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WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT
Monthly Bulletin - Issue 187 - February 2013

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The NGO Brainforest, in collaboration with FERN and WRM, has conducted a study on the impacts of the expansion of oil palm and rubber tree plantations in Gabon. The country's government wants to turn Gabon into Africa's largest producer of palm oil. This article presents a brief overview of the new study, with information on the companies involved in this expansion, their projects, and the impacts already observed and expected in the regions affected.
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OUR VIEWPOINT

- March 8: Women in defence of forests



International Women's Day on March 8 is a day to celebrate the achievements made by women in the defence of their rights. It is also a day of struggle, a day to denounce the countless ways in which women's rights are still being violated all around the world.

In this editorial, we would like to pay special tribute to the women who fight every day of the year for the forests in Asia, Africa and Latin America – forests which, for them, are not merely areas of land and trees, but territories that play an essential role in their social, economic, cultural and spiritual lives. Their defence of their territories and forests infringes on the economic interests who view forests as nothing more than lands to exploit for quick profit, for example, through the extraction of timber. These economic interests destroy forests, even when it is legally prohibited. In many places, this leads to violent reactions.

Laísa Santos is one woman experiencing this situation first hand. She lives in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest, on the first "extractive reserve" created in the country, established in 1997 in the state of Pará. Since then, this community of families who live off of the rainforest has suffered repeated invasions by ranchers, loggers and charcoal producers. Laísa, who has received death threats for her efforts to defend the rainforest, has requested protection through the Brazilian federal government programme established to protect human rights defenders. But after a preliminary assessment, her request was turned down. There is certainly no lack of evidence that the threats made against Laísa are serious: her sister, Maria do Espírito Santo, and brother-in-law, José Cláudio Ribeiro, were murdered in May 2011 for defending the same cause. In recognition of their struggle and sacrifice, they received a posthumous award from the United Nations.

Laísa is a teacher at the local school and a member of the Women Artisanal Extractive Workers Group – an association of women who produce medicinal and cosmetic products made with andiroba oil, which is processed from the nuts of the *Carapa guianensis* tree. Laísa specialized in raising awareness about the importance of using the rainforest without destroying it. But the threats have radically changed her life: she has lost her freedom of movement.

There are women like Laísa in all countries where there are tropical forests, in Latin America, Africa and Asia. They are struggling to care for and improve the lives of

their families and communities, by defending the forests. Laísa and her community are fighting against loggers and ranchers who are invading their territory. In other places, communities are fighting against mining companies, large-scale monoculture plantation companies, oil and gas companies, hydroelectric power companies, etc. – companies that destroy forests and violate the rights of the peoples who depend on those forests and have always cared for and protected them.

To commemorate this International Women’s Day, we call for support and defence of the struggles being waged by these communities, and especially for women defenders of the forests. At the same time, we demand that the governments of countries with tropical forests adopt urgent measures to recognize the rights of forest peoples, including women’s rights, and to protect all the women and men who are threatened or persecuted for defending the forests.

In particular, we urge you to sign this online petition to demand protection for Laísa’s life: <http://www.peticaopublica.com.br/?pi=P2012N20715>

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WOMEN RESISTING

- Feminism as an integral part of popular struggles



The People’s Summit in Santiago, Chile was held January 25-27 as a parallel event to the summit meeting between the governments of the member countries of the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Social justice, international solidarity and the sovereignty of the peoples were the watchwords of the social, trade union and political organizations that joined together, in parallel to the official government meetings, to hear the demands and proposals of the peoples of Latin America and Europe affected by the “austerity” policies adopted by the sectors who provoked, and have profited from, the current worldwide economic and financial crisis, and now want the peoples to pay the price through the imposition of drastic social and democratic setbacks.

The People’s Summit also represented the search for a space for building and coordinating alternatives among social organizations at a time in history which “demands a unified response from our peoples and a radically alternative solution to the prolongation and strengthening of the current neoliberal model.”

And when it came to questioning the different dimensions of the crisis and the inequitable and predatory extractivist model, to demanding social justice and an alternative model that fully guarantees political and democratic rights, as well as economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, the voice of women was heard loud and clear. Among the organizations that convened the Summit were the National Association of Rural and Indigenous Women (ANAMURI), the World March of Women Chile and the World March of Women International, Women for Mexico, and the National Platform for the Rights of Ecuadorian Women. Also participating were the National Coordination of Women Rural Workers and Indigenous Women's Organizations (CONAMURI) of Paraguay, the Latin American Network of Women Transforming the Economy (REMTE), and the National Federation of Peasant, Artisan, Indigenous, Native and Wage-Earning Women of Peru (FEMUCARINAP).

An activity was held in the framework of the Summit in which representatives of feminist movements, environmental organizations, and peasant and indigenous movements discussed the situation of the feminist movement in the face of economic integration processes and the building of feminism with an identity.

Elisabeth Peredo of REMTE stated that one of the key concerns is the continuity of processes of resistance and movement building within social movements. In the case of feminist struggles, while progress has been achieved, rates of violence and discrimination are still alarming, which demonstrates the need to "work harder at the ideological, cultural and subjective level." She also reaffirmed the need for reflection that can lead towards new paradigms, taking into account concepts that are given little visibility, such as the economic value of care-giving and the double burden of work faced by women throughout the continent (see Radio Mundo Real, <http://www.radiomundoreal.fm/Mujeres-al-volante>).

Francisca Rodríguez (better known as Pancha), a leader of ANAMURI and the Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations (CLOC-Vía Campesina), said in an interview with Radio Mundo Real (<http://www.radiomundoreal.fm/Por-un-proyecto-popular-en-America>) that this new meeting of the peoples in Chile "is full of great hope and great strength, we believe that we will be able to learn a great deal and this will strengthen our movement building. We are discussing key themes, education, health, housing, work, and Living Well and the rights of Mother Earth versus the commodification of nature and life. This includes addressing the theme of indigenous peoples and their world views, but also the powerful proposal that has been made by La Via Campesina, which is now a proposal shared by many, on the crucial importance of food sovereignty," she added.

For Pancha, any further progress will require moving beyond convergence to more solid and visible alliances, which can open the way for the proposals being constructed. "We need to bring together the processes of each sector to build an important bridge that can lead to a people's project in Latin America, to guide and inform our struggles," she said. In this regard, she highlighted the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Latin America and the Caribbean, "which must work for food sovereignty and the land," a process that will culminate in April in Colombia with the founding of the Continental Alliance for Food Sovereignty and Land.

