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When consumption and production have no limits, more territories at the service of capital

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OUR VIEWPOINT

What do the criticism of the Pope's encyclical by carbon market and REDD proponents reveal?

The new Pope Francis' "*Laudato Si'*" encyclical addressing the ecological crisis, particularly the climate crisis, has been much discussed in the last month. It is uncommon to see so many organizations and individuals discussing a papal encyclical. Although it did not take into account important issues such as the place and role of women in these matters, the document was quite incisive and effective in its analysis and questioning of the current globalized capitalist over-consumption and production model. With this, the encyclical reinforced what social movements and other groups have been pointing out and denouncing for a long time.

In this document, the Pope also questioned some of the false solutions to the climate crisis that have been presented to the people of the world. The document states that carbon trading "*can lead to a new form of speculation, which would not help reduce the emission of polluting gases worldwide*". It also affirms "*in no way does it [this mechanism] allow for the radical change which present circumstances require. Rather, it may simply become a ploy which permits maintaining the excessive consumption of some countries and sectors*". Some defenders of the carbon offset mechanism, which allows the selling and buying of carbon credits, also known as carbon trading, were upset. The question then is: What does the criticism published by some of them reveal?

Such defenders start their answers affirming that the sale and purchase of carbon credits is an excellent and effective tool since it already has shown results, with projects that even were "certified" and awarded "quality labels". This defensive posture reveals an intransigent desire to protect carbon trading, without a willingness to acknowledge the widespread conclusive criticism of carbon market mechanisms as a whole (1), as well as the experiences on the ground with tools that aim at commodifying carbon in tropical forests, such as REDD (2). Likewise, carbon market defenders cannot provide even basic developed responses to the content of each enquiry raised in the Pope's statements.

Despite some praises to the analysis of the causes of the climate crisis in the papal encyclical, defenders end up evaluating the proposed solutions as weak and unrealistic, partly because it would cost an amount of money that would not exist. For them, defending a "radical change" is synonymous with not being "down to earth". This reveals how they try to convince us that we must accept the world as it is, especially the fact that it is dominated by a capitalist market economy. Apparently they do not care

that this economy is controlled by just a few hundred corporations, which despite being largely responsible for the climate crisis, receive all sorts of concessions from our governments – and for that there is money - and do not accept limits to the continuous expansion of their markets and profits at the expense of the majority of the people and the destruction of the environment. Some examples can be seen in the articles in this bulletin on the growth of large-scale monoculture projects in Papua, as well as mining expansion in Madagascar and the criminalization of social movements in India for fighting against the construction of a dam. The fact that carbon market advocates do not speak about, much less defend, the urgent need to dramatically curb these concessions, reveals how they live and collaborate with the world of financial institutions and companies representing big capital. Those are also the institutions and companies that so far have taken full advantage of the existence of carbon trading and these are the key players taking advantage of this new market and its speculative potential. In their anxiety to show the success of carbon trading, proponents also reveal another position: the “technician” or “specialist” who “knows” and understands that his/her role is to inform men and women who (still) "do not know" about these so called "complex" issues like "CO2" and "carbon credits", since only the "technician" or "specialist" (generally from the North) really understands those issues.

Communities affected by REDD projects have suffered first-handed. The "technicians" who come to the communities to propose projects decide which information the "beneficiaries" of the project will have access to. They rarely inform for example, that REDD does not reduce the impacts of the climate crisis because it allows pollution and destruction to continue, so in practice it is in fact a diversion from the main problem. Moreover, the time and energy invested in REDD discussions within climate conferences have confirmed why there are still no decisions to approve and implement real solutions, such as a drastic reduction of carbon emissions by the main responsible parties. "Specialists" do not inform either that if continuing with this situation for much longer, climate change will be intensified, and will particularly affect the livelihoods of rural communities and/or those living in the forest – because the climate crisis even compromises the future of the forests which many communities depend on. They also fail to mention that due to REDD projects, other communities neighboring main polluters in countries like the US or Canada, which buy carbon credits to supposedly "offset" their emissions, will keep suffering more and for longer because of polluting activities, such as extraction and/or refining of oil; activities that would have now been "compensated" with REDD. These communities are often indigenous and/or black communities which have been suffering from environmental racism for years due to the fact that they are neighbors of the oil companies (3)

Finally, there are advocates who argue that the Pope’ criticism is not applicable since the carbon market mechanism was already accepted by governments, i.e., it is already part of the negotiations for a new global climate agreement to be decided in Paris later this year. This reveals how carbon market advocates have made progress in their strategy to capture governments to serve their interests. But above all, it reveals that these advocates do not seem to be bothered by the disturbing fact that communities generally are not invited, and much less can influence the extremely important decisions that will define the direction the world will take in relation to the climate change struggle - or lack thereof, and which impacts will be felt by everyone. The disinterest in allowing more popular involvement and voice has a reason: If communities were actually present, they could see up close how many of their representatives -

governments and the UN - are "prisoners" of the interests of a small group of corporations and NGOs, which in order to avoid structural changes, have been "selling" false solutions to the climate crisis for years, mainly the idea of carbon trading, including REDD. If people really were represented and present in these discussions, they could rebel and change the course of events.

We reaffirm the need for our governments to make decisions that “the present circumstances require” by the end of the year in Paris. The "radical change" advocated for years by many organizations and social movements merely lies in exercising to take conclusions based on the analysis of the facts that led and aggravate environmental destruction and climate change; namely, being "down to earth"! Our governments should also act accordingly, if they were serious about their role and if they cared about the future of the people they supposedly represent. It also means that false solutions like carbon trading and REDD, which do not represent any actual or structural change, must be rejected.

We call on everyone to join the [Call to Action to reject REDD and the extractive industries](#), already signed by over 150 organizations and social movements worldwide - see also the article in this bulletin - which was released in the run up to the climate conference in Lima, Peru, in 2014

- (1) See for example: <http://www.fern.org/tradingcarbon>
- (2) See for example: <http://wrm.org.uy/books-and-briefings/redd-a-collection-of-conflicts-contradictions-and-lies/>
- (3) See for example: <http://www.ienearth.org/category/climate-justice/carbon-trading-and-offsets/>

WHEN CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION HAVE NO LIMITS, MORE TERRITORIES AT THE SERVICE OF CAPITAL

Relaunching destruction in Papua: monoculture agriculture project threatens indigenous lands and livelihoods

For the last five years, the people of Merauke Regency, in Indonesia's southern Papua province, have been resisting a large-scale agriculture project that threatens the livelihoods of more than 50,000 people. Their resistance has effectively slowed the development of the 2.5 million hectares of concessions linked to the “Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate” (MIFEE) project. However, the government has recently announced new and ambitious plans that threaten the food and forests of Merauke's Malind indigenous majority.

The land allocated to the project – more than 55 per cent of Merauke’s total area – was chosen because the government considers it as “unproductive” and sparsely populated. The vast monoculture agriculture project is in line with a 2008 Presidential Decree on large-scale investment in food and agriculture. Responding to the global food crisis of the time, the government saw the development of large-scale plantations as a way to feed Indonesia's growing population as well as contributing to feeding the world.

MIFEE has been controversial from the start because it will destroy part of the Papuan forest, which is the world's third largest tropical forest, and threatens the homes, food supply and forests of the indigenous Malind community.

While the stated goal of the project is to produce rice, corn and other food crops intended to ensure national self-sufficiency and reduce food imports, the majority of the location permits covering 1.5 million hectares (a first step to obtaining a concession) issued for Merauke as of 2014 were for crops which are usually exported. Seventeen sugar plantations cover 580,000 hectares; eight oil palm plantations occupy 266,000 hectares; seven industrial tree plantations (mostly of acacia and eucalyptus) cover a total area of 594,000 hectares; and food crops including large rice and cassava farms make up the remaining 70,000 hectares (1).

Strong resistance in Papua and throughout Indonesia has slowed MIFEE's expansion. But the newly elected President Joko Widodo, better known as Jokowi, announced during a visit to Papua in May 2015 his plans to establish the area as the nation's rice bowl over the next three years. He said that 1.2 million hectares of rice farms would be developed, producing 60 million tonnes of rice annually. He even said the area allocated to MIFEE would be expanded to 4.6 million hectares (2).

