACCCH), financed by the British Embassy, with Conservation International as a key actor in its implementation.”

Castro Soto reports that the pilot projects planned by Conservation International for 2011 in Chiapas – where there are 1.3 million hectares of land considered natural reserves, of which almost 50% are in the Lacandon jungle – fall under the framework of an agreement signed in November 2010 between US California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Mexican Chiapas Governor Juan Sabines Guerrero and Brazilian Acre Governor Arnobio Marques de Almeida Junior at the Third Governors’ Global Climate Summit, held in California, USA. The agreement establishes the bases for initiating a carbon credit market incorporating REDD and other forest carbon schemes into the regulatory frameworks of the United States and other countries.

This means that the Chiapas authorities must create the conditions for the sale of carbon credits.

And this is what led to the agreement signed in December 2010 between the governor of Chiapas and communities in the Lacandon jungle, who will be used by the government, according to Castro Soto, “to confront other organizations and indigenous and peasant communities while facilitating their eviction, even with violence.” As the governor is quoted as declaring to the communities involved in the agreement, “You are going to be committed to protecting the reserves, to making sure no one goes in them, making sure no one cuts down the trees, making sure no one goes in there to hunt, you are going to protect them for the whole planet, for all of Chiapas, for all of Mexico, for all of humanity.” Nevertheless, immediately outside the area designated for the sale of carbon credits, the government will continue to promote the expansion of agroindustry, tourism development, industrial plantations of oil palm, and other activities that lead to deforestation.

In the region where this REDD project is planned, as described by Jeff Conant in an exhaustive report following a recent visit to Chiapas (2), peasant farmers have long coexisted with the rainforest by clearing productive spaces to plant maize and beans, while maintaining a strong stance on protecting the jungle from destructive

agroindustrial activities like cattle ranching, illegal logging of precious hardwoods, and exploitation of oil reserves.

The authorities have responded by implementing arbitrary “forest protection” programmes. They have created exclusive protected areas like the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve, and expropriated neighbouring lands. However, the peasant movement initiated by the communities of Amador Hernández, which forms the core of the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve, and dozens of outlying settlements, succeeded in halting their forced eviction and appropriation of their land in 2008.

But heavy pressure is being exerted. Investors in the REDD+ project promoted by the state and federal governments, which was to be presented at the COP 16 climate conference in Cancún, demanded legal demarcation of the territory involved. As a result, according to a statement from the Council of Traditional Indigenous Doctors and Midwives for Community Healthcare in Chiapas (COMPITSCCH) (3), in April of 2010, with no prior warning or explanation, the government withdrew all medical personnel and suspended the supply of medical supplies and the aerial evacuation of the gravely ill in the Amador Hernández region, undoubtedly with the aim of punishing and weakening communities that have historically fought back against the attempts to seize their land. In a region that also has a history of indiscriminate medicalization and a lack of health promotion and education efforts, this measure has sparked an upsurge in illness. Clearly, the authorities are attempting to use the dependence on the medical system created in the region as a means to force the rebels into surrender, beginning with children and the elderly.

According to the COMPITSCCH statement, “Hundreds of children have fallen ill due to the lack of vaccines, and have had to be urgently transported to hospital centres, such as San Carlos hospital in the neighbouring municipality of Altamirano. They suffer from persistent fevers and continue to spike high fevers for weeks. Some present symptoms of asphyxia and blueness of the fingers, while others develop a persistent dry cough typical of whooping cough. There have also been cases of children having convulsions due to difficulty breathing, which sometimes leads to fainting. In these cases, the cause appears to be a sea of parasites that floods the upper respiratory tract.”

Earlier this month, the community assembly of Amador Hernández sent an open letter (4) calling on the federal and state public health officials to re-establish health services and asking the governor of Chiapas to “suspend the state REDD+ project in the Lacandon Community Zone, as it constitutes a counterinsurgency plan that promotes conflicts between neighboring communities” and to “stop lying to the indigenous peoples regarding the climate-related objectives of the REDD+ Project in Chiapas, and declare its true purpose: to conserve and recuperate biodiversity in the areas of greatest biological wealth in order to turn it over to the control and exploitation of transnational interests.”

The letter has been circulated as an international action alert by a group of social organizations from around the world. To sign the alert, send your name, organization (if any), country and email to: contact@globaljusticeecology.org

The community assembly of Amador Hernández in Chiapas clearly recognizes what

REDD+ signifies: “For the indigenous peoples, who have freely and bravely decided to walk our own destiny on a different path from that of the political regime and the economic system that turns everything into merchandise and thievery, the bad government sends illness and slow death, and projects that fortify intercommunity conflicts, paid for now by the resources associated with REDD+. And all in the name of service to humanity.”

This article is based information gathered from:

(1) “EnREDDar a Chiapas”, El Escaramujo, Gustavo Castro Soto, Otros Mundos AC/Amigos de la Tierra México,
<http://www.otrosmundoschiapas.org/index.php/component/content/article/118-el-escaramujo/897-el-escaramujo-enreddar-a-chiapas.html>

(2) “A Broken Bridge to the Jungle: The California-Chiapas Climate Agreement Opens Old Wounds”, Jeff Conant, Communications Director at Global Justice Ecology Project, email: jefeconant@gmail.com, <http://climate-connections.org/2011/04/07/a-broken-bridge-to-the-jungle-the-california-chiapas-climate-agreement-opens-old-wounds/>