In particular, the ANAMURI and CLOC leader highlighted the advances made in forging alliances and unity among women from the countryside, women from the cities, and indigenous women: “I believe that we are engaged in a process of the construction of popular, peasant feminism that is rooted in our identity, and that this will also be a step forward in the process,” she said.

In this regard, the final declaration of the People’s Summit (<http://cumbrechile2013.org/declaracion-cumbre-de-los-pueblos-santiago-de-chile/>) stated “the need to build the foundations for a new model of society that can transform the current political, economic, social and cultural logic and coordinates of all of our nations and peoples from both sides of the continent, the struggles of different actors and organizations in the popular movement.” To achieve these objectives, it proposes, among other strategies, “positioning feminism with an anti-patriarchal and anti-capitalist political project.” Moreover, “alongside the struggle for the sovereignty of our territories in Latin America, it is necessary to struggle for respect for the sovereignty of our bodies as women’s own territory.”

The need for uniting struggles emerges as the key challenge of the moment: “We cannot continue to divide the organizational bodies to which we belong. Moving towards a project grounded in diversity is the greatest challenge we face for the creation of a genuine alternative of popular power. Breaking down the sectarianism that fragments, divides and obstructs the building of unity of the popular movement is an urgent task. Faced with the power of the dominant bloc, only unity and solidarity among our peoples will give us the strength needed to achieve our highest objectives and to overcome.”

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- World March of Women: Change the world to change the lives of women – the fight continues against green deserts and the commodification of nature



(Photo by Cíntia Barenho/CEA)

We are once again approaching March 8, the international day of women’s struggle, on which we, as feminist women, also struggle against the commodification of nature. This commodification is deepened by the expansion of green deserts, which are portrayed as a step in the transition to a so-called Green Economy. This is a process

based on false environmental solutions for a system in crisis, but which is, in fact, aimed at creating economic opportunities for the integration of nature into the market.

The expansion of green deserts is not a new phenomenon, but has been particularly promoted in recent years as a result of the policies of so-called developed countries that prohibit polluting factories and processes within their own territories. They prohibit the processes, but they do not prohibit the use of the products that are produced. As a result, companies seek out other territories suitable for the installation and/or expansion of their polluting industrial processes, and South America has become a destination of choice.

Pulp and paper companies are expanding their green deserts of eucalyptus trees in various regions of Brazil. In the states of Bahia, Espírito Santo, Maranhão, Mato Grosso do Sul, Piauí and Rio Grande do Sul (RS) in particular, these companies have taken over ever larger areas of land, expelling indigenous peoples, the descendants of African slaves and peasant farmers from their territories.

In RS there are currently more than 500,000 hectares of monoculture plantations of exotic tree species, and, according to projections, there will be close to one million hectares of pine, eucalyptus and acacia plantations in the state by 2015. The projects planned, in addition to transforming the Pampas biome into vast stretches of eucalyptus, also foresee the construction of pulp mills.

However, due to the deepening of the world economic crisis, combined with ongoing local resistance and opposition, pulp and paper sector investments in RS began to decline. The companies that had always claimed to be driven by their desire to contribute to the development of the state showed their true colours.

But new investments have begun to flow into RS. The current pulp and paper offensive is spearheaded by the Chilean company CMPC (Compañía Manufacturera de Papeles y Cartones, known in RS as Celulose Riograndense), which announced the purchase of 100,000 hectares of eucalyptus plantations and the expansion of the pulp mill in Guaíba, using public money from the Brazilian National Development Bank (BNDES). The announcement was applauded by parliamentarians, the media (obligated to their advertisers) and the state government.

Numbers and figures are tossed around and celebrated, but little is being said about environmental licensing process, or about how the conditions of Environmental Zoning for Silviculture (ZAS) will be/are being fulfilled.

We, the women, say no to green capitalism!

This brief summary is essential in order to have a minimum understanding of what and whom we are dealing with. The fluidity of capital is great, and so is the fluidity of the transmutation of the market. The arrival of Celulose Riograndense is nothing new, but rather another stage in the process of the commodification of the territory of the state of RS.

We, the women, are systematically denied the possibility of defining and planning local development. We are denied, because the capitalist system, which is

patriarchal, imposes a role on women in which they are unable to make decisions over their own lives, over their food, energy and land sovereignty. Women are limited to acting within the private space, while men control the public space.

Nevertheless, working alongside other movements, peasant and feminist women in RS are playing a leading role in the ongoing struggle and local resistance against the expansion of green deserts. This resistance has shaken the agribusiness sector, which believed that RS offered favourable conditions for its further growth. And now, as we confront this new offensive, we must say NO to green capitalism, falsely referred to as the Green Economy.

The Green Economy is the strategy discovered by the neoliberal capitalist system to commodify life. Despite the failed attempt at Rio+20 to impose the so-called Green Economy as “the agenda” for coming years, governments and corporations continue to endorse this fallacy (see, for example, the recent study by the International Labour Organization).

In the case of green deserts, the false pretext of forest preservation is used to promote the expansion of “planted forests”. This deceptive use of the word forest serves to disguise the fact that these are monoculture plantations of exotic tree species primarily established for use as raw material for pulp production.

Instead of imposing rules to limit the environmental damages and/or making changes to the current model of production and consumption, the green economy is a continuation of the logic of compensation and commodification. Compensation or “offsetting” implies that polluting processes can continue as long as the state is financially compensated for them. Commodification reinforces this principle and also creates the need place a financial value on nature, which in turn reinforces the idea that only that which can be bought, sold and negotiated on the market has value. Following this logic, investments are needed to ensure a “stable flow” of natural goods (viewed as mere resources at our service).

This fallacious and destructive model directly affects women, especially women rural workers, because of their close ties to natural goods and the sexual division of domestic work. The work of reproduction and care-giving, of sustaining life, is still primarily considered to be “women’s work”. Thus, as this model leads to greater concentration of land ownership, greater use of toxic agrochemicals, greater violations of environmental legislation, greater contamination of the water and greater priority for the productive work carried out by men, the negative impacts on the lives of women are greater as well. This equation is essentially ignored, and deliberately so.

Under this model of agribusiness, promoting the green economy through monoculture plantations of exotic tree species is simply a way of promoting the accumulation of capital, with absolutely no environmental – or social – benefit. It is based on a view of the world in which natural resources and women’s work are inexhaustible. And the state is held solely responsible for ensuring and subsidising the welfare of the population.

Women in the fight against commodification

For those of us in the World March of Women, March 8 is also a day of struggle against the violence of capital against the people's territories, and consequently, against our bodies and against nature itself.