That announced figure is clearly impossible, as it would be equal to the total area of Merauke Regency. Even looking at the smaller but still staggering figure of 1.2 million hectares for new rice farms, it is not clear where land would be found in the Regency alongside already existing plantations, community housing areas and the Wasur National Park.

The announcement appears to have been spontaneous. Soon afterwards, a follow-up meeting to work out details was held between representatives of the Merauke Regency administration and agriculture minister Andi Amran Sulaiman. A local newspaper reported that Sulaiman gave the local government authorities only three days to prepare a framework for developing 1.2 million hectares of rice plantations; 250,000 hectares to be developed this year, and another 250,000 hectares every six months thereafter (3).

The central government said it would provide seven trillion rupiah (US\$ 534 million) per semester to support the plans. The state-owned fertiliser maker, Pupuk Indonesia, has been given the task of raising the initial amount, which will be used to clear and develop 750,000 hectares of rice fields (4). Another 250,000 hectares will be managed by the Agriculture Ministry and a further 200,000 hectares will be offered to private companies.

President Jokowi was invited to visit Merauke by Medco, which is currently the only company actively experimenting with growing rice agriculture in the area. The company – more usually involved in oil and gas production – is one of the pioneers of MIFEE, but its record so far hasn't been good. One of its subsidiaries involved in timber extraction, PT Selaras Inti Semesta, became well known as one of the worst companies in the area after it tricked the community of Zanegi into handing over its forest for minimal compensation. Poverty and conflict followed, and the company itself failed to make a profit and was shut down a few years later, but only after destroying a vast swathe of the forest and leaving the villagers with no forest and no income (5).

Other private companies are yet to publicly commit to participating in the programme, although one newspaper report mentions Wilmar International and Sinar Mas as being among the conglomerates that have expressed an interest in investing in the project (6). Both companies are among the largest in the oil palm plantation sector, with the production of palm oil as their core business.

Rice is a staple food for Indonesia's population and all across Asia and it is mostly produced by small scale farmers. According to Indonesia's 2013 agriculture survey, there are 14 million rice farming households in the country, more than half of the total of 25 million rural households. The majority are small scale farmers who own less than half a hectare of land (7). Today, small scale peasant agriculture produces nearly all of the 44 million tonnes of rice grown in the country. Developing rice cultivation on the scale announced by Indonesia's president can only be done using large-scale monocultures, with fully mechanised methods and heavy input of agrotoxins. If rice production is centralised in the hands of a few state-owned and private corporations, what will happen to the livelihoods of the country's millions of rice farmers? The MIFEE project area covers 160 villages in Merauke. For the Papuan people it could mean the loss of their home and territory. It could also endanger their source of food – the staple here is sago rather than rice – and animals from the forest.

A villager from Zanegi reported that since plantations began encroaching on their territory it has become more difficult to find food. In 2013, five children died from malnutrition in one of Medco's concession areas (8). Writing about Jokowi's relaunch of MIFEE in a local magazine, a Papuan student wrote, "On the issue of his proclamation about rice in Merauke, Jokowi is clearly ignoring the fact that the indigenous people of Papua consume sago and their livelihoods depend on the sago forest. That means that cutting down sago palm trees in order to ensure national food (rice) security is a programme that will make the survival of Merauke's indigenous people impossible because it will destroy their staple food, sago." (9)

Jokowi's plan continues to follow a top down national food and agriculture policy, leaving no room for discussions with communities in Merauke or with Indonesia's rice farmers in general about what they believe is needed to achieve food sovereignty. Despite the fact that during his election campaign, he talked a lot about food sovereignty. The rhetoric argument of increasing national rice production remains a simple transfer of lands from indigenous peoples to big companies.

With more than 1.5 million hectares of land already occupied by plantations in Merauke Regency, it is not clear where the land being talked about now will be found. The 1.2 million hectares probably refers to land originally earmarked for MIFEE in 2010. If so, it is highly unrealistic to imagine it could be developed within three years. To begin with, permits for oil palm and sugar cane plantations have already been issued for virtually the whole area. Also, in many places, Malind indigenous communities, who have rights over that land clearly stated that they will not surrender any more of their land to corporations.

The initial development of MIFEE has created havoc for the communities and the environment in the area. Expanding the project on such a large scale will only create more pressure for the communities and further destruction of forests. Relaunching MIFEE shows that decades of bad policies in the interest of tycoons and multinational

companies to control land and natural resources remains. Enough is enough, it is time to denounce MIFEE and return the land to the Malind people.

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- (2) “Pemerintah Siapkan Merauke Jadi Lumbung Padi Nasional” (Government prepare Merauke as National Rice Bowl),” *Tempo*. 11 May 2015. <http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2015/05/11/090665231/Pemerintah-Siapkan-Merauke-Jadi-Lumbung-Padi-Nasional>
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- (8) Testimony of Zanegi villager during limited discussion on Jokowi’s agriculture program, Jakarta, 20 May 2015.
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Mining activities and environmental protection in Madagascar

In Madagascar, a big island of 587 000 km² in the Indian Ocean famous for its exceptional biodiversity and for its subsoil wealth in minerals, more than 6 million hectares nowadays are classified as protected areas for nature conservation. Yet, mining areas are also numerous and expanding. These two kinds of spaces are sometimes close or superimposed.

From a few facts and examples, this article highlights situations where these interests clash, the way in which the conflicts have been managed by the Malagasy decision makers and by their discussion partners. This reflection focuses on the consequences of these management processes on the local communities.

In the cycle of a mining project, according to the Malagasy regulation, the delivery of an environmental permit should take place between the delivery of the research and the exploitation permits. This environmental permit is complemented by terms and conditions related to the environmental management plan of the mining project.

The critical issues at stake

So far, the National Office for the Environment (ONE, for its acronym in French), which is responsible for granting the environmental permits, has not published any information concerning the refusal of an environmental permit requested by a mining company.

Currently, in the South-West of Madagascar, the environmental permit given by ONE to the **Toliara Sands Project** is a hot issue. This is because its main shareholder, the Australian company World Titanium Resources Ltd, obtained an exploitation permit in 2012 without the environmental permit required by national legislation, and during the period of the Transitional Government (2009-2014). The Transitional Government was not allowed to make such a long-term decision. Moreover, the road construction for transporting the extracted ilmenite to the harbour will surely lead to the clearing of the Mikea forest, a protected area where the Mikea people entirely depend on harvesting, hunting and using the forest resources for their living.

The world known native artist from the region, Theo Rakotovao, is the president of the young association MA.ZO.TO. The association was created in October 2014 by the representatives of communities affected by the Toliara Sands Project and their allies, to defend and claim their economic, social and cultural rights. They work together with the association of Masikoro people, a group of herders from the area. These associations resisted the environmental permit of the Toliara Sands project during the public consultations held since October 2014, and expressed their refusal in order to protect the existing biodiversity, beauty, culture, natural resources and most importantly, the livelihoods of the inhabitants (1). The environmental and social impacts of ilmenite extraction are already known and widely publicized through a documentary entitled “I want my part of the land - Madagascar” (*Je veux ma part de terre – Madagascar*) describing the realities for communities in the QIT Madagascar Minerals (QMM) Rio Tinto mining area in the South-East of Madagascar. In spite of this strong resistance, the Toliara Sands project obtained the environmental permit in June 2015.

During a conference followed by a debate in Paris, two of the MA.ZO.TO. association Board members stated that in terms of environmental protection in Madagascar, “the key stakeholders apply double standards. When small-scale farmers use slash and burn practices and sell charcoal in order to survive, they [stakeholders] say that the forest is protected, but when multinational companies destroy hundreds of hectares of forests for their mining activities, the forests are no longer protected”. In this specific case, the NGO WWF, which had managed the conservation of nature in the Toliara region for many years and lectured everybody to protect forests, moved away from the protected area to leave the ground free for the Toliara Sands Project (2).

Moreover, in the North-West of Madagascar, a German company named **Tantalus Rare Earths** received a mining concession of 300 km² on the Ampasindava peninsula, for rare earths exploration. This company also obtained the exploitation permit during the Transition Government period. In 2012, the company signed a letter of intent for a technical cooperation with the French chemical company Rhodia (3) and more recently, a ten-year off-take contract with the German industrial group ThyssenKrupp (4). International media often write about the success in Tantalus’ fundraising to support its project (5).