(3) “La salud como instrumento de represión y exterminio: El caso de la región Amador Hernández, Reserva de la Biosfera de Montes Azules”, Consejo de Organizaciones de Médicos y Parteras Indígenas Tradicionales por la Salud Comunitaria en Chiapas (COMPITSCCH),
<http://wrm.org.uy/paises/Mexico/COMPITSCCH.pdf>

(4) “REDD Alert: Urgent Action Needed – Medical Services in Amador Hernández, Chiapas Withdrawn in Advance of REDD+”,
<http://www.globaljusticeecology.org/connections.php?ID=544>

[index](#)

- Philippines: A call to stop mining in Palawan

SAY NO to mining in Palawan Province, the home of the best-conserved and most ecologically diverse forest in the Philippines. Sign the on-line signature petition to deliver a strong message to the Philippine and Palawan governments demanding for an immediate stop of ongoing and pending mining activities in Palawan and for the non-endorsement of new mining applications. Here is the link to the petition launched by the Save Palawan Movement: <http://www.intellithink.com.ph/wordpress/>

Palawan is home to three main ethnic groups: The Palawan, the Tagbanua and the Batak. The southern part of the main island, where most mining activities are concentrated, is also inhabited by vulnerable indigenous communities living in partial isolation (see video: <http://tinyurl.com/4x4lrc6>). Their livelihood is based on ‘swidden’ [rotational] cultivation, hunting and gathering, and commercial collection of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs).

Today the areas being threatened by mining activities also include indigenous burial grounds, sacred and worship sites. The local inhabitants perceive the destruction of

these historical and natural landmarks as an obliteration of their history and collective memories of the past.

Until now Palawan indigenous communities are the traditional custodians of a unique biodiversity, which also includes 49 animals and 56 plant species, which are globally threatened with extinction, according to IUCN (The International Union for the Conservation of Nature).

Open-pit and strip mining for nickel results in the flattening of mountain tops, in the plundering of precious forest, in the production of vast amounts of tailings that contaminate fresh water sources and the sea.

In less than one decade, mining could obliterate a highly diverse landscape, which is the only source of livelihood and cultural sustenance for hundreds of indigenous and rural communities. (see video: <http://tinyurl.com/4227xbg>).

In 1990, because of its rich biocultural diversity, Palawan was declared by the UNESCO as a 'Man and Biosphere Reserve'. In spite of this, the Philippine Government is favoring the intensification of mineral exploitation on the island, thus jeopardizing the livelihood of both indigenous communities and farmers. As of now, the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) - the provincial government body in charge of ensuring the sustainable development of the island - has failed to fulfill its mandate and has already released environmental clearances (EC) to mining corporations (see <http://tinyurl.com/3nlpdab>).

Mining companies such as MacroAsia, Ipilan Nickel Mining Corporation and LEBACH have entered protected zones and indigenous cultivated land where they have already excavated test-pits and made deep drilling-holes. This is particularly prevalent within the uplands of Brooke's Point Municipality (see 'geotagg' report: <http://tinyurl.com/3vend4z>). Overall, joint 'geotagged reports' by ALDAW and the Center for Biocultural Diversity (CBCD) of the University of Kent, clearly show that exploration activities have been allowed in "Core" and "Restricted" zones despite all rules and regulations engraved into the Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP), also known as Republic Act 7611.

The SEP Programme was highly funded by the European Union, which has also invested 17 million Euros in the 7-year special project known as the Palawan Tropical Forestry Protection Programme (PTFPP). However, many of the alleged project beneficiaries still complain that most of the money was used to pay disproportionately high salaries to foreign consultants, project directors/managers and government officials and that, ultimately, the project has left behind little tangible evidences of its success.

Sadly, the European Union remains another silent witness of the Palawan tragedy.

Further south, Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corporation (RTNMC) has already built roads across the Bulanjao mountain range, thus undermining the integrity of one of the most precious biodiversity hotspot in southern Palawan (see video at <http://tinyurl.com/4yjr47c>, and 'geotagged' report: <http://tinyurl.com/4ye2fgm>)

Corporations such as Citinickel, Berong Nickel and other mining companies partnering with the Canadian MBMI group represent an additional threat to Palawan forest (see: <http://tinyurl.com/2f7zwvr>)

The political squabbles underlying the mining saga on Palawan Island are also detected in the ambiguous behavior of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) – the official government body in charge of protecting the rights of tribal communities. The NCIP Palawan Provincial Office has bluntly violated all required procedures leading to transparent and genuine Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes, siding instead with the mining companies.

After intense pressure from human rights and environmental groups such as the Rainforest Rescue, the UNESCO has finally made an attempt in looking into the Palawan case. On 18 February 2011, UNESCO Director General (DG), Irina Bokova, has forwarded a letter of concern on the mining threats in Palawan to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Chairman of the National Commission of the Philippines for UNESCO. The letter is requesting the said institution to provide a comprehensive report to UNESCO on the mining situation in the Palawan Biosphere Reserve, and additional information on the current and future mining activities on the core zones of the biosphere reserve.

Recently, on 25 March, UNESCO DG also visited the Philippines, meeting with President Benigno Aquino and commending him for “his strong commitment to education and sustainable development” (see: <http://tinyurl.com/3b4cmvn>). Indeed, this is quite ironical since the newly appointed Philippine President is replicating the mining aggression policy of his predecessor, and – until now – his commitment to environmental and human rights issues has been rather weak. President Aquino explained to UNESCO DG that a total ban on mining would be counterproductive, as it would open the way to small, unregulated mining. The argument, according to which, commercial 'regulated' mining will avoid the proliferation of 'unregulated' mining is a non-sense, also in view of the fact that, in Palawan, there is already a 25-year moratorium on small-scale mining, passed by the Provincial Board on November 2008. However, this moratorium is not enough to prevent large-scale mining corporations from plundering the Island.