We are fighting for another model. From the perspective of Feminist Economics, we defend the need for a new paradigm to ensure the sustainability of life. Every day, women are creating concrete alternatives to the dominant economic model, articulating changes in the models of production, reproduction and consumption. In other words, we, the women, are developing real solutions that include food sovereignty, energy sovereignty, agro-ecology and the solidarity economy. We are also fighting for the recognition and valuation of the traditional ecological knowledge of the peoples, and for the defence of forests and biodiversity, among other battles. The paradigm shift is already underway, but there is a need for public policies that promote structural changes aimed at the development of the peoples, not the development of capital.

The green economy is a false solution! The feminist economy is our solution! Let's change the world to change the lives of women!

By Cíntia Barenho, project coordinator at the Centre for Environmental Studies (CEA) and member of the World March of Women (WMW), email: cintia.barenho@gmail.com

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- Liberian women impacted by expansion of Sime Darby's oil palm plantations



The Garwula District, in Grand Cape Mount County, is one of the areas affected by the 63-year lease agreement signed by the Malaysian giant oil palm producer Sime Darby with the Government of Liberia in 2009. When the company established large scale export-oriented oil palm plantations the livelihoods of the local residents were disrupted, and women have had to cope with many difficulties.

The report “Uncertain Futures. The impacts of Sime Darby on communities” (1) produced by the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) and World Rainforest Movement (WRM) and also quoted in another article of this bulletin, gives a deeper insight in how industrial oil palm plantations affect women in a differentiated way.

Based on field work, the report depicts how women in the Garwula District used to feed their families growing on the same piece of land, rice, corn and cassava together with a variety of vegetables such as potatoes, cucumbers and many more. They could thus secure their food because while the rice was growing, the family could harvest other crops with a shorter growing time, such as corn, cucumbers and other vegetables.

Women worked side-by-side with their husbands and other family members, and the surplus was sold to the local markets or to the capital Monrovia. So, not only did this strategy secure food for the family but also provided a small income that allowed them to hold on until the major harvests.

The report says that “(T)he months of December through March are mostly sunny and dry in Liberia. At this time of the year, there is a relative abundance of food in most villages. But more than that, this is also a moment of strategic value to the women – the ideal time for processing cassava into Garie for sale and domestic consumption. Garie is a cereal-type cassava product that is eaten widely throughout Liberia. It is very easy to prepare and can be prepared in many different ways. Women in the area set up small businesses processing and marketing the Garie. They are known for producing high quality Garie and local consumers favor their products. This was a major income earner mainly for women”.

Not only farming but also the forest had been particularly important for women as with the forest products they gathered they could make a variety of household items like fishing nets and baskets, of utmost importance in villages that rely on fishing as a major source of protein. The sale of the surplus fish can also provide a small income for the family.

But Sime Darby came and took away the farms and the forest along with the food sovereignty and even the sacred sites in the forest in order to plant oil palm. Women’s source of income, which empowered them and gave them pride, was lost.

“In this our country, we the women we help our husbands. If you get the children and they are going to school the husbands will not be able to take care of all the needs of the family. But if the women are doing business we can be helping our husbands. When your husband makes the farm and you plant cassava, you make gari, you can go to Monrovia and sell it. You can be doing that and helping to support the family. You can buy your own clothes and pay some of the children school fees. Now that the company has destroyed all of that they need to provide money for the women to engage in business.”

When in November 2012, under the slogan ‘Our Future is Now’ more than 150 people from communities inside oil palm concession areas in Liberia gathered to discuss the expansion of export-oriented oil palm plantations in their country and the impacts of this expansion on their livelihoods (see WRM Bulletin N° 185), information

could be exchanged between communities from Cape Mount County already affected by the Sime Darby oil palm plantations, and communities from other three counties in the concession area who are still not affected.

Women impacted by Sime Derby could speak out and warn about the expansion of industrial oil palm plantations.

Interviewed by WRM, Ethel Wion, the President of the Farmers Union Network of Liberia expressed:

“I think the concession agreement [of Sime Derby with the Nigerian government] is in violation of the Constitution’s rights of our citizens, especially for the women that their occupation is farming, that live on the land, fish in the rivers, get meat from the forests.

All the promises that are in the concession agreement are not real. There’s no way that we can protect the forest if the concession comes and claims the land. They will destroy the land, they will destroy the waters, and even the animals that live in the forest will be destroyed.

As 90% of our people live on farming, the quantity of land requested for [the concession] is too much and the tenure is too long so I think that the concession agreement will affect us greatly.

As Liberian we have a food security program, they say that they want to reduce poverty. But how can we reduce poverty if that land that we are supposed to use to produce food and make us food secure will be taken away? So how do we reconcile food security with the quantity of land that is being given to the concession company?

Some of the women are frustrated because in the past all of them lived on farming, but now they find that they are not getting anything of the farming. There is no road to the market, there is no market for what they produce and so they are living on subsistence farming just to eat. In some cases you find that they are saying ‘let the land go! What are we getting out of it?’

So, as a representative of the farming committee I think that we have to see how they can empower our women to grow food, to provide them with the market, to make them accessible to loans and grants, so that they can be able to speak up for themselves because if you are hungry you make mistakes.

It’s hour to secure our future for tomorrow. We need our land because without our land we will not be able to grow food, without food there will be no peace, without peace we will go well back to the 50 years of civil war. Our children will be used, beat up and abused, there will be a lot of robbery in the towns, the girls will be turned into prostitution. If we cannot develop the mass of the people the nation won’t be developed. So the farming committee says NO. [Industrial oil palm] is not in our interest because we as farmers live on the land.”

(1) "UNCERTAIN FUTURES. The impacts of Sime Darby on communities in Liberia", September 2012, by Silas Kpanan’Ayoung Siakor, published by Sustainable

- Philippines: Indigenous women impacted by militarization for large-scale mining



(Photo by Ronalyn V. Olea)

The Philippines has a great variety of minerals, including gold, copper, nickel, chromite, manganese, silver and iron. Mineral extraction increased rapidly after it was liberalized by the Philippine Mining Act of 1995, which gives full rights to foreign transnational mining corporations in indigenous territories, including 100% ownership, repatriation of profit and tax holidays thus violating indigenous peoples' ancestral land rights.

Large-scale mining by foreign firms has become the key to national development for the government of the Philippines, which has put the ancestral domains of indigenous peoples increasingly under threat of encroachment and has militarized the territories of indigenous communities to force the entrance of large-scale development projects.