Does Tantalus dare going ahead with such commitments because it has already secured informal commitment for the extraction activities from the decision makers, no matter the risks for the environment? Yet the photographs of rare earth exploitation sites in China show the extreme seriousness of the environmental damages caused by rare earths extraction and provide a basis for major concern about the future activities of this company.

In fact, a protected area has been created on the Ampasindava peninsula. The Natural Protected Area Ampasindava-Galoko-Kalobinono 2015-2020 development and management plan, which describes forests and other natural resources in the area, mentions the risks provoked by “an industrial mining project” without naming neither the company name nor the products concerned (6).

The international NGO Missouri Botanical Garden Madagascar is in charge of this protected area, which is supposed to exist on the basis of a pacific coexistence with the mining company. But how can there be such co-existence without grave impact on the protected area in the face of differing interests? Local community groups have expressed their fear about the loss of their land and harvests.

A dramatic event occurred in the Western region of Madagascar, where an iron extraction project operated by a Chinese company known as Madagascar Wuhan Iron and Steel Corporation, **WISCO**, had led to launch an alert in 2012 (7): the building of the road and harbor constitutes a high risk of destruction to the National Park of Baly bay (8) in Soalala. Local communities were especially concerned by the issue as several rivers flowing to the neighbouring villages originate from inside the park. The discussions that took place between the nature conservation NGO managing the park and the defenders of the company’s interests were not published. In December 2014, the Malagasy media reported a fire, probably an arson that lasted for nine days and destroyed 220 hectares of the national park (9). Would the fire have resolved a part of the problem? Did the investigations on this fire end up in the identification and sanctioning of the culprits and persons behind them?

Mining companies in charge of biodiversity management and protection?

In the Eastern region, the company **Ambatovy**, a joint-venture between the Canadian companies Sherritt and SNC-Lavallin, Japanese Sumitomo Co and South-Korean Korea Resources Co, extracts nickel and cobalt since 2013. Ambatovy won the “Nedbank Capital Sustainable Business Award” in 2014 in the category “Resources and Non Renewable Energy”, due to its Biodiversity Program in Madagascar. (10) Some Malagasy civil society organizations mentioned the example of this company to argue that the transfer of the protected area management to mining companies by the State is inappropriate due to a critical issue linked to watercress growers. The peasants who grow watercress depend on access to a small river that runs through the protected area managed by the Ambatovy company. Three of them were arrested and charged with having introduced a new species to the protected area. These people and their families have grown watercress in this river for decades. The court decision freed the three men from jail, while the forty families that used to grow watercress in this river were no longer allowed to continue and were provided with compensation of unknown amounts (11).

The Qit Madagascar Minerals (QMM) company is extracting ilmenite in the South-East of Madagascar since 2009. The Anglo-Australian multinational Rio Tinto is 80% shareholder of QMM and 20% of the shares are held by the Malagasy state. The whole area containing ilmenite covers 4 000 hectares but the land area assigned to QMM-Rio Tinto is more important as a part of it has been dedicated to nature conservation. Investigations from the field resulted in a document entitled “The mining-conservation nexus Rio Tinto. Development ‘gifts’ and contested compensation in Madagascar” (12), where the author writes that access to land connects the apparently disparate domains of nature conservation and mining extraction. The QMM company has also been exploiting ilmenite from the mining site of Mandena while extraction at the Petriky and Sainte Luce sites seems to have been postponed due to the current low price of ilmenite on the global market. All three sites were declared protected areas in May 2015, i.e. well after QMM had received its mining concessions covering these areas. In Mandena, local communities had already lost access to the area when mining started. But at the Petriky and Sainte Luce sites, mining has not yet commenced, and thus the area should remain available for local use. Declaring the sites as protected areas facilitated already restricting access for community use even without any active mining being undertaken.

Final remarks

These cases are examples of the issues around mining activities and environment protection in Madagascar. A few companies have started extraction without any environmental permit. The weakness of capacities and means of the Malagasy government and state institutions to appropriately assess the environmental impacts constitutes one of the reasons that led the civil society organizations and other structures to demand the Malagasy government to hold on any new grant of mining exploitation permit, in order to take time to improve the mining regulation in the Malagasy nation interests.

As research in the field has shown, restricting local communities' access to protected areas does not stop deforestation and may increase poverty in some places. Assessments are being implemented about the different kinds of forest and natural resources management, including different methods of financialization of nature applied in Madagascar.

The will of the Malagasy government and decision makers to protect the rights and interests of the local communities when discussing with the mining and multinational companies remains a major issue to be discussed too.

Mamy Rakotonrainibe

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Why are we in jail? A women's fight against injustice and domination in India

It was 6am. Me and other women comrades had to get ready for a rally and meeting at 10am to oppose the new Land Acquisition Ordinance promulgated for the third time in succession by the current party in power in India. I heard jeeps coming in. I heard the sound of the police boots as they alighted from the jeeps. Then, there was a loud banging on the door in the adjacent room where two men comrades sleep. I knew the police have come to arrest us. Meanwhile the men comrades open the door. The police in numbers rushed in. I came out of my room and asked them to wait until I had changed. Some police officers entered my room, slapped one of the other woman Adivasi comrades and stared at the other Adivasi comrade who was kind of frozen in her half dressed position after bath. They seized all the phones they could see. Meanwhile my landlady was called and shouted at by the police officers for renting out this two room space and ordered to vacate the space. I was led by about fifteen to twenty officers and forced to sit inside a jeep. The other Adivasi woman comrade was forced to sit in another jeep. Our convoy left. About six jeeps and one truck load of armed constables! We were driven to the Superintendent of Police office on the outskirts of the city. Me and the other woman comrade were sent to two different rooms and the men comrades were kept outside. Then, as expected, we were taken to the local court, which was emptied and cordoned off, and we were sent 80 kilometres away to a fourteen-day judicial remand, to join 5 other comrades already there for more than two months, at Mirzapur jail.

What have we done for the police to swoop down at 6 am and arrest us with such a big armed force as if we were terrorists? There is an *immediate reason* and a *long term*

anger which the police and administration have against those of us fighting for peoples' rights.

Immediate reason – the movement against the illegal Kanhar dam and illegal acquisition of land in the Kanhar dam area.

Kanhar Irrigation Project is an inter-state project located downstream at the confluence of the rivers Pagan with Kanhar, near Sugawan village in Tehsil Dudhi of District Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh. The project proposes a 3.003 kilometres long earthen dam with a maximum height of 39.90 meters from the deepest bed level, which may be increased to 52.90 meters if linked to the Rihand reservoir. The project envisages the submergence of 4131.5 hectares of land, which includes parts of Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, mostly inhabited by tribal communities. The project claims that it will provide irrigation to Dudhi and Robertsganj Tehsils in the Sonbhadra district via left and right canals emerging from both sides of the dam, however, this region has seen with the Rihand dam - which was built across the Rihand river in the early 1960s and displaced thousands of families from over 100 villages - how the waters are being used to meet the needs of energy companies. The arable command area of the project is 47,302 hectares. The project imposes enormous threats not only on the environment and ecology but also to thousands of tribal families living here for hundreds of years.

Originally approved by the Central Water Commission in September 1976, there was some foundation work undertaken at the time, but the project was soon stalled due to inter-state issues, lack of funds and strong protests from tribal communities of the region. The construction work was completely abandoned since 1989-90. There were attempts to re-inaugurate the project in January 2011 and in November 2012, however no work could be taken up until December 2014, when construction work began under heavy police and paramilitary presence. Roads were blocked and the project site entry was closed 1.5 kilometres ahead of the construction site. Local Adivasi and Dalit people who have been opposing this project expressed their opposition even more strongly.

The loosely knit movement gathered momentum with their decision to align with the Union of Forest Working People in a public meeting in December 2014. Continuous picketing began a little far from the construction site. Activists filed cases in the National Green Tribunal to challenge the project in terms of the environmental harm it would be causing and the lack of proper environment and forest clearances. The Tribunal passed a stay order and asked the dam project authorities to produce relevant environment clearances.

The Tribunal order noted among other issues that the project is bound to result in a huge loss of forests; with a large number of trees already cut despite strong opposition from the tribal communities, because the cutting is a gross violation of the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act from 1980. The Renukoot forest division of the Sonbhadra district is one of the richest and densest forest areas of Uttar Pradesh. It is known for its rich biodiversity, medicinal plants and the traditional and cultural heritage in the form of tribal knowledge which has attracted much scientific and economic attention.