Recently, the struggle to Save Palawan has reached momentum after the ominous murder of environmental campaigner and radio journalist Gerry Ortega on 24th January (see <http://tinyurl.com/4s4lf9r>). Together with ALDAW and other members of the Save Palawan Movement, Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM), the largest anti-mining advocacy network in the Philippines (<http://www.alysatigilmina.net/>) is playing a major role in bringing the Palawan case to national and international attention.

By ALDAW Indigenous Network (Ancestral Land/Domain Watch), email: aldaw.indigenousnetwork@gmail.com

[index](#)

- India: Women take the lead in the fight for their rights over forest

The non-recognition of the territorial rights of indigenous and other traditional peoples has been identified as one of the major underlying causes of deforestation. In India, inequalities in land tenure stemming from deep-rooted social structures as well as from disruption brought about by colonialism have resulted in the takeover of forest land by the state. The typical process has been forest being lost to a plethora of commercial enterprises that have displaced forest communities who had defended the forests from colonialist assaults and resisted several commercial exploitations in the post colonial era.

The loss of local communities of their land rights is the great umbrella inside which another inequality develops: that of women especially marginalized from access to and control over land and other forest resources.

However, awareness is growing among women that they are also main actors of change.

On the wake of Women's day and in the memory of Bharati Roy Chowdhury - a woman activist who struggled hard for the inclusion of women rights in the Indian Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006 - a press release (1) informs that around 100 women leaders from 7 states gathered this year at Dumka, in the state of Jharkhand, for a consultation on women rights under the Forest Rights Act 2006 (see WRM Bulletin N° 115 for information on FRA).

The venue is a relevant place indeed. Dumka has been a land of resistance since 18th century when local communities revolted against the British imperial policies to protect their traditional rights over land forest and territory. The bloodbath of adivasi of Jharkhand and Dumka resulted into saving their land and forest. Phulo and Jhano, two tribal women leaders of the revolt were killed by the British.

The women attending the meeting discussed the new legislation on forests rights and the reason why the State is not interested in implementing the Act. They also acknowledged the need that women rights on community forest resources were recognized. They felt that "it is very important that women should come in the forefront and take the lead in implementing the community rights across the country."

As a result of the meeting, an Action Committee on Women Forest Rights was formed "in order to accelerate the process of implementation of FRA particularly on women's control and management over community forest rights and minor forest produce."

The role of the Forest Department was also analyzed critically and there was a strong voice from the consultation that the FD should be replaced by the Community forest governance led by women across the 7.5 million hectare forest land.

Various important decisions have been taken in this consultation including raising awareness among women of the FRA provisions, filing community claims collectively by women in various places where people's organization is strong, and forming women cooperatives to manage and control the minor forest produce and oust the Forest Department from the forest.

Another national level meeting will be held with more women leaders to widen the Action Committee.

The women attending the meeting felt they are the primary producers and protectors of the forest and as such they went for their rights.

Article based on information from (1) "Announcement of formation of 'Women Forest Rights Action Committee'", sent by Roma, NFFPFW (Kaimur) / Human Rights Law Centre, email : romasnb@gmail.com, <http://jansangarsh.blogspot.com>

[index](#)

- Brazil: OAS calls for suspension of Belo Monte dam construction

On April 4, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), an organ of the Organization of American States (OAS), officially requested that the Brazilian government immediately suspend the authorization and construction of the Belo Monte Dam Complex in the state of Pará.

According to the IACHR, all of the traditional communities who live in the Xingu river basin and would be affected by the construction of the dam must be consulted through a process that is "free, prior, informed, of good faith and culturally appropriate."

The Court's decision responds to a complaint submitted in November 2010 on behalf of various traditional communities of the Xingu river basin, presented by the Xingu Alive Forever (Xingu Vivo para Sempre) Movement (MXVPS), the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB), the Prelacy of the Roman Catholic Church in the Xingu region, the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), the Pará Society for the Defense of Human Rights (SDDH), Global Justice and the Inter-American Association for Environmental Defense (AIDA).

For more information see: <http://www.xinguvivo.org.br/2011/04/05/organizacao-dos-estados-americanos-determina-suspensao-imediata-de-belo-monte/>

[index](#)

COMMUNITIES AND TREE PLANTATIONS

- Mozambique: More denunciations against Chikweti, a company financed by a Nordic "solidarity" fund

For a number of years, peasant farmer communities in the province of Niassa, in northern Mozambique, have been fighting back against the expansion of monoculture pine and eucalyptus plantations. This expansion has caused serious problems because it is taking over land from machambas, small family farms used to grow food. Now the struggle waged by these communities has received a significant boost.

Following denunciations made by the National Union of Peasant Farmers (UNAC), based on information gathered in the field by the Provincial Union of Peasant Farmers of Niassa (UPCN), and by WRM (1), the National Directorate of Land and Forests (DNTF), a government agency, has voiced harsh criticism of the conduct of pine and eucalyptus plantation companies in the region, on the basis of a recent field study.

According to an article published February 25, 2011 in the local Niassa newspaper "Faisca", the DNTF concluded that Chikweti, the main plantation company in the region, has illegally occupied no less than 32,000 hectares of land, in addition to 30,000 hectares granted in concession by the government and another 14,000 hectares for which concessions are currently under study. This finding confirms the accusations made by the UNAC and local peasant farmers interviewed by WRM during a visit to the region: that plantation companies are taking over land in areas that have not been officially licensed to them.