Militarization has especially impacted indigenous women. "When our communities are militarised, we indigenous women not only struggle with the fear and abuse that comes with militarisation of the hinterlands due to mining interests, but we suffer a loss in livelihood as well. A militarised environment makes it difficult for us to access farms due to displacement, checkpoints, curfews, and other types of abuses. Due to influences brought by foreign companies, government soldiers, and others, the role of women in indigenous communities is now changing more rapidly, disintegrating and evolving into the objectified concept of a woman. The rise of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and sexual violence is greatly increased due to militarisation. These violations happen in a climate of impunity. These abuses are most often denied by the military, as well as national and local governments."

Militarisation in mining areas has intensified in 2008 with the introduction of the Investment Defence Force, composed of members of the Armed Forces of the

Philippines, tasked to protect extraction projects from those who stand in the way of “development”.

In November 2012, an international fact-finding mission of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders highlighted the effects of the ongoing militarization in the region, where the army has taken up the role of law enforcement, multiple illegal private armies have emerged, and paramilitary groups have been legalized, all of which contributes to the spread of human rights violations with impunity.

While large-scale mining operations have negative consequences for those who live in nearby areas, the disproportionate impact on indigenous people make them more vulnerable to many types of human rights violations, including appropriation of land resulting in massive displacement; large-scale destruction of forests and agricultural land; pollution of soil and rivers with toxic chemicals;; disintegration of indigenous society and culture; and the marginalisation of women as food producers in the subsistence economy.

Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD) are human rights activists who defend women’s rights. In Philippines, the indigenous WHRDs are at the forefront of the struggle against destructive mining in their communities throughout the Philippines, and they have been targeted by State and non-State actors – or by both acting in collaboration. In the case of the community struggle in the province of Itogon, against open-pit mining by Benguet Corporation, indigenous WHRDs played an important role in preventing the expansion of the open-pit mines. Save the Apayao People’s Organisation, a protest group against mining in the mountain range (Cordillera) has strong women leaders resisting the entry of UK’s Anglo-American and Australia’s Oxiana Gold mining companies.

Exchange visits, study tours within a region, the country and to other countries and sharing up-to-date information on mining and actions taken by women and people among organizations working on mining issues have been implemented in an effort to strengthen local communities. This has allowed the groups to give a prompt response to emerging and urgent issues on mining which together with a combination of actions including community barricades and rallies resulted in a moratorium on mining as in the case of mountain provinces in the Cordillera region, and a delay in the implementation of mining projects.

Article based on: “Mining and Women in Asia: Experiences of women protecting their communities and human rights against corporate mining,” Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), http://www.apwld.org/pdf/Mining%20with%20cover_opt.pdf; “Defending Ancestral Lands: Indigenous Women Human Rights Defenders In The Philippines,” AWID, <http://www.awid.org/eng/News-Analysis/Friday-Files/Defending-Ancestral-Lands-Indigenous-Women-Human-Rights-Defenders-in-the-Philippines#.UR5ZFvRVJkA.facebook>

- Open letter from Latin American women's network to governments and social movements



On the occasion of International Women's Day, March 8, the Red de Mujeres Defensoras de los Derechos Sociales y Ambientales (Latin American Network of Women Defenders of Social and Environmental Rights) – made up of women from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay who represent a wide range of organizations, institutions, collectives and local groups, including environmental and research organizations, women from both the countryside and the city, professional women and others with a basic level of education – has published an open letter on its website (<http://www.redlatinoamericanademujeres.org/>) addressed to governments and social movements in Latin America. Through this letter (see the full text below), they are seeking to raise wider awareness of the situations they face throughout the region as a result of large-scale mining activities. Their goal is to collect as many signatures as possible in support of their demands. You can sign on to the letter by sending a message to redlatinoamericanamujeres@gmail.com

Full text of the letter:

On this day that is so special for all women around the world, on which we commemorate women's struggle for their rights to equal participation in society and for their integral development as human beings, we would like to address you and invite you to reflect on what this day means for us.

We are Latin American women who have joined together to fight in defence of the right of our societies to live with dignity and social justice in a healthy environment and in peace, and to oppose "mega projects" involving the extraction and plunder of our natural wealth, particularly metal mining activities, due to their highly negative impacts on society in general and women especially. When mining companies arrive in our communities, we suffer the systematic violation of our rights; they pollute and destroy nature, and reduce the space available for work and family life. Our daily lives and convivial social and family relationships are altered by problems like alcoholism and a lack of safety on the streets. The problem of violence against women, including psychological, physical and sexual abuse, is exacerbated, along with human trafficking and forced prostitution, discrimination and social exclusion in the work-related, political, social and economic spheres, and the criminalization of women leaders of social protest movements, in addition to the theft of our lands and an increase in health problems.

The establishment of mining company operations in our territories has

increased the burden of work for women, when they are left alone to deal with the care of their homes and families, working the land, raising livestock and even working outside the home to earn a living, when their men go to the mines or do not return.

With the arrival of big mining companies and the backing they receive from governments through laws that benefit these companies and the repression and criminalization of social protest, some of us have also faced aggression, imprisonment, torture and even death, as in the case of our sisters Bety Cariño Trujillo in México and Dora Alicia Sorto in El Salvador.

For all these reasons, on this day we want to call on governments and social movements so that they recognize that in addition to its harmful social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts, large-scale metal mining in Latin America has particularly adverse effects on women. It has also impoverished our communities and deprived us of land, water and healthy food, which are fundamental for our survival and that of future generations.

The development model based on the unlimited exploitation and plunder of natural resources for the international accumulation of capital that enriches a small few and impoverishes the majority of our peoples, and particularly women, a model that is persistently implemented by Latin American governments, including so-called progressive governments, represents a destructive, impoverishing development that we do not want.

We demand:

- That no more mining concessions be granted in our territories.
- That environmental permits be cancelled when companies do not respect them.
- That no more special laws be drafted to facilitate mining activity to the detriment of traditional and more sustainable activities such as agriculture and livestock raising, on which a large part of our peoples depend for their survival, whether as peasant farmers and/or as consumers of the food produced on these lands.
- That the problems caused by the harmful impacts of mining activity in our countries, communities and lives be investigated and addressed through public policies.

For the right of women to be heard and to decide on the kind of development we want! No to large-scale metal mining on our lands!

Latin American Network of Women Defenders of Social and Environmental Rights
To sign on to this letter, send a message to redlatinoamericanamujeres@gmail.com

Sent by Red de Mujeres Defensoras de los Derechos Sociales y Ambientales, e-mail: redlatinoamericanamujeres@gmail.com

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COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- Nigeria: Dutch court condemns Shell - but more justice is needed!