However, in violation of the tribunal stay order, construction work continued. Peoples' anger grew. On 14 April, local people decided to organise a protest near the construction site. As people came together, they were fired upon – one Adivasi suffered

bullet injury and several others were injured. But the people resisted with increasing numbers joining the sit-in programme. This made the police force to retreat and thus the sit-in continued. Again, on 18 July people were brutally baton charged and fired at. Arrest warrants were issued against several activists, including me and other women Adivasi community leaders. Orders were also issued prohibiting my entry into the district.

The local district administration and police, hand-in-glove- with the local land mafia and the industrial-builder lobby have decided to trample on peoples wishes and forcibly evict them from their ancestral villages and lands. They do not care for dialogue, they have no regard for the legal system or the constitution of the country. It is their fiefdom and they rule it the way they want – by force. They do not care that this project does not have appropriate environmental or forest clearances and that it will directly adversely affect nearly 10,000 tribal families who will lose their ancestral land permanently. They do not care that Gram Sabhas (Village Councils) of the affected villages have passed a consensus against the project and submitted it to the State Government. They do not care that dense forests will be lost: the Kanhar project document shows that 4 439.294 hectares of land categorized as ‘Forest and others’ will be affected - millions of trees will be cut down by this project which would cause significant impact on the environment, wildlife and livelihood of tribal peoples. They do not care about the health of the tributary river Kanhar to one of the major rivers of the region – the Sone river, which is in turn a main tributary to the life line of India, the Ganges river. They do not care that loosing millions of trees will contribute to climate change because the carbon in the forests will be released to the atmosphere. People of this area do not want this project. They say: *“We do not want dams; in fact we don’t need it. It is the industries for which they need water, and for which they want us to give up our fertile ancestral land and destroy the forests which we have protected since centuries and put our children in danger.”*

The long-term anger against us – the fight for people’s rights and against injustice

It needs to be understood that the anger of the local administration, police, landed gentry, mafia, is due to the work of more than a decade and a half in the district of Sonbhadra among the Adivasi and Dalit people of this region – for their rights to land, forest, water and natural resources.

Sonbhadra district, tucked away in the south eastern corner of the state of Uttar Pradesh, is the “energy capital of the country” – producing more than 11,000 MW of electricity, millions of tons of aluminium and cement. While the area is highly industrialized, the people are highly impoverished. The whole country is benefiting from this region, which was once full of forests and hills, but this region and its people have not benefitted and on the contrary have been impoverished. The “energy capital of India” does not provide electricity to the people of this region. And the fact that people were uprooted from their lands for the industrialization has only impoverished the people in the region.

It is in the backdrop of this industrial progress but unprecedented impoverishment of the Dalit and Adivasi people of this region that the All India Union of Forest Working People – then not a union but part of the Uttar Pradesh Land Reforms and Labour Rights Campaign Committee and later on as part of the National Forum of Forest

People and Forest Workers – NFFPFW, which was actively advocating for the rights of forest based people - sent me to work with the people in this district and build awareness around their rights to land, forests and natural resources. That was in 1998-1999. The work of the National Forum in Sonbhadra added strength to the evolving discussions around the rights of forest workers and forest-based communities. The struggles of forest dwelling communities to assert their sovereign control over forests and other natural resources, waged from the early days of the British rule right up to post-Independence India, are probably the oldest and the most consistent.

But these struggles had so far been marginalised by the political and academic circles. In post-colonial India, the mainstream discourses on forests and environment almost always deal with and describe forest communities as a threat to the environment and hold them responsible for the destruction of natural resources. Hence, the identity of forest workers was never really recognised, neither in the political nor in the labour movement discourse. But our struggle was changing that scenario. Our struggle was empowering local Adivasi, Dalit communities to be aware of their rights, speak up and, after the passing of the Forest Rights Act, demand it. Large tracts of land have been reclaimed by Adivasi and Dalits in the region and they are collectively cultivating such land. This has posed a direct challenge to the landed class and upper caste of this region.

An added dimension is that the struggle has been primarily spearheaded by women – which has unsettled and angered the patriarchal state and landed gentry. So it is a class struggle with a strong gender aspect linked to it. This kind of repression – sending us to jail, threatening us, will only strengthen the movement. Long live the victory of peoples struggle all over the world for their rights of land, water, forests and dignity of work.

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All India Union of Forest Working People (AIUFWP)

See Press Release from July 15, 2015, “Say No to state violence against democratic protests”, A joint statement by Forest and Adivasi Movements in India: <http://palashscape.blogspot.nl/2015/07/press-release-say-no-to-state-violence.html>

Liberia: Vambo Community Activists ask for international support against gold mining

1. Could you tell us who are the Vambo Community Activists?

The Vambo Township Development Association is made up of ordinary people living in the isolated and long ignored and underdeveloped Vambo Township in District Number Two, Grand Bassa County. They are joined by a network of extended family members who live in Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia, and spokespersons in the U.S. include Matthew and Isaac Gblorso; Moniyue Brown and Mamie Boe, prominent women community leaders, Zach N. Davis and lastly Kona Khasu, Sr., a former Deputy Minister of Education during the first term of Liberia’s first woman President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Liberia’s prominent 1970s playwright when he was Director of the National Cultural Troupe. Members of Mahlor Township, our nearest neighbors, have also joined us. David Kennedy Vanyan, a son of Mahlor Township, is a powerful speaker for the shared interests, history and familial inter-relatedness of both townships.

2. *How is the experience of mining in Liberia: have there been many projects in the past, is mining a common struggle for local communities?*

Liberia has some of the richest reserves of natural mineral resources in West Africa. Iron ore, diamonds and gold are just some of the commonly sought resources we have. Unfortunately, mining in Liberia as across Africa has historically meant the exploitation of the populations living in the closest proximity to the mines. Most of these communities are isolated in the interior of the country, where the most basic human necessities do not exist. Citizens of these communities succumb to mining through a combination of promises of “development”, manipulation, coercion and, sometimes, force. Many times the government has used force to take desired areas. Citizens living on this land have been conscripted or left with no choice but to work in these mines. All mining concessions in Liberia have engaged in such behaviors to varying degrees. These would include LAMCO and BONG mines, which operated before the Liberian “civil” war. It remains to be seen what record Arcelor-Mittal and others will leave in this new era of mining in Liberia.*

3. *Could you explain what type of mining activities are taking place in Vambo Town? Is it gold mining? Diamonds? Other minerals?*

Presently, it is only gold mining, however, it has been speculated that there are other minerals. The gold mining is done by groups of itinerate miners, mostly youths, who engage in what is now being called ‘artisanal’ mining – a term far too elegant for what has occurred on our land. The miners – or ‘gold boys’ – as they are called hail from Liberia as well as West African countries, such as Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali, Ghana and others. They use manual labour with basic hand tools such as shovels and diggers mostly.

4. *Since when are these activities taking place? And how many communities are being impacted?*

There has been very small-scale gold mining in the mountains above Vambo and Mahlor Townships since the 1960s and perhaps before. But the discovery of gold deposit in November 2014 attracted national and even international attention. Twenty communities out of the 48 communities in the Vambo Township have been adversely affected by an unprecedented influx of over fifteen thousand gold seekers from all over. They outnumbered and overwhelmed the local population by far.

Gold seekers from abroad and other parts of the country have introduced wide varieties of criminal activities including stealing food crops on which the local subsistence farmers solely depend, pillaging livestock, looting communal assets including the only two hand pumps existent in the Township. Countless miners have been murdered by other miners for their “fortunes” before they could leave the pits to meet buyers or their sponsors. Fortunately, no local inhabitant has been killed in this manner. However, we live in fear of being victimized and under constant threat. We cannot attend their normal farming activities for fear of being attacked or due to destruction of farmlands and the river and creeks depended on for water.

5. *Do you know if a company (or companies) is involved? Is it a Liberian company*

or is it from abroad?

In the beginning, the miners were largely Liberians. Soon illegal aliens from Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ivory Coast to as far as Mali and Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nigeria joined them.

At the peak of the mining frenzy before the rains, several foreigners from Europe, Asia, the Middle East and even some 'big hands' – prominent Liberian citizens - were rumored to be secretly financing miners and pits. Some foreign timber concession holders and their local partners made proposals for claims as well. So there was no single company as it were but the net effect of all these competing interests was as overwhelming and damaging. And there was no one company or individual to hold accountable.