The DNTF report also confirmed the allegations that the required community consultation processes were not properly carried out by the company. When the company tried to restrict talks to community leaders known as régulos, offering promises of jobs and resources, the community members were not heard, and subsequently revolted against their own leaders. According to the local newspaper, "a district administrator accused Chikweti of arrogance and 'a lack of social responsibility.'"

The article noted that the DNTF report also found evidence of the invasion of machambas by tree plantations, which are sometimes a mere 10 metres from houses in the communities. According to the report, "when it negotiated the establishment of the plantations, Chikweti said it would only plant in marginal areas, but in fact it has invaded productive agricultural land." In the administrative post of Maniamba, said the article, the company invaded the local community's lands with promises of compensation that were never fulfilled. According to the UNAC, the peasant farmers rose up in protest and uprooted the company's plantations.

And finally, the article said, the DNTF report also denounced the deforestation of native fruit tree forest areas, used by the local population as a source of food, in the district of Sanga.

The local newspaper highlights the fact that the main investor in Chikweti is the Global Solidarity Forest Fund (GSFF). Based in Sweden, the GSFF was founded by the Diocese of Västerås (Sweden), the Lutheran Church of Sweden and the Norwegian Lutheran Church Endowment. Today, one of the GSFF's largest shareholders is the Dutch pension fund ABP.

One has to wonder, what is the opinion of this Global Solidarity Forest Fund and its investors regarding the denunciations that have now been made by an agency of the government of Mozambique itself? These organizations urgently need to analyze and take a position on this matter, because it has been clearly demonstrated that Chikweti's operations cannot in any way be described as "solidarity". On the contrary, its aim is to seek profits to the detriment of local peasant communities.

This matter has taken on even greater importance now that Chikweti is seeking FSC certification, supposedly a guarantee of “good forest management”, for its pine and eucalyptus plantations, through the FSC-accredited certifying body Soil Association Woodmark.

As has been amply demonstrated in previous WRM bulletins (see, for example, Bulletin No. 161), the FSC has been heavily criticized for granting its “green label” to monoculture pine and eucalyptus plantations around the world. The certification of Chikweti would be yet another mistaken move in the wrong direction on the part of the FSC, as well as an insult to the peasant communities of Niassa who directly suffer the problems caused by Chikweti. It should be noted that the Mozambique Land Law of 1997 guarantees peasant farmers, who make up the majority of the country’s population, access to their lands, which is crucial to ensure their food security and sovereignty.

In March of this year, the Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC) arranged a meeting among representatives of Chikweti, the government and civil society. According to reports from the UNAC in Niassa, this meeting did not allow for meaningful dialogue, although a commission has been established to continue the debate over Chikweti. And in the meantime, another conflict flared up in the community of Licgole, where Chikweti continues occupying land and evicting peasant farmers. One community member was arrested and detained, but released several days later.

It should be stressed as well that the problem of Chikweti is not only a problem of this particular company. There are dozens of foreign investors coming to Mozambique with the aim of investing in land, often for projects involving monoculture plantations of trees or other crops for agrofuel production.

According to the UNAC, these companies negotiate directly with peasant communities, without government involvement, acquiring land in exchange for promises of benefits for the community. When these promises are broken, conflicts erupt, and it is when these conflicts become unmanageable that the companies seek the government’s support.

These companies appear to have an insatiable hunger for land, since between 2004 and 2009, according to the article in *Faisca*, concessions were granted for almost three million hectares of land in Mozambique. And while the hunger of these companies is being fed, the food security and sovereignty of the Mozambican people is becoming increasingly threatened.

(1) See WRM Series on tree plantations No. 14: “The Expansion of Tree Monocultures in Mozambique: Impacts on local peasant communities in the province of Niassa, a field report”

This article is based on information gathered from the National Union of Peasant Farmers of Mozambique (UNAC) and an article published in the newspaper *Faisca*, in Niassa, Mozambique, on February 25, 2011.

- Brazil: Women in Camp Sister Dorothy Stang – for their right to life, against monoculture eucalyptus

On the evening and early morning of 27th and 28th February, women of the Landless Rural Workers Movement from all over the Extreme South of Bahia gathered in the area that would become the Camp Sister Dorothy Stang. Many brought their children and looked like they were going to the best party in the world. On 28th March, round about 4am, before the sun rose on the horizon, hundreds of useless eucalyptus trees were falling on an area planted by Veracel Cellulose, the largest land owner in the state of Bahia. And that's how they resisted for the next 10 days.

Every morning, conscious that a development model based on highly unequal land distribution and agribusiness cannot be tolerated because it is responsible for the destruction of biodiversity, the women cut down eucalyptus and plant food crops. There are around 1,500 women of all ages, beliefs and colors. Kitchens, huts, food crops, school and health centre all built and planted together. A lesson of love and citizenship!

Under black plastic sheeting and a blistering sun, motivated by the chance of peace and equal rights, they advance on one of the greatest icons of human conceit. A monotonous, lifeless landscape gives way to huts, children's voices, games and joy. Street Sellers also begin to arrive that, excluded from the "job market", take the opportunity to earn their sustenance. The women begin to transform the desert in a creative and different community.

Many believe this green desert to be uncontestable. But landless women workers, excluded from society, tired of their precarious living conditions, no longer accept the repression of neo-colonialism. Stora Enso, Fibria, Suzano, Arcelor Mital, BNDES or whatever other monster that comes near will be confronted and transformed through hard work and sweat. Many people came from near and far to widen the ranks of the struggle and messages of support and comfort have been received from far and wide.