(Photo by Elaine Gilligan, FoE)

On January 30, a Dutch court ruled that the Anglo-Dutch transnational corporation Shell is responsible for polluting the Niger delta, affecting heavily the lives of people at Ikot Ada Udo in Akwa Ibom State. Shell must clean up the oil pollution, compensate those affected and prevent further leaks from occurring. This case is unique because for the first time a Dutch multinational had to respond in front of a Dutch court for the acts of one of its subsidiaries.

The communities of the Niger Delta depend primarily on the environment for their livelihoods, including farming and fishing. This decision is a victory and important because “other communities will now demand that Shell pay for the assault on their environment”, according to Nnimmo Bassey from Oilwatch and Friends of the Earth (FOE) Nigeria. However, two important elements about what the court decided are important to reflect on.

First, in its decision in favor of the people in Ikot Ada Udo, the court decided to hold Shell Nigeria responsible and not the Royal Dutch Shell in the Netherlands. The latter, the so called ‘parent’ company, is 100% owner of Shell Nigeria and therefore it is difficult to believe that it does not interfere in the decisions taken by its subsidiary and, what is worse, would not be responsible for what its subsidiary does. FOE Netherlands declared that it was denied access to evidence proving that the Royal Dutch Shell determines the daily affairs of Shell Nigeria.

Secondly, the verdict means a bitter disappointment for the people in the villages of Oruma and Goi. They suffer from exactly the same environmental destruction as the people in Ikot Ada Udo, but the court did not hold Shell liable; it evaluated that Shell had done enough to maintain their pipelines and would not have been negligent; the spills would be the result of ‘sabotage’ by people that were stealing oil. The Nigerian farmers and FOE-Netherlands announced they will appeal against this decision.

In the Dutch newspapers, Shell declared it was “happy” because the ‘parent’ company was not held responsible and that it was sabotage and not bad maintenance in the case where Shell was absolved.

We can say that we are also happy, but with the victory of the people in Ikot Ada Udo. At the same time, we are profoundly sad and concerned. How can the Dutch court affirm, far away from Nigeria and far away from the reality of the destruction in the Niger Delta, that Shell is not responsible in the cases of the oil spills for which it has been absolved? According to the press release of FOEI: "The plaintiffs declared that they find it incomprehensible that the court has allowed itself to be convinced by a number of blurry photos and poor quality video images submitted by Shell".

Menno Bentveld, a Dutch journalist that made a documentary on the oil spills in Nigeria, commented that the local people he met admit that sabotage takes place and that they cause oil spills but they also argue that the pipelines are Shell pipelines and Shell therefore should protect them well. If not, they say: 'do not come here and take the oil away'. Menno furthermore questions the underlying idea and logic that "We can extract their oil and that is no problem and Shell and the Western World earn billions with that, but when it comes to protect the pipelines and prevent oil spills and the stealing of oil, then we do not need to do anything".

This raises the following question: What would have been the reaction in the Netherlands if a similar decision would have been taken by a Nigerian court, regarding activities of a Nigerian company in the Netherlands, causing tremendous harm to Dutch people? Does the fact that sabotage occurs in the Niger Delta mean that these particular cases of oil spills resulted from sabotage?

But let us hope that many communities follow the steps of the courageous Nigerian farmers that took Shell to court in its home country, with the support of FOE Netherlands and FoE Nigeria. And let us also hope that the court will attend their appeal for justice and less impunity in the corporate world!

Source: press release Friends of the Earth International (<http://www.foei.org/en/media/archive/2012/dutch-court-ruling-against-shell-a-partial-victory>) and <http://www.radio1.nl/items/71044-shell-veroordeeld-voor-milieuschade-in-nigeria>

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- India: Steel-making POSCO strikes again



On 3 February 2013, at around 4 am, twelve police platoons entered Govindpur and Nuagaon villages in Jagatsinghpur district of Orissa (present Odisha) and started beating up sleeping women & children, injuring many of them seriously, and arresting people at random. They are demolishing the betel vines in the area - the traditional and one of the most viable local livelihoods.

The villagers of Govindpur and Nuagaon are protesting against a project that for the last eight years has met with stiff resistance. A resilient local movement by a cluster of strong-willed villages, including Govindpur and Nuagaon, have been resisting the forceful and illegal acquisition of their land to set up a steel plant, port and ancillary infrastructure project promoted by the South Korean-based transnational steel-making company POSCO in the Jagatsinghpur district of the eastern Indian province of Orissa, in an area which includes 6000 hectares of pristine forests, prime agricultural land and coastal economy. (See WRM Bulletin No 155)

In this phase there have been many ups and several downs. There have been constant shifts of power with the highest offices of the Government of India intervening so that POSCO's men and machines could find their way into their earmarked project site.

Due to years of protest and other delays, the first set of environmental approvals to POSCO, granted in 2007, lapsed in 2012. These were valid for only five years. During this time local resistance, solidarity, and lack of the final set of permissions under other designated laws disallowed POSCO from starting operations. There were efforts to forcibly enter the area, local clashes, episodes where POSCO's officials were prevented from entering, arrests of protesters and so on.

Now the state moved to take possession of the land forcefully disregarding the constitutional rights of the people and in a gross violation of Forest Rights Act 2006.

All India Forum of Forest Movements (AIFFM) strongly condemn this barbarous attack on people who are resisting forceful acquisition of their lands peacefully and demand immediate withdrawal of police from the area and immediate release of people who have been illegally arrested.

Article based on information sent by All India Forum of Forest Movements (AIFFM) Secretariat, e-mail: aiffmsecretariat@gmail.com: "POSCO isn't a closed chapter", by KanchiKohli; "Demolishing democracy: An Oppressive State violates its own rules", AIFFM Statementcondemning State Violenceagainst Villagers in Orissa, India protesting against South Korean TNC promoted POSCO Project

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COMMUNITIES AND TREE PLANTATIONS

- Nigeria: Environmentalist threatened for his denounces against Wilmar's oil palm plantations



The Singapore based agribusiness giant Wilmar - is expanding its operations in Africa. It already has approximately 50,000 hectares of oil palm plantations in Ivory Coast, Uganda and Ghana. More recently it has expanded to Nigeria going into a joint venture with PZ Cussons to set up huge extensions of oil palm plantations in Cross River State in the south east region of the country while promising the creation of thousands of job opportunities.