- 6. What are the problems that the communities in Vambo town are facing in relation to this mining? Are there environmental problems such as deforestation or water pollution? Are there health risks involved for the local populations?*

The forest is being cleared indiscriminately to get to the gold deposits. A portion of the Findley Mountain has been reduced to pits and tunnels for mining the gold. The soil has been destabilized, and any sustained rains could cost mudslide unto the "residential" section of the No Way Town, the town at the base of the mountain. At the peak of the mining in early 2015 there were reportedly 20,000 illicit artisanal miners. Large trees, hundreds of years old were cut down and burned to clear space for mining pits. Miners operate 24-hour shifts with some sleeping during the day in order to mine at night using artificial light sources.

Locals are afraid to farm for fear of rogue miners stealing their crops. Gangs are pillaging farms and taking the crops to the market in No Way Town. It is reported that some of the law enforcement personnel begun to mine themselves or to have miners working for them.

The creeks and rivers serving the township have become muddy and unsafe as miners use the creeks and rivers to pan for gold as well as to wash their bodies. Many have taken to using the waters for relieving their bodily functions. The stealing of the two communal hand pumps have left townspeople with no choice but to use the rivers and creeks for washing, drinking and cooking. Under these conditions, any outbreak of disease will spread rapidly, especially since the population is not fully aware of the short and long term dangers of drinking polluted and diseased water. The township is under constant threat of cholera and other water-borne diseases. Miraculously, the township was spared from the recent Ebola epidemic.

There are no clinics or health posts so ill persons, expectant mothers and the elderly have to be carried on human back or motorcycle - if they are well enough to sit up - to the nearest health facilities in Buchanan, 25 or so miles away. On several occasions we have had to pay transport for sick persons.

- 7. Was there any consultation with the affected communities before or during the mining activities? If so, who organized the consultation (the company, an NGO or the government?) and how would you describe the consultations?*

No, there were no proper consultations to speak of. The meetings were largely for show as employees of the Ministry of Land, Mines and Energy ignored the tenants of recent laws Community Rights Laws from 2006 and 2009 and set about parcelling out large portion of township land as mining claims. They also failed to seek inspections of other relevant government agencies that by law should have been involved. Those would include the Forestry Development Authority, The Environmental Protection Agency and the Ministries of Health and Labor, respectively. These oversights happened as certain individuals from the community and representatives of the government put personal interests above the community at large and the laws of our country. This is common practice in Liberia.

8. What activities have been/are organized in the communities to resist the mining activities or company?

A series of largely cosmetic community-based meetings, public dialogues, and meetings with local and central government offices were initially carried out with the usual lip service being paid – promises of road building, etc. The past few months have seen positive developments as some local officials are now paying some attention to our situation. These responses came after our letter-writing campaign and video clips of the destruction and degradation were hand delivered to elected and appointed officials and eminent citizens and friends of Grand Bassa County. Since then, we have seen a level of response from some members of the Grand Bassa County Legislative Causes, the County Superintendent, and officials of the Ministry of Land, Mines & Energy.

9. What are the demands from the communities in relation to the mining activities?

We want to:

(1) Stop the expansion of the unregulated mining activities responsible for the level of destruction and environmental degradation of our communities; (2) Prevent increase of such practices, (3) Remedy damages already done (4) Insist that government support the communities in acquiring safe drinking water, schools, clinics, and skills training/employment opportunities for the youth and (5) to continue to take control of our natural resources and to decide when, how and with whom we engage to harvest these resources for the greater good of the community, Liberia and business “partners”.

10. Do you have any idea on who is buying the gold and to which international companies and markets it is being traded?

We are not sure who buys the gold but it is likely that it ends up among the handful of powerful Monrovia-based brokers for international markets. Our focus has been to bring the situation unfolding in our community under control by engaging the proper authorities through the law and not necessarily identifying the “big hands” behind things.

11. What has been the government's reaction to the communities' demands? Do you feel that the demands are being heard?

Initially, the government deployed troops of special riot police forces - the Emergency Response Unit (ERU) and Police Support (PSU) of the Liberia National Police - to stop

the killings and other forms of crimes and lawlessness. Fifty police officers were permanently stationed in the mining camp for five months. It is common knowledge that these officers began to mine themselves which led to a riot between disgruntled miners and the officers. Persons lost their lives during this fracas. The Government sent officials from the Ministry of Land, Mines and Energy on several occasions to assess the situation. This ministry also established a sub-office in the No Way Gold Camp. Revenue agents were sent to collect government taxes from the mining. Besides, the Ministry of Public Works engineers conducted an assessment of the 12-km motor road from the BIA Market to the No Way Gold Camp. Road construction began in February 2015. Barely two miles were graded when the work was halted at the first large creek. Immigration failed to make any real attempt to address the presence of thousands of foreigners plundering the mountain. While, they have been more responsive since our letters and accompanying video was sent to our Representatives and Senators it is fair to say government did not fully respond to our demands. It is also fair to say government may have been overwhelmed by the situation for several reasons we will not get into here. Yet and still our community suffered greatly due to what occurred and is struggling to pull itself together.

12. Which kind of international solidarity do you think would help to support the affected communities?

We need international solidarity and support to help:

1. Raise awareness and end all mining activities that negatively impact the people and environment (stop destruction of the forest, and contamination of the land and water resources)
2. Raise funds for improving our livelihoods and supporting community projects, i.e., agriculture, income generation activities, education, health, and trainings in leadership and advocacy.
3. Ensure that mining of gold and other mineral resources should be done accordingly to best practices and policies of Natural Resource Governance and Management as well as existing Community Rights Laws of Liberia.
4. Ensure community involvement in negotiations of all natural resource agreements (both mineral and forest resources), with the right to say “No” to any of the proposed forestry or mining activities if it is not in the interest of the community and the nation at large.
5. For the communities and people of Vambo Township, to get fair financial benefits and tangible infrastructural development due to the extraction of minerals and forest resources on our land.

Ernest Matthew Gblorso, Chairperson - matthew.gblorso@gmail.com

Kona Khasu Sr, Senior Advisor and Elder - j.emmanuelroberts@gmail.com

Vambo Township Development Association Leadership

** **WRM addition:** Mining in Liberia has always followed the interests of foreign companies and business. The Liberian-American-Swedish Minerals Company (LAMACO), now a defunct corporation, was founded in 1955 by American and Swedish investors. The company established the first large-scale mining operation in Liberia, today being reactivated by the multinational Arcelor Mittal, which is partially rebuilding the Lamaco railway for shipping the extracted minerals. Likewise, the BONG mining Company, a German-Italian concession established in 1958, constructed one of*

Liberia's main rail lines to ship the iron ore from the mountains, leading to the displacement of local populations and environmental harms.

Mineral extraction in the province of Nord-Kivu, DRC: present situation and analysis of environmental questions

Reseau CREF (Network for Conservation and Rehabilitation of Forest Ecosystems) is a platform of organizations working on governance of natural resources in the province of North Kivu. Among others, it intervenes in the governance of the mining sector through its program “Mines and Hydrocarbons”.

Context of the province of North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo

a. Security situation

For a decade, the province of North Kivu has been continuously facing several challenges related to the security situation. The operations that have been launched continue – except for some (1) –without significant impact to this day, so that murders, massacres, abductions and kidnapping of citizens in *territoires* (administrative areas in DRC) and towns across the province continue. Until now, more than 400 people have been reported to have been killed by machete or axe, which also has humanitarian consequences such as displacements, illnesses...

This situation is made worse by the lack of governance that favours the proliferation of conflicts and, in addition, militias. This lack of governance is at the root of the human rights violations in the mining zones and leads to the population being deprived of their wealth and to environmental destruction.

The different agreements that were signed in the context of improving stability in the region of the Big Lakes (4) remain “dead letters” and do not guarantee lasting peace.

b. Decentralisation and election processes

The Constitution of the DRC from February 18, 2006, demands a decentralisation with the objective of good management of State affairs. Linked to this decentralization is the further dividing up of RDC from 11 into 24 provinces. A publicity campaign about the new provinces has already been launched but the regulations still await effective implementation. Although the province of North Kivu was not directly affected by this process (6), it will be affected by the consequences given the investment costs to set up and maintain the institutions of these additional provinces which will require fairly substantial resources from the national governmental budget, etc.