On 4th March, the main road (BR 101) was blocked by the women who solicited a meeting with the Agricultural Development Minister exactly at the time that the President Dilma Rousseff was visiting Bahia in the town of Irecê. The women demanded the settlement of families camped on the roadsides in the Extreme South of Bahia. There are around 2,000 families living under plastic sheeting in a region where 700,000 hectares of eucalyptus are planted. For two hours drivers and passengers waited and the women finally unblocked the road thanking them for their patience and advising them of the objectives of the struggle.

On 8th March, the women began the day with a lively sing song of traditional music: "Oh woman lace maker, lace maker, come away from the oven and free yourself". Women from the Struggle for Land Movement (MLT) arrived from another camp to help and participate in activities. They brought milk, manioc flour, beans and vegetables to complement a special lunch to celebrate the International Women's Day. This food was produced in the MLT camp, Baixa Verde located on government land on which Veracel planted eucalyptus. This areas consists of 1,333 hectares that now sustain 85 families. If these women and their allies have anything to do with it,

the days of subordination, repression and discrimination are numbered.

Samba and other traditional music, poetry and theatre (“mística”) provided the dessert and festivities continued throughout the afternoon. Politicians, union leaders and comrades from all segments of society came to see for themselves the town of huts covered with plastic sheeting built by the women. Two hundred and eighty school children delighted the public with songs, art, místicas and games. The speaker begins her talk saying: “while there are so many people without land and so much land without people the struggle continues. Our country cannot be hostage to companies like Stora Enso and Fibria, that poison the soil and people. We don’t want to inherit the ruins that this project will produce. The climate has already been transformed and unimaginable changes are sure to come. We can’t just stand back and watch. We have to build another reality’.

The women also reminded the listeners that the companies that plant eucalyptus also possess cellulose factories that contribute to global warming. They cut down forest to plant eucalyptus, in our case the Atlantic Forest. They use petroleum based agrotoxics that are greatly responsible for processes of global warming and use a lot of energy in the paper production process that also causes carbon emissions. And they still want us to believe that these same companies can solve the problem. They even seek credits from the so called “carbon market” arguing that eucalyptus plantations absorb carbon. But what happens when the eucalyptus is harvested after seven years? This is just another strategy to generate more profit and clean up their image, and mask the real threats.

This is why these women continue in their struggle for their rights to land and territory! For their right to life! Against all forms of racism, oppression and exploitation!

By Ivonete Gonçalves, CEPEDES (Centre for Studies and Research for the Development of the Extreme South of Bahia), e-mail: cepedes@cepedes.org.br

[index](#)

- Cameroon: peoples territories being targeted for oil palm plantations

Powerful countries and corporations have targeted the African continent to become a commodity supplier for their industrial needs. This has led to intense land grabbing with industrial oil palm plantations becoming in recent years a new source of land grabbing in many African countries.

However, industrial oil palm plantations are not new in some African countries. WRM electronic book “Oil Palm in Africa: past, present and future scenarios” (http://wrm.org.uy/countries/Africa/Oil_Palm_in_Africa.pdf), gives an overview of how industrial plantations have been promoted in several African countries since colonial times:

“Wherever it grows naturally, oil palm has for centuries provided local communities with a large number of benefits such as palm oil, sauces, soap, wine, fertilizer (ashes), roofing (leaves), building material (trunk), medicines (roots). All of these

traditional uses are until today very much part of the African culture in oil palm countries.

When the European powers invaded the continent, they quickly realized that they could profit from trading palm kernels and palm oil, initially from natural palm stands and soon followed by the establishment of large-scale plantations, in most cases based on either forced or slave labour and in the appropriation of communities' lands.

Independence resulted in the further entrenchment of the plantation system – encroaching on local peoples' lands- now based on state-owned enterprises with attached large industrial processing units.

World Bank and IMF-led structural adjustment policies imposed on African governments in the 90s resulted in the privatization of most of those industrial complexes and in the return of control over industrial palm oil production to foreign corporations.

During the entire process summarized above, the traditional system -based on the harvesting of fruits from natural or semi natural palm stands and their conversion into palm oil through manual techniques- managed to successfully coexist separately from the different centralized systems put in place by governments and corporations.

Over the last few years, the expansion of industrial plantations has changed its focus from edible palm oil to the production of agrofuels, mostly led by a broad array of foreign corporations eager to invest in the region”

Cameroon is no exception to the agrofuels boom. With already more than 76,500 hectares of industrial oil palm plantations, the government is planning to lease huge areas of land to set up more oil palm plantations.

The Malaysian big player in the oil palm sector Sime Darby has also set its eyes on the African continent to expand its business. The company has already been granted 220,000 hectares of land lease in Liberia for a 63 years period and it is now negotiating a 300,000 ha lease of land in Cameroon.

At an interview in the magazine *The Ecologist*, Samuel Nguiffo, from the Centre for Environment and Development (CED), said in reference to the Sime Darby deal that “even if they only develop on degraded forest, the deal is likely to involve farmland being taken away from local communities.” He also said that “degraded natural forests are located next to villages, and are considered as traditional land and ‘reserve’ for the future expansion of communities' farmland. But according to the State law (which prevails), the State owns part of the land, and is custodian of the rest of the land. The Malaysian company [Sime Darby] will therefore enter a deal with the State, and not with the communities, but will be taking what is still considered by the communities as their traditional land, according to their customs,” he says.