“Such a project would bring enormous benefit to the country by creating employment and saving tremendous foreign exchange. So far we have acquired 35, 000 hectares of land and we would complete the development in about four years. We are willing to develop as much land as the government can give us and we will develop it at a speed and quality that has never been seen before. “We also assure the government and all concerned parties that we would do the development in compliance with all sustainability requirements,” (1) announced Wilmar’s International chair when referring to the company’s project in Nigeria.

However, since Wilmar started its operations it has created land conflicts with local communities and refuses to deal with the land claims that local farmers and lands owners have on the properties they have received in concessions.

Rainforest Resource & Development Center (RRDC) is an environmental organization from the mentioned region, who is working at the local level in trying to ensure that Wilmar’s operations are transparent, responsible, and recognize the rights of indigenous peoples and communities, as well as comply with related laws and regulations. RRDC has denounced Wilmar at the RSPO (2) for several reasons among them for failing to reach an agreement with landlord communities, unlawful acquisition of land leases in the case of farmers under the Cross River State Agricultural and Rural Empowerment Scheme (CARE) failure to properly account and recognize migrant communities living in the old oil palm estates that were allowed to farm in the estate and have no customary rights over the land that will therefore receive no compensation, none commitment to transparency and none compliance with applicable municipal laws and regulations.

Despite the communities’ claims and the RRDC’s complaint filed at the RSPO, Wilmar continues with its operations of forestland destruction and planting of oil palm seedlings in defiance of applicable Nigerian Laws and regulations, and in total disregard to the RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production. For these reasons RRDC is on the eve of launching a lawsuit against both the company and the government.

Odey Oyama, RRDC director, which is at the forefront in the denounces against Wilmar, has very recently started to be subject of police harassment. As he said to WRM “It is not possible to pin point the exact cause of the recent police harassment;

but it could have arisen from any of the issues in which I have been involved in my person or under the auspices of RRDC. There are three principal issues in which I am presently involved in my person and also as RRDC and they all relate to Wilmar operations in Cross River State. They have to do with Wilmar's disrespect to and violation to the laws of the country and the state, denounces that the plantation area is encroaching on the Oban Hill Division of the Cross River National Park and Ekinta forest reserve and finally a denounce of corruption. By reason of SOME OR ALL or any of the above matters, I have recently experienced undue harassments from the Nigerian Police Force.”

As a result of his advocacy, Odey has been placed on a government watch list – a recognized signal that his life could be under threat – and has been forced to flee his home.

An international action alert has been organized to support Odey and other Nigerian environmentalists. The alert urges the Nigerian government officials to put an end to the threats to Odey Oyama and alert that the world is watching: Odey Oyama's safety must be guaranteed, and the company must comply with national and international laws.

We invite you to join the alert by sending a letter to the relevant official at:

<http://www.foei.org/en/blog/stop-threats-to-nigerian-environmentalist-odey-oyama>

(1) <http://farmlandgrab.org/post/view/21323>

(2) The full submission of complaint to RSPO in respect to Wilmar operations in Nigeria can be read at

<http://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/news/2012/11/NGO%20Complaint%20to%20RSPO%20about%20Wilmar%20NPP%20in%20Nigeria.pdf>

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- Gabon: New study warns of impacts of the expansion of oil palm and rubber tree plantations



Tropical rainforests cover 85% of the total land area in Gabon. They are home to an immense diversity of species, on which some 300,000 people depend for their survival, through hunting, gathering, fishing and small farming.

The expansion of oil palm and rubber tree plantations and the companies involved Under the “Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon” (Plan Stratégique Gabon Emergent, PSGE) of the President, the government aims to foster export agriculture by promoting plantations operated both by private companies and by communities,

known as “community plantations”. The Plan specifically mentions two companies that will develop oil palm and rubber tree plantations: Olam and SIAT Gabon.

According to the scant information that is publicly available, Olam has already been granted the rights to the use of 87,274 hectares of land for a period of 50 years, which can be extended, under an agreement that encompasses a total area of 300,000 hectares. The company is currently operating in the provinces of Estuaire (through the Awala oil palm project), Ngounié (the Mouila oil palm project) and Woleu-Ntem (the Bitam/Minvoul rubber plantation project).

Olam states that its goal is to contribute to the country’s long-term development by generating hard currency revenues through exports and creating employment, while taking into account the concerns of local communities. To this end, it claims that it implements the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). This is also one of the criteria for certification by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), a controversial “green seal of approval” scheme in which Olam participates.

SIAT Gabon has oil palm plantations in the province of Moyen-Ogooué (the Makouké plantations in the Lambaréné region), and rubber tree plantations in the provinces of Estuaire (in Kango), Woleu-Ntem (in Bitam and Minvoul) and Nyanga (the Tchibanga estate). SIAT hopes to receive RSPO certification in 2013. SIAT Gabon’s four concessions cover a total of 15,712 hectares, and the company has recently initiated an expansion process.

SIAT states that it has carried out consultations with the local communities affected by its operations, and has pledged to provide support for small oil palm producers to ensure their own production, as well as adopting measures to mitigate the impacts of its plantations.

Under the terms of a presidential decree passed in 2005, these companies are required to conduct environmental impact assessments (EIAs). Olam has already received approval for the EIAs submitted for its projects in Awala and Mouila, while EIAs for all of SIAT’s projects have been given the green light. However, these approvals have been the subject of considerable criticism and doubts.

Above all, the government’s Directorate General of the Environment has still not fully created the conditions for the adequate monitoring and evaluation of these assessments. As a result, the approval of the EIAs has been a largely informal process.

The local population in the areas affected by the plantations as well as other interested parties have not been informed of the terms and conditions of the agreements signed between the government and Olam. As a result, the benefits and obligations established for the company are unknown, which is also true in the case of the agreements signed with SIAT.

What is known is that the lands where Olam is operating were chosen by the company itself. This is a highly questionable practice, because, in theory, land concessions do not grant this right to the company involved. However, in the case of Olam, the state is a partner in the project, and this even includes the Presidency of

the Republic. As a result, the local population is extremely cautious when it comes to discussing the project or opposing it in any way. On more than one occasion, community members stated, “Olam is the Presidency of the Republic,” while high-level government authorities affirmed, “Olam is the President’s project.”

Nevertheless, in some of the regions and communities visited that will be significantly affected by the plantation projects, there were local residents who were not afraid to voice their dissatisfaction, doubts and criticisms.

In general terms, the communities do not have the guaranteed right to the use of their lands, as stipulated by Law 16/01 of 2001, and this results in insecure land tenure. Bureaucracy and a lack of awareness among the population of their rights, even when they have been living in a certain area for many generations, create a situation where the expansion of oil palm and rubber tree plantations leads to a reduction in the size of their territories. For example, all of the communities complain that the buffer zone of five kilometres between the plantations and their communities is insufficient. Some have requested a greater distance, of seven kilometres, while others have proposed that the companies seek out other regions for their projects.