The Democratic Republic of Congo in general and especially the province of North Kivu will be engaged in an election process during all of 2015 and 2016. The lack of security observed in a part of the province continues to be one of the major challenges to hold peaceful elections.

Moreover, some political parties and groups of the opposition have conditioned their participation in the elections on some prerequisites including a dialogue to discuss

issues related to the electoral calendar and to stop the slide towards a third mandate of the present President of the DRC.

Context of mining in the province of North Kivu

For a decade, mining in the Province of North Kivu is done without respect for human rights of local communities and environmental norms. It also contributes to deforestation in the region. Indeed, apart from the problems related to human rights in mining and the perpetration of conflicts, environmental issues have not raised concerns among the stakeholders involved in the mining activities in the Province of North Kivu.

It should be also noted that even in the zones where semi-industrial mining is practiced and where the operators seem to have means to put in place best policies of social and environmental management the consequences to the environment are always harmful.

a. Present situation in the zones of artisanal mining

In the Province of North Kivu, mining is taking place in the *territoires* of Walikale, Masisi, Rutshuru, Lubero and Beni. In the *territoire* of Lubero and Beni, the mining is for gold, diamonds, wolfram, cassiterite, coltan... Mining is predominantly artisanal in the mines of Lubero (Manguredjipa, Bunyatenge et Kasugho) and in the mines in the *territoire* of Beni (Cantine, Mabalako, ...).

On the other hand, in the Walikale *territoire*, artisanal mining is also the predominant practice in the majority of the mining sites, except for the mine of Bisie (the big mine in the area) that is moving towards industrial production and is run by the company MPC/Alpha Mine. It is important to note that MPC/Alpha Mine are two separate companies, the first is from South Africa and the other from Canada and both are in the process of working together to extract cassiterite in the aforementioned Bisie mine. The extracted minerals in the Walikale *territoire* continue to be wolfram, gold, cassiterite, diamonds, coltan...

One single mining site has been identified in the *territoire* of Rutshuru, which is the mine of SOMIKIVU that extracts pyrochlore. The mining takes place in a part of the Rutshuru river. And finally, in the *territoire* of Masisi, mining is also artisanal and semi-industrial with the Congolese company "SMB" and here the boom for coltan can be seen.

It should be noted that at certain mining sites including those at the Bisie mine in the Walikale *territoire*, there is a conflict between local communities and/or artisanal miners, and the companies that hold the mining concessions.

There has been an attempt of coming to agreements and sort out the differences but the divergences persist among all stakeholders.

b. The review process of the legal framework: the mining code of 2002

This process that has started with work done at the level of each group (government, companies and civil society), resulted in a draft version that was submitted to the parliament.

This review process has not been finished yet as divergences continue between the stakeholders (government, companies and civil society) and because of the delay in putting the issue on the agenda of the Lower House of the Congolese parliament.

Current situation of mining in the province of North Kivu

It is well-known that the Congolese people live the paradox of the countries rich in mineral resources but the local population facing extreme poverty.

The province of North Kivu, where this is certainly the case, has been experimenting with different initiatives of traceability and transparency aimed at providing benefits to local communities from the resources of which their subsoil is so plentiful.

Indeed, since minerals in DRC, and particularly those in the East (North Kivu, South Kivu), are object of illicit and illegal extraction, several initiatives have been set up to bring to an end the mafia circuits but also to break the link between the conflicts and the extraction of these minerals.

a. The mining products

The mining in the Province of North Kivu is mainly for gold, cassiterite, coltan, diamonds, tourmaline, pyrochlore, wolfram... These minerals are extracted through artisanal mining by groups of diggers known as cooperatives that sell to processing entities (desks) through traders (middlemen).

It is important to highlight that those operators are obliged to comply with certain requirements of transparency and traceability so their products can be sold.

b. About the organization and functioning of the Sector

The mining sector in the province of North Kivu is nowadays submitted to several requirements aimed at ending the link between the conflicts and mineral extraction. These initiatives are being experimented with even though they have not been able to put an end to the fraud and smuggling in the mining sector.

Efforts are made by the Congolese government to qualify and validate certain mining sites as providing responsible products into supply chains but this must go hand in hand with an efficient monitoring to dismantle all the mafia networks that continue to profit from those mineral resources.

In Walikali, there are 61 mining sites identified; 7 have been qualified and validated as 'green' and the artisanal operators have regrouped in mining Cooperatives. These are cooperatives that manage the extraction activities in these places, including the cooperatives CEMIKA, COMIDE, COMID, COMIMPA, COCABI, COMIDER.

In Masisi, of the 33 identified mining sites, the most important of which are located around Rubaya for coltan, around Ngungu and Mahanga for wolfram and cassiterite, 17 mining sites were qualified as "green", of which 12 are for coltan, one for wolfram and 4 for cassiterite, with only one recognized mining Cooperative (COOPERAMMA).

In Lubero *territoire*, 6 mining sites of coltan, wolfram and cassiterite were qualified and validated “green”, this means, ready for mining activities. These are the following mining sites: Masingi, Mambilee, Kigali, Etaeto gauche, Malimbenze and Etaeto droite.

c. Impacts of mining

Social impacts

Mining in the Province of North Kivu is at the root of several problems as a consequence of bad management in the sector that, instead of being the base for a sustainable development, has created frustrations and misery among local chiefs and people.

On the one hand, this extraction has created a small economy facilitating commercial trade between a group of people and, on the other hand, the same extraction is done without any respect for human and environmental rights.

The flagrant violations at this time related to the access to these mining resources result from the fact that mining titles overlap with areas already covered by other titles and/or used by local operators.

The problem of formalizing mining operations in particular and of good governance in general in the mining sector that continues to be dominated by artisanal mining in a big part of the province of North Kivu cause other violations of human rights such as arbitrary arrests, acts of torture, violence against women and children.

Just as civil and political rights are violated at the mining sites in the Province of North Kivu, socio-economic rights also represent huge problems.

Not having access to the better schools, to quality health care or even the absence of road infrastructure, remains a nightmare for the populations living in the mining zones. This remains the reality despite the recognition of decentralization in the constitution in the Democratic Republic of Congo [that was meant to address such issues of lack of infrastructure and educational and health services].

Environmental impacts

There are links between mining and environmental factors. Mining today in the Province of Nord Kivu has an impact on the environment. Among these fragmentation of the forest, the destruction of biotopes, deforestation, and the degradation of water quality.

Like in other countries where mining is taking place, the DR Congo has felt the need to introduce provisions related to the management and the protection of the mining environment in the new Mining Code and its implementing regulations. These are aimed at encouraging mining operators to take measures to, if not eliminating the environmental effects of the mining activities, and at least to mitigate these as much as possible.

Unfortunately, we are witnessing an extraction that does not respect these provisions, both in Lubero as well as in Walikale, Beni, Masisi et Rutshuru.

The Masisi *territoire*, for example, continues to be one of the zones with much deforestation and this is visible in the grazing projects that have invaded these areas.

The few forests left in Masisi that were in the process of recuperation are now being ravaged by mining activities at several mining sites.

At the mining sites of the Lubero *territoire*, artisanal mining that violates environmental norms is known in the zone under a local name called “sakasaka method”. This means that the wood is cut, the remaining vegetation are cleared, the soil is dug up without respecting any environmental norm.

Finally, in the zones of artisanal mining for gold (mining site of Umate -, Walikale -, Beni Maguredjipa), the use of mercury to extract the gold continues being destructive for the environment, first because of the water pollution and the destruction of the soil; and there are even consequences for the climate with the disturbance of the seasonal rainfall.

d. Organization and functioning of the mining sector in North Kivu

The administrative organization of the mining sector in the province of North Kivu follows the Congolese mining code and regulation.

For example, the mining services which represent the division of the mines, as well as the ministry of mines are in the same administrative organization.

The offices of CEEC (7) for the control and certification of minerals are also in place although the officers are few and are unable to cover all the mining sites. The SAESCAM (8) which is a technical service of the Ministry of Mines in charge of the supervision of the artisanal miners is in place in certain mining zones, although they face serious problems in these zones.

Conclusions and perspectives

At this time, when responses are being sought to the issues of mineral extraction in the East of DRC and in the region of the Big Lakes, through adoption of measures and policies to address conflict minerals, we suggest that more attention be paid also to the environmental issues and social impacts.