Furhtermore, the US based SG Sustainable Oils (SGSO) is planning a 30,000 hectares oil palm plantation in the South West Region in an area directly adjacent to the Korup National Park and Rumpi Hills Forest Reserve, and another 40,000 ha just

to the east of that plantation and adjacent to Bakossi National Park and Banyang Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary.

SGSO is affiliated with Herakles Farms (a US-based company that is a subsidiary of Herakles Capital Corp) and Sithe Global (a US-based energy company, involved in the Bujagali dam construction in Uganda and the Amaila Hydropower project in Guyana). Sithe Global is 80% owned by the Blackstone Group, one of the largest investment firms in the world. In 2004, Bruce Wrobel founded Sithe Global Power. He is also the founder of Herakles Capital Corp. These companies share the same New York City mailing address as the NGO All for Africa, also founded by Bruce Wrobel. Mr. Wrobel and others founded All for Africa, in part, to help support and fund the oil palm development of Herakles and Sithe Global. In collaboration with these two companies, All for Africa is promoting its "palm out poverty" campaign arguing that planting oil palms will reduce poverty in Africa. They claim that this oil palm development will not only be socially responsible but also environmentally sustainable.

WRM was recently contacted by a group of US researchers working in Cameroon jointly with some local organizations that are strongly concerned about this project. The researchers have sent a letter to All for Africa and Sithe Global urging them to provide full information on the project on the grounds that it may have terrible social and environmental negative impacts. The letter -among other questions- raised the following concerns:

"The oil palm plantation will displace and disrupt the social and economic situation for over 30 villages (over 3,000 people). Their culture and way of life is closely tied to these forests, which provide these villages with clean water, food, and important income-earning capabilities. Most of these villagers rely heavily on farming to feed their families and earn an income. It is unclear how local villagers will be compensated for loss of their forest and farms. Some documents suggest that villages will be resettled and/or will be allowed to remain, but will be surrounded by oil palms.

To date, SGSO has operated in an unscrupulous manner. Villagers from various villages have discovered SGSO teams demarcating land, opening transects, and planting pillars in their farmland without consent. Complaint letters concerning SGSO have been sent to government representatives. These letters described informal meetings SGSO has had with village and tribal elites who have given their support for the development without consultation from people in their villages.

The original demarcation of the plantation in fact overlapped with existing forest titles and rights, including 2,500 ha of community forest, 5,415 ha of Council Forest, 132 ha with the Bakossi National Park, and 6,000 ha with the 3 km buffer zone to Korup National Park. It was only after complaints from various individuals and organization that the planned borders were changed."

US-based researchers working in Cameroon informed us that, just a few weeks ago, the youths in one of the villages that will be directly affected by the oil palm plantation threatened a SGSO bulldozer as it entered their village to establish an oil palm nursery. Most of the village is against this development because it would mean

losing their forests, and either being surrounded by oil palms or being forced to relocate. The chief of the village was approached by representatives from SGSO and agreed to give up village land to allow the plantation to proceed. He did this without consent from people in his village. There is now a tremendous amount of in-fighting in the village - and this is likely also occurring in each of the villages that will be affected by this plantation.

In addition to the social implications of this oil palm plantation, the US researchers notes that the majority of the land covered by the proposed plantation near Korup National Park is dense, mature, high canopy forest and the remaining being a mosaic of forest, agroforest, farmland, and settlements. Forest and hunter surveys have shown that this area is home to the Endangered chimpanzee and drill monkey and may be home to other highly threatened wildlife. This area might also be an important migration route for the forest elephant, which regularly uses Korup and the Rumpi Hills. This oil palm plantation will not only remove important habitat for threatened species but it will also further isolate these species inside protected areas. These protected areas will likely see increased bushmeat hunting as a result of the oil palm plantation and the conservation community will be ill-equipped to do anything about it.

Taken together, the US researchers argue that, "If this oil palm development is allowed to continue it will potentially have far reaching, long-term negative cultural and socioeconomic consequences for the affected villagers, who are being bullied into selling their forests. Additionally, the forests in South West Cameroon represent a stronghold for many kinds of endangered and endemic species. This oil palm development will destroy ecosystems and key habitat for threatened species and will be catastrophic for the wildlife inside the neighboring protected areas."

Article based on information from: WRM Publication "Oil Palm in Africa, past, present and future scenarios"; and information from "The Ecologist" magazine available at <http://tinyurl.com/5rtef79> and further information received by WRM.

[index](#)

- Stora Enso makes money out of environmental crimes

On April 20, the Finnish-Swedish giant of the forestry industry Stora Enso held their annual shareholder meeting in Helsinki where it planned to distribute part of its 2010 EUR 817.4 million profit.

A press release by Friends of the Earth International, Brazilian Cepedes (Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas para o Desenvolvimento do Extremo Sul da Bahia) and MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra), Friends of the Landless Finland, and WRM (World Rainforest Movement) warned that "Stora Enso's profit comes on the back of violations of environmental and labor laws and the criminal code in Latin America."

In Brazil and Uruguay, alone or in joint ventures, the company is being responsible of environmental crimes. Stora Enso's large scale tree plantations for pulp mills have

led to displacement of local communities, soil erosion and water shortages. Land concentration to grow eucalyptus threatens food security and causes misery to millions of landless people.

In Uruguay, Montes del Plata – jointly owned by Stora Enso and Chilean Arauco - is the country's largest landowner, with 238,000 hectares of land and it has been pressuring national authorities to reclassify farm lands near its new pulp mill in order to find 100,000 hectares more for new forestry plantations.