In all of the “consultations” held regarding the oil palm and rubber tree plantation projects, the communities expressed the collective will to guarantee their right to their territories. When the government grants land concessions without precisely delimiting those lands, it leads to heightened insecurity and conflicts with communities.

Gabon My Land, My Right

An important initiative to support the process of regularization of land tenure for local communities is “Gabon Ma Terre, Ma Droit” (Gabon My Land, My Right, www.gabonmaterre.com). This joint initiative involving approximately 20 NGOs works with local communities in a number of regions of the country to help them exercise their rights to their lands and achieve secure tenure over them.

Food sovereignty

The expansion of large-scale plantations will further aggravate the food insecurity already suffered by the general population, whether as a result of the loss of land and deforestation, or due to the fact that when farmers go to work for the oil palm and rubber tree plantation companies, their fields are not properly maintained. A resident of Doubou in the region of Mouila said: “This forest allows us to survive and we do not want to share it. If we cannot plant food, fish or hunt, how are we going to survive?” The decrease in food production threatens the food sovereignty of the population of a country that currently needs to import most of its food.

In addition, local communities are also concerned over access to water in the future. Although water is, in principle, a public good, they are greatly worried by the growing private ownership of lands and forests, deforestation, and the expansion of rubber tree and oil palm plantations, and the potential impacts of these on the water supply.

Final considerations and warnings

Based on the impacts and reactions reported with regard to the still recent process of the expansion of oil palm and rubber tree plantations in numerous regions of Gabon, the following considerations and warnings emerge:

* The importance of popular organization

The communities in the regions affected have traditionally not been organized in associations or cooperatives. However, faced with the threat that these plantations pose to them, the local population is organizing, as they view this as a fundamental step that they must take in order to defend their rights. Among the different organizations that are emerging, agricultural associations are the most prevalent, and most of these are cooperatives led and made up by women.

* The importance of knowing their rights

There is growing awareness among local communities of the importance of knowing their rights, such as, for example, their right to their territories, but other rights as well. It is only by knowing their rights that they will be able to fight for them and to challenge the legality of the actions of Olam and SIAT Gabon. In addition, when the companies meet with local communities, it is important for the communities to ensure that minutes are taken during every meeting held.

* The right to the use of their territory

It is crucial that rapid advances be made in the recognition of the rights of communities to the use of their land, to avoid the risk of them losing their territories to agro-industrial projects and other projects being established in Gabon. This will require greater commitment from the government to the fulfilment of this demand of the rural population and to the ratification of international agreements that are fundamental for the protection of the rights of indigenous and traditional peoples, such as ILO Convention 169.

- The right to food sovereignty and incentives for agricultural production

Greater support must be given to the agricultural activities of the population. This would include effective implementation of Law 022 of 2008, which emphasizes “the production of high-quality and diversified food and non-food agricultural goods, which respond to the needs of domestic markets”, “the organization of marketing channels”, and “the creation of favourable conditions for the financing of agriculture and livestock raising and for access to land ownership”.

* The right to information and properly conducted impact assessments

It is essential for communities to have access to all pertinent information on agro-industrial projects planned for their areas. Environmental impact assessments must be conducted impartially and transparently. The community has a right to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of these assessments.

And finally, the right to free, prior and informed consent, which Olam and SIAT Gabon claim to be respecting through the consultations they have conducted, must be implemented in all seriousness. This not only means informing the community about projects in a fully transparent manner, but also giving them the right to say yes or no

to projects planned for their territories and forests, on which they depend for their future.

(1) Franck Ndjimbi, 2013. Etude sur l'impact des plantations agro-industrielles de palmiers à huile et d'hévéa sur les populations du Gabon (Study on the impacts of agro-industrial oil palm and rubber tree plantations on local populations in Gabon). Brainforest, with the collaboration of FERN and WRM.

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- Liberia: Action against the expansion of oil palm plantations by Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum



The three leading Liberian civil society organizations Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU), and Social Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development (SESDev) released a statement on January 31, 2013, calling for a review of Liberia's agricultural policy.

Since 2006, the Government of Liberia has entered into binding contracts – known as concession agreements – with three major oil palm producing foreign investors: Sime Darby (Malaysia), Golden Veroleum (Indonesia), and Equatorial Palm Oil (UK). These concessions cover massive tracts of Liberian land; in total, they span nearly two million acres – just under 10 percent of the country's total land mass.

Thousands of Liberians who had farmed and lived off the land growing rice, cassava, and a variety of food crops to feed themselves and to sell the surpluses, cultivated cash crops such as rubber and kola nuts for sale and collected a variety of non-timber forest products from nearby forests for domestic use and sale to markets have experienced the loss of these industries that had provided diverse opportunities for income generation to men and women alike. The Malaysian palm oil company Sime Darby was granted a concession in Garwula District, Grand Cape Mount County. When it started its operations in the region, farmlands were cleared and converted to oil palm plantations. Also the forests from which local people harvested non-timber forest products were cleared and converted to oil palm plantation as well and even the community's culturally significant sites were desecrated.

Communities inside the concession areas were not properly consulted prior to the signing of the contracts, and the farmers were not told the prices the company would pay for their crops in advance. Some of them initially rejected the payments, but the company threatened to hand their compensations to the government, so they accepted them for fear that if the payments went to the government it would be

impossible to get them back. Eventually the compensation paid for crops that were destroyed was inadequate.

There is no more land available to residents: they are now confined to their villages and there is nowhere to farm, which may contribute to increasing poverty and crime rates in the area, and forced migration; they have to buy their food items, including their staple foods, cassava and rice, from other villages that are far away and from the capital city, Monrovia. Without land to farm, they are unsure how else they are going to survive in the coming years. (1)

Two complaints have been filed against Sime Darby Plantation Liberia and Golden Veroleum Liberia by community representatives to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). The Liberian government admitted to “mistakes” and most recently, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf agreed in London to “revisit” the agreements with a critical eye.

The need for a thorough, transparent review of the current situation led the coalition of Liberian NGOs that calls for a review of Liberia’s agricultural policy to start a campaign urging oil palm companies to respect human rights, renegotiate their contracts, and protect the livelihoods of the rural poor. “Giving away land for large scale plantations is hailed as promoting the economic recovery of Liberia, but in reality these plantations undermine Liberia’s basic food security and cause poverty when livelihoods are lost. Therefore, allowing them contradicts the Liberian government’s own policies on reducing poverty and preventing hunger,” stressed Silas Kpanan’Ayoung Siakor, campaigner with the Sustainable Development Institute. “Allocating large swathes of fertile agricultural land to foreign companies for several decades will push people further into poverty, as local income generating activities are curtailed and peoples’ earning capacities become limited”, he added.