The extractive industries, and local artisanal miners must do more in relation to social responsibility of the mining companies, but also respect other provisions of the mining code related to environmental protection.

Environmental issues should be considered a mandatory consideration to secure acceptance of the supply of minerals by processors and final consumers.

Reseau CREF (<http://www.reseaucref.org/>)

- (1) Democratic Allied Forces – Liberation army of Uganda
- (2) Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo
- (3) Observation Mission of the United Nations for the Stabilization of Congo
- (4) The countries of the African region of the Big Lakes are Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Ruanda, Tanzania and Uganda
- (5) Decentralized territorial entities
- (6) Because of being already an entire province as a result of the division of Kivu in 1988 (a division test)
- (7) CEEC: Center of Evaluation, Expertise and Certification (State service)
- (8) SAESCAM: Service for Assistance and Supervision of Small Scale Mining

Living on the run: devastation of the Ayoreos' lives and land at the hands of livestock farmers

Paraguay is currently the location of a far from ordinary regional meeting. Experts from Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia and Peru gathered on July 28 to discuss the critical situation posed by increasingly frequent sightings of indigenous peoples in isolation and its consequences.

The irony is that this meeting called by several organizations for cooperation and indigenous rights was held in a country that fails to apply, when it's not flagrantly disrespecting, International Law (1) and the Guidelines for the Protection of Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact (2), both of which it is committed to comply through consultation with the United Nations Human Rights High Commissioner.

All of this despite the fact that the Paraguayan Chaco is home to the last uncontacted Indigenous people outside the Amazon, the Ayoreo-Totobiegosodes (3), a nomadic hunter-gatherer people who consider this area their ancestral land and who have taken care of her for countless generations.

Against the current, destruction continues at the hands of landowners and firms, mostly of foreign capital, which illegally log territory to make way for cattle farms. The state is a spectator, often indifferent if not complicit (4) in this devastation, although theoretically it should be safeguarding the lives and lands of those who are fleeing from bulldozers and sheltering in the last refuge of the forest inhabited by both them and their ancestors.

Deforestation and disease: a deadly duo

Neither the fleeing situation which has forced uncontacted indigenous people to have interactions with outsiders, nor the dangers that they and everyone involved face, can be headed off unless the state responsible for their welfare moves from rhetoric to action. It is a fact that if their land is not immediately protected, the Ayoreo-Totobiegosodes, whose name means "people of the wild pig place" who still survive thanks to isolation, are facing a catastrophe.

This is one of the most vulnerable societies worldwide (5), which is perhaps why in the UN guidelines, such as in the Convention 169 and the commentary of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (6), the principle of the intangibility of

their territory, and the criteria of use in place of ownership to establish their limits, are not understood as a fanciful whim, but as the key to their survival.

Many of the contacted relatives of the Ayoreo, living in sedentary communities, have been claiming in collaboration with Survival International for more than 20 years the ownership of their land, 500,000 hectares which belong to them and to their isolated family members threatened by agricultural and farming industry. They are the rightful owners, but the land remains under the control of foreign companies.

The lookout for expansion of these firms, such as Itapotí S.A., Yaguareté Porã or the subsidiary of Grupo San José, with Carlos Casado SA at the head, has led to the fastest rate of deforestation in the world, according to a study from the University of Maryland (7). The death of the forest is followed by the violation of the most fundamental right of all: the life of the Ayoreos who depend on it.

"After we were contacted in 1986 many of our people died, including my mother. We do not want that to happen again," declared an Ayoreo woman before a minister in 2014. An unknown number of recently contacted indigenous Ayoreos are suffering from respiratory diseases to which they lack immunity, such as tuberculosis, because of the activity of those who snatch their land and resources and also as a result of a first contact. Many suffer from this and other diseases brought in by company workers or other people from surrounding areas, which threaten the survival of more lives.

Parojnai Picanerai, Ibore Picanerai, and many more names (8) bear testimony to the trail of death left by forced contact, deaths which would have been avoided if recognition of their land was guaranteed.

The ravages of the "beast with metal skin"

Before contact, Esoi, one of the indigenous people in isolation, saw how the gardens and hunting areas of all his community, which allowed them to survive, were being surrounded. They were forced to leave their forest in 2004. He resisted, like many other Ayoreos still do, the attempt of colonization from an excavator and attacked what he considered to be a "beast with metal skin". "I thought I heard shootings (...) I looked around but we were all alive. Then I realized it was the noise of the trees being cut by the bulldozer," he testified. The threat that Esoi anticipated proved to be real and is still very much alive.

Several companies have been discovered *in flagrante* (9) through satellite images while building roads and infrastructure within the territorial area claimed by the Ayoreos. Although this has been denounced countless times and in various ways, such as through the recent alarm voice given to the UN (10), the weak and corrupt Paraguayan judicial system has failed to prevent future land invasions or to return the land to its indigenous owners, despite this obligation being enshrined in the Constitution.

The company Itapotí S.A. has illegally and repeatedly invaded Ayoreo land (11). In April 2015, a Government team confirmed that the company operated once more in territory whose title was given to the Ayoreo in 1997 and 2004. Nonetheless, no charges have been brought against the company, owned by Nelly Estela Martinez and Mercedes

Viviana Gonzalez, which continues operating with impunity in 15,000 hectares of Ayoreo territory.

Yaguareté Pora SA, owned by Marcelo Bastos Ferraz, occupies 78,549 hectares of Ayoreo land, of which thousands have been illegally cleared by the company's workers. The Brazilian rancher rejected just over a year ago the desperate request of the Ayoreo to curb large-scale destruction of their forest (12), considered a natural heritage area by UNESCO. Satellite images taken on June 27 this year attest how, despite not having the required environmental license, rapid deforestation to make way for cattle ranching continues. For years there have been advocacy campaigns so that Ferraz returns the land to the Ayoreo, but he still resists doing so.

The farming and ranching company Carlos Casado SA (13), subsidiary of the Spanish San José Group presided by Jacinto Rey González, owns 36,000 hectares of the core of the Ayoreo ancestral territory. In August 2012, the Government confirmed to the organization of the Ayoreo people, OPIT, that the company began the construction of a road and a reservation without the required legal license. Due to the reaction, Carlos Casado S.A. wrote to the Government to propose the sale of land and subsequent tenure for the benefit of the Ayoreo. But despite pressure from the Ayoreo themselves (14) to demand the return of the Ayoreo territory, the company remains silent and inactive.

The disaster that this dispossession represents for the sedentary Ayoreos is evident not only in the violation of their territorial rights, equivalent to the hijacking of their self-sufficiency and livelihoods. It is also evident in the attempts to rob their dignity, since those who have lost their land often have no other choice but to become pawns of these ranchers who have occupied their territory to breed cattle. "We want to continue using the forest, and we want farmers to stop harassing our relatives who are still there," an Ayoreo spokesperson said in response to this situation.

The best guardians of the natural world

For decades we have witnessed that in contrast to the destruction of the Paraguayan Chaco ecosystem by these companies, the Ayoreos act as the best guardians of the environment with which they coexist. A proof of this is that the lands inhabited by the Ayoreos are still some of the last remaining forested areas in the region

Support for the Ayoreo's struggle for territory and life has made progress, as can be seen with the recent protection of 150,000 hectares of land that they have been striving to preserve based on their ancestral knowledge and their intimate relationship with her. However, many challenges remain ahead, which can only be solved if organized pressure at the international level is put on the Paraguayan state to fulfill its responsibilities and to awaken broader society to the importance of recognizing and protecting Ayoreo land. This, in turn, will play a role in the protection of our collective future as human beings.