In Brazil, Veracel joint venture of Stora Enso and Brazilian company Fibria is being accused of environmental crimes (illegal deforestations and inappropriate use of pesticides), workers' rights violations, money laundering, tax evasion and corruption. It has also brutally evicted women and children of the Rural Landless Workers movement (MST) and the peasant movement Via Campesina who have occupied several of Stora Enso's plantations in direct action against hunger and poverty.

“Instead of bringing development, Stora Enso causes land conflicts and threatens food sovereignty. Genuine sustainable development promotes small-scale farming to feed people and not large-scale plantations to make profits for companies. We cannot eat eucalyptus!” said Marcelo Durao Fernandes from MST.

The full press release can be read at <http://maanystavat.fi/index.php?cat=82&aid=9&lang=fi&mstr=2>

[index](#)

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Women voices in the climate change negotiations

This month a new UN round of climate change negotiations took place in Bangkok - the first session after the Cancun conference last December. Many key pending issues over which there was not agreement in Cancun had to be negotiated in the talks.

In a context where alternatives have gone from bad to worse, women groups have raised their voices to strongly ask for real solutions.

GenderCC denounced that (2) “the commitments of developed countries continue to evade their historical responsibility, the heavy reliance on false and risky solutions and the other pending tasks to avert the current climate crisis.” As an example, “clean energy” “still includes large-scale hydropower, despite its long history of forcibly evicting communities in the Mekong and other areas, and degrading river flows and biodiversity, regardless of the ‘safeguards’ funding agencies particularly the multilateral development banks have adopted.” They also highlighted the danger of REDD Plus projects as “false solutions which can lead to a poisonous scramble for resources and engender danger, displacement and disempowerment”.

Also a group of women from social organizations and women groups from the Asia Pacific (2) demanded “real, bold, urgent and gender- sensitive commitments for

climate justice!" Teresita Vistro, Focal Person for Climate Change of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) warned that "poor people, especially women in rural and urban disaster prone areas have been confronting climate change aggravation of difficulties in their daily lives because of climate change. They are frontline casualties of these weather disasters". After almost two decades of talks, the rich industrialised countries who are the main responsible for the present climate crisis betray "the primacy of business interests in their countries over the lives and welfare of peoples across the planet, poor women and children most especially", stated Frances Quimpo of People's Action on Climate Change (PACC) and International Council on Adult Education (ICAE). And she added: "Global warming is affecting everyone across continents now and it is the majority of the world who are poor are the ones paying the dearest price with their lives"

Besides women, the peasant movement La Via Campesina called in Bangkok (3) for "all governments to stand for climate justice and uphold the people's solutions and demands listed in the Cochabamba People's Agreement which upholds the rights of the people and of Mother Earth and is a concrete solution to the climate crisis" while it "reiterates its call that a concrete and genuine solution to climate change is sustainable small-scale and family farmer agriculture. Many studies have shown that agro-ecology will not only feed the world but it will also cool the planet."

Furthermore, several NGOs sent a letter (4) to Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs Patricia Espinosa and UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres challenging the Green Climate Fund (GCF) – allegedly established to respond to the urgent needs and rights of peoples and communities throughout the global South - for the involvement of multilateral development banks as well as the World Bank as interim trustee. The organisations based their opposition on "past experience of the devastating social and environmental impacts of these institutions' activities and policies, and their ongoing role in financing climate destruction. In spite of the climate and economic crises, the World Bank continues to finance fossil fuel projects at an alarming rate, promote false solutions to the climate crisis, and use funding instruments that increase the indebtedness of developing countries. Thus, the World Bank is not suited to advise in the design of a fund that must ensure fair and effective long-term financing based on the principles of environmental integrity, equity, sustainable development, and democracy", and furthermore "able to respond to the urgent needs and rights of peoples and communities throughout the Global South".

Article based on information from :

(1) "Still A Frozen Pie: GenderCC on the Bangkok Intersessional Meeting 2011", GenderCC press statement, April 7, 2011, <http://www.gendercc.net/metanavigation/press.html>

(2) "Decommission the Fukushima nuclear plants and nuclear plans all over the world", Asian Rural Women's Coalition (ARWC) Resolution Adopted on 30 March 2011 in Chennai, India, During the Conference on 100 Years of Women's Resistance: Rights, Empowerment and Liberation, <http://www.asianruralwomen.net>

(3) "La Via Campesina opposes the inclusion of agriculture in carbon markets", La Via Campesina Press Release, April 11, 2011, <http://tinyurl.com/68n388z>

- "Forest in exhaustion": a new trick to subsidize monoculture tree plantations

"Forest in exhaustion" stems from a controversial proposal by Brazil under the UNFCCC negotiations in Poznan. The interest of Brazil to amend the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in order to include "Forests in exhaustion" is that it would allow the CDM to award credits under the Kyoto Protocol for reforestation projects on forest land that has been so over-exploited as to become "exhausted", and without additional money from the carbon credits would not be replanted. However, it's not about forests but tree plantations, a main economic activity in Brazil and other Southern countries. Indeed, the Executive Board of the Clean Development Mechanism agreed on the definition of "forest in exhaustion" as "an area of land that contained forest (sic) – established through planting, seeding and/or the human-induced promotion of natural seed sources – on 31 December 1989 and/or at the starting date of the project activity."
(<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/cmp5/eng/16.pdf>)

This has the major implication that the CDM can subsidise monoculture tree plantations in the South, where they are already very profitable, through credits awarded under the Kyoto Protocol as reforestation projects on previously planted land that has been so over-exploited as to become "exhausted".