The civil society organisations are also concerned about large scale conversion of primary and secondary forest to palm oil plantations as Sime Darby expands into Gbarpolu county. They are demanding a halt to any further planting and further deforestation and environmental degradation in any of the concession areas.

“Forests have environmental benefits and provide multiple livelihood sources for the people, which they have now lost. Employment from the plantations is insecure; low-paid and does not contribute to sustaining livelihoods in the long term. Instead, local communities want the Liberian government and the palm oil companies to recognise their ownership of community land”, says SAMFU campaigner Robert Nyahn.

Sime Darby claims that it upholds international human rights standards and voluntary guidelines such as the UN Global Compact of which the company is a signatory. However, an analysis of the contracts between the Liberian Government and the Asian companies demonstrates they are likely to be violating several Human Rights conventions ratified by Liberia. (2)

Liberia’s Land Commission has recommended a draft land policy that includes recognition of community land ownership. However, communities located inside existing agricultural concessions – including those of Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum – would not be included in the reform. This oversight ensures that tens of

thousands of Liberians will technically remain squatters on their own land.

The statement released by SDI, SAMFU, and SESDev urges the government, Sime Darby, and Golden Veroleum to protect the rights of rural farmers by agreeing to bring their concession agreements in line with international human rights principles, and to recognize legal community ownership over land.

(1) All this has been exposed in the report "Uncertain Futures," authored by Silas Kpanan'AYoung Siakor, and published by the Sustainable Development Institute in August 2012. The full report is available at

http://www.wrm.org.uy/plantations/21_set/2012/Liberia.html

(2) Report by the Forest Peoples Programme "A human rights-based analysis of the agricultural concession agreements between Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum and the Government of Liberia", available at <http://www.foei.org/simedarby>

Article based on: Press release "Liberian civil society urges oil palm companies to respect human rights, renegotiate their contracts, and protect the livelihoods of the rural poor", issued by SDI, SAMFU, SESDev on January 31, 2013; "Land grabs and human rights violations exposed in Liberia ahead of global development summit", Friends of the Earth International, January 31, 2013; "Civil Society Coalition Statement on Oil Palm Concessions in Liberia" by Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU)/Friends of the Earth Liberia and Sustainable Development Institute (SDI).

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PEOPLES IN ACTION

- Cambodia: Action against land-grabbing

A community petition on Avaaz.org calls for action against companies that subsidized by a European Union trade scheme, forcibly displace hundreds of thousands of Cambodian farmers from their land. These schemes are intended to benefit poor countries, but in Cambodia they have incentivized companies that steal people's land and make them poorer, while the benefits have flowed primarily to a business and political elite.

The petition calls to investigate land-grabbers in Cambodia and remove their trade privileges. See http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/Investigate_landgrabbers_in_Cambodia_and_remove_their_trade_privileges/?kJeWlab

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- Mozambique: Action in defense of peasants' right to food

The organization Fian International - for the right to adequate food, began an action in October 2012 to end on 30 April 2013 in defense of peasant communities in Niassa province in Mozambique who have lost access to land used for food production and to natural forests and thus are facing food insecurity and violations of their right to food due to the establishment of large-scale tree plantations promoted and financed

by Sweden.

FIAN invites to take URGENT ACTION, by writing to the Swedish government to demand that it conducts a human rights assessment of its development aid to Mozambique, that it regulates investors operating from Sweden and that it introduces a monitoring mechanism to track business enterprises' activities.

Join the action at <http://www.fian.org/get-involved/take-action/urgent-actions/urgent-action-mozambique-niassa-province/>

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- Brazil: First National Meeting of the Peasant Women's Movement

Close to 3,000 members of the Peasant Women's Movement (MMC), hailing from 23 different states, gathered on February 18-21 for the first national meeting of the organization. The central theme of the gathering was the fight against violence against women. On the morning of the last day, the women filled the plaza in front of the National Congress building in Brasilia with the colour purple and shouted out slogans.

"The first national meeting reaffirms the importance of the autonomous, feminist, peasant and socialist Peasant Women's Movement," stated the final declaration drafted during the event. The declaration also reaffirmed the MMC's aim to contribute to the struggle for the liberation of women workers from all types of oppression and discrimination; the building of an agro-ecological feminist peasant agriculture model; and the struggle for the transformation of society. The achievement of these goals, they added, demands "struggle, organization and training, to promote experiences of popular resistance in which women play a leading role in their own history." For more information, see: <http://www.mmcbrasil.com.br/site/node/71>

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- Attac France urges EDF to abandon its lawsuits against climate justice activists in the UK

Last October, sixteen activists of the climate justice group "No Dash for gas" occupied for a week two chimneys of the EDF West Burton plant to denounce the government's plan to build 40 new gas-fired plants. EDF has announced that it is suing these people for these peaceful civil disobedience action, for 5 million pounds. If the prosecution of EDF is successful, these activists will lose their homes and be forced to repay EDF a significant portion of their wages for decades to come. These 5 million pounds represent only 0.3% of the annual profits of EDF in the UK, which grew by 7.5% in 2012 to reach 1.7 billion pounds.

The French State is the major EDF shareholder (84.4%). If they maintain their prosecution, EDF and the French government will demonstrate how little importance they attach to climate change and democracy. Attac France invites unions, associations and political parties to support these twenty activists and denounce this

act of intimidation designed to silence all those who would use non-violent civil disobedience actions to protest against social and environmental crimes.

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RECOMMENDED

- "Environmental crime: in pursuit of palm oil industry", video on the business of palm oil in Liberia, at <https://vimeo.com/40934862>

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- "Live or drive, a choice has to be made", a case study of Sime Darby operations in Liberia, basta! and Friends of the Earth France, at http://www.bastamag.net/IMG/pdf/Rap_LiberiaEN.pdf

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- "Land grabbing for biofuels must stop", a new report from GRAIN at <http://www.grain.org/e/4653>

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- "Gentle Treasures: Stories of women against mining", launched in March 2012 by Alyansa Tigil Mina (Alliance to Stop Mining), commemorates the contributions of Filipino women to the struggle against large-scale mining and the promotion of human rights, at <http://es.scribd.com/doc/96588780/Gentle-T>

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