Join the campaign for recognition of Ayoreo territory by sending a message to the Paraguayan Attorney General:

<http://us1.campaign-archive2.com/?u=b14580b05b832fb959c4ee444&id=6862cfb39d&e=6665240795>

Hilda Pérez, @survivaesp

Survival International, global movement for the rights of indigenous and tribal people,
www.survival.es

* For more information on the indigenous people in isolation, see [WRM's 194 Bulletin](#)

- (1) <http://www.ilo.org/indigenous/Conventions/no169/lang--es/index.htm>
- (2) <http://acnudh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Final-version-Guidelines-on-isolated-indigenous-peoples-february-2012.pdf>
- (3) <http://www.survival.es/indigenas/ayoreo>
- (4) <http://www.survival.es/noticias/10763>
- (5) <http://www.indigenasaislados.org/>
- (6) <http://www.survival.es/noticias/10607>
- (7) <http://earthenginepartners.appspot.com/science-2013-global-forest>
- (8) <http://www.survival.es/noticias/10151>
- (9) <http://www.survival.es/noticias/7384>
- (10) <http://www.survival.es/noticias/10838>
- (11) <http://www.survival.es/noticias/10555>
- (12) <http://www.survival.es/noticias/9975>
- (13) <http://www.survival.es/noticias/8608>
- (14) <http://www.survival.es/noticias/10033>

Call to Action to reject REDD and extractive industries

Once again, the world's governments will meet at the end of this year within the United Nations convention framework to supposedly deal with the real and tangible problem of climate change. However, the agenda of the climate negotiations - mainly driven by governments of industrialized countries and corporate lobbying groups - follows the mantra of capital accumulation, which in terms of climate change it is translated in the carbon market. This mantra has led to a further increase of greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation and environmental destruction in general. This growing destruction is "accepted" and even promoted, as long as it is "offset" by a project elsewhere. It is primarily traditional, forest-dependent peoples who suffer the consequences; not only with the impacts of severe droughts, floods and many other changes in the climate, but also through the plundering and looting of their territories, due to the expanded extraction legitimated by the carbon market. The last (public) draft of the climate agreement to be implemented post-2020, and which is expected to come out of the negotiations this year in Paris, France, opens the door wide to market mechanisms such as REDD at a global scale (1).

What does this mean?

Carbon market mechanisms such as REDD have allowed the continuation, legitimization and intensification of destructive activities such as mining, oil, gas and coal, monoculture plantations, agribusiness, among others. This extractive model has resulted in dispossession, violence, criminalization, destruction and loss for hundreds of communities worldwide, and with them, their cultures, spirituality, knowledge, autonomy and control over their lives and territories (2). How can we speak of a

mechanism that seeks to "stop deforestation" or "benefit forest peoples" when the underlying logic is to expand industrial scale extraction? Despite all the propaganda and speeches created to make us believe that REDD is a "viable solution", experience teaches us that what it is really seeking is to maintain an economy of capital accumulation which controls more territories and fills the pockets of just a few (3).

In this context, in December 2014, in the run-up to the climate negotiations that were held in Lima, Peru, over 150 organizations and movements from around the world launched a Call to Action to reject REDD and extractive industries, to curb capitalism and defend lives and territories (4). The Call stated that *"One of the fundamental pillars of the new global capitalism is 'environmental services'. This involves the further financialization and commodification of nature, and signifies subjugating it to capital. The carbon market, biodiversity offsets and water markets are part of this kind of capitalism."* And adds that *"With REDD+, forests' and soils' capacity to absorb carbon and retain it, and plants' capacity to grow, photosynthesize, conserve water, grow and generate biodiversity are being quantified, monetized, appropriated, privatized and financialized, just as with any other commodity. The 'environmental services' trade also fuels the impunity of polluters and destroyers: instead of complying with laws that prohibit polluting and deforestation, they can 'compensate' for these ills. This trade also diverts attention from combatting climate change, as it does not address the cause."*

An important step in this Call was to clearly articulate the criticism of REDD with its implications in the expansion of the extractive model, as its proponents constantly use a discourse of "local participation," "improving forest management," "improving living conditions and development of local populations" and even "implementing territorial rights". Nevertheless, as stated in the Call, *"Corporations like Shell Oil or Rio Tinto mining corporation; tree plantations and pulp and paper producers like Green Resources and Suzano; agribusiness firms like Wilmar, Monsanto and Bunge; multilateral agencies like the UNDP and FAO; conservation transnationals like Wildlife Works, WWF, The Nature Conservancy or Conservation International; consulting firms, public and private banks and many governments elaborate, support and fund REDD+ (...) These mechanisms undermine the real solutions to climate change, as they serve as a distraction from changes to the modes of production and consumption and towards economies and societies that are free from fossil fuels"*

However, the pro-carbon market and REDD campaign intensifies as we approach the negotiations this year, where an agreement on REDD is expected to be reached, disregarding the evidence gathered about the harmful impacts of this mechanism. *"Climate negotiations, which are increasingly controlled by corporate power, do not try to save the climate, nor protect forests and soils, eradicate poverty or respect indigenous peoples' rights. On the contrary, they cravenly protect predatory corporations and reinforce a destructive and patriarchal model."*

Therefore, we once again denounce that the decisions to move forward with carbon markets and related mechanisms, taken in conference rooms by white-collar representatives, do not reflect the reality of peoples and forests, and much less reflect the urgent need to initiate a real transition away from an economic model thirsty for fossil fuels. To continue with the carbon market mantra would mean to continue with the imposition of destructive projects on those people who have defended their forests

and territories for generations. We reiterate the request to organizations, social movements, groups and networks to join the Call to Action to strengthen the voices coming from the forests which teach us the true consequences of these mechanisms. *To fight against REDD+ is also to fight capitalism!*

You can join the Call here: <http://wrm.org.uy/all-campaigns/to-reject-redd-and-extractive-industries-to-confront-capitalism-and-defend-life-and-territories/>

- (1) <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/adp2/eng/4infnot.pdf>
- (2) See more information in: <http://wrm.org.uy/browse-by-subject/mercantilization-of-nature/redd/>
- (3) See for example: <http://wrm.org.uy/books-and-briefings/redd-a-collection-of-conflicts-contradictions-and-lies/>
- (4) http://wrm.org.uy/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Call-COP-Lima_NoREDD.pdf

PEOPLES IN ACTION

Movement update of resistance against POSCO in Odisha, India

The protests against the establishment of POSCO's steel plant in the Jagatsinghpur district of Odisha, India, are determined to continue until the multinational withdraws from the area. An update from the spokesperson of the local movement reveals that criminalization to those involved in the resistance is still extreme, with over two thousand people facing judicial charges. The statement denounces that "Many villagers cannot go out even when there is a medical emergency for fear of getting arrested". They ask for support in their fight against POSCO and the criminal charges to villagers and activists as well as the reclamation of their territories and livelihoods. See full update here.

Manifesto for the International Day for the defense of the mangrove forests

Since 2004, through the International 'Redmanglar' (Mangrove Network) - which brings together communities, organizations, academics, scientists and activists concerned with the defense of the mangrove forests - every 26th of July mangroves are celebrated by recalling their importance as a source of life, protection and support for coastal towns and communities, and their identity as a territory, traditions and cultures associated to them. Industrial activities such as shrimp farming, oil exploitation, large scale tourism, among others, have led mangroves and the communities they support to a critical point; threatened and endangered. See the manifesto "Mangrove: our food, our lives" (in Spanish) at:

http://redmanglar.org/sitio/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=395:manifesto-dia-manglar&catid=45:dia-del-manglar&Itemid=49

This year, in light of the recent murder of Julio Lopez, an active defender of the territories and the collective rights of his community and member of Redmanglar, we pay tribute to all those people who live on this important ecosystem and who constantly defend it from hazards and threats, giving their own lives to this cause. See the statement here.

Broken Promises in Malaysia: Displaced by Dams

The construction of three mega dams in Malaysia has displaced tens of thousands of people and forced them into resettlement areas. A stunning video from The Borneo Project shows a rather terrible reality, where current plans to construct twelve additional dams in the region of Sarawak will displace many thousands more. Learning from what happened to affected communities with previous mega dams in the country, including loss of livelihoods, land, culture as well as sacred places and cemeteries, people don't want more broken promises. Communities are still resisting the implementation of new dams and are decided to prevent them. As one of the villagers says: "If you have land, you live. Without land, you die". See video: <https://vimeo.com/130516168>

Honduras' Garifuna communities resist eviction and theft of land

Along the Atlantic coast of Honduras, Afro-Caribbean Garifuna communities are being threatened and forced from their land by proposals for the creation of mega-tourism projects and corporate-run cities, often known as "model cities," as well as the expanding interests of narco-traffickers and oil palm plantations to invade and use their territories. Faced with evictions, the Garifuna communities have decided to dedicate themselves to non-violent resistance in defense of their territory. Read full article at: <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/honduras-garifuna-communities-resist-eviction-theft-land/>

RECOMMENDED

Zero