In its 33th session held in Cancun in December 2010, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) invited Parties and admitted observer organizations to submit to the secretariat, by 28 March 2011, their views on the implications of the inclusion of reforestation of lands with forest in exhaustion as afforestation and reforestation clean development mechanism project activities.

As an organization that has been long defending forest and forest-dependent people in their struggles to secure their livelihoods against threats such as industrial monoculture tree plantations, WRM submitted the following main points of concerns about the Board's definition of 'forests in exhaustion' and what would supposedly happen to these 'forests', as well as about the proposal to include as a possible CDM activity reforestation activities on lands that did not contain or contained 'forests in exhaustion':

"1. According to your description of 'forests in exhaustion' these supposed 'forests' can include industrial tree monocultures. In our supportive work to local communities that are affected by these monocultures, we learned that these tree monocultures have nothing to do with forests. The only similarity is that both contain trees. However, while forests offer a huge range of nutritional, water, medicine, spiritual and other benefits to forest peoples, industrial tree plantations are being called "green deserts" by local communities for the fact they do not offer any benefit, and life is totally absent inside the identical rows of trees of these monocultures which have

only one purpose: supplying wood to industry. The fact that even the FAO still considers industrial tree plantations as forests, has had dramatic consequences for thousands of communities in the South and has favored Industry interests. However, over the past years, many academics, state officials, representatives of different social and environmental organizations, etc. have opposed against the FAO definition. The fact that UNFCCC opts for maintaining the FAO definition is disturbing and tends to perpetuate and create new conflicts all over the world between expanding plantation companies and local communities.

2. This new proposal permits tree plantation companies to present a CDM project for any of their plantations, be these existing or new plantations. What we have learned from the practice is that the companies that started their plantations long before 1989 always have counted with sufficient financial support and resources to maintain their activities until now and the main proof is that the major companies always have been replanting their areas. Especially in the global South where this activity is extremely profitable, which has led to a process that Northern tree plantation companies are in a process of transferring their activities to the Global South where they can make more profits. It is therefore that this activity can not be considered as 'additional', on the contrary, it is clear that what the industry is aiming at is another subsidy for an already very profitable sector.

3. Industrial tree monocultures of eucalyptus, pine, oil palm and rubber trees cause many negative impacts, in spite of a discourse of industry that it is a 'sustainable and renewable' sector. The attached studies (1) show very clearly that these plantations have severe impacts on the land distribution, expelling people directly and indirectly from their land. Large scale plantations have huge impacts on water resources availability and quality and several scientific studies on the issue are also publicly available. Plantation companies need to apply pesticides that affect soil, biodiversity and the workers. This type of agricultural activity creates 10 to 15 times fewer jobs if compared with small-scale agricultural production and the majority of jobs are dangerous and relatively badly paid. Women are relatively most impacted by industrial tree monocultures. And also, the expansion of these monocultures continues to be one of the important direct and indirect drivers of deforestation, which means in fact the emission of even more carbon to the atmosphere.

4. And finally, but of extreme importance: be it plantations or be it forests, not one of these planted trees areas are able to guarantee a structural and long-lasting contribution to mitigate global warming, because, among other reasons, the carbon emissions resulting from deforestation may be chemically identical to those coming from the burning of fossil fuels, but the two are climatologically different. Carbon released from deforestation does not increase the total amount of carbon being exchanged among the atmosphere, the oceans, soils, forests, and so on. Carbon released from fossil fuels, on the other hand, does increase this above-ground carbon pool."

(1) This refers to the document that was sent to the UNFCCC with some of the research made by WRM related to the impacts of monoculture tree plantations and which can be read at [http://wrm.org.uy/actors/CCC/Letter to the SBSTA.pdf](http://wrm.org.uy/actors/CCC/Letter%20to%20the%20SBSTA.pdf)

DEFINING FORESTS

- Lend your voice to the forest!

At WRM we have been opposed to FAO's definition of forests for many years. We believe that it actually serves as an indirect cause of deforestation. According to FAO, a forest is merely "land spanning more than 0.5 hectares with trees higher than 5 meters and a canopy cover of more than 10 percent, or trees able to reach these thresholds in situ" (*), which means that industrial monoculture tree plantations fall under this definition. As a result, industrial tree plantations "disguised" as forests continue to spread throughout the world, often replacing real forests.

In this International Year of Forests we have decided to challenge FAO's definition of forests, which has serious consequences for the world's forests because it is used as a reference by many international organizations. We are working on developing different tools that can be used to raise awareness of this issue, and are trying to make their development as participatory as possible.

To begin with, we would like the short video we posted on our website earlier this year (<http://www.wrm.org.uy/forests.html>) to be available in many different languages and in many different places on the internet. If you have a website, a blog, a Facebook account, or any other means of showing this video to more people, then please share it, distribute it, use it any way you can!

And here's another way to participate: if you speak another language (other than English or Spanish), we invite you to translate the video's short script (transcribed below) and send us your translations. As soon as we receive a translation, we will create a new version of the video in that language and post it on our website.

This is the text to be translated:

*This is a polar bear, but this is not the North Pole
This is water and fish, but this is not an ocean
This is a lot of trees, but this is not a forest
Can you imagine replacing the North Pole with this,
and replacing the oceans with this?*

*FAO's definition of "forests" allows forests to be replaced with this.
Tree plantations are not forests
Let's define the forest by its true meaning
Tell the world what forests mean for you*

Please send your translations, or any other ideas or suggestions you have for this campaign, to forest@wrm.org.uy

(*) FAO, Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010

[index](#)

Monthly Bulletin of the World Rainforest Movement

This Bulletin is also available in French, Spanish and Portuguese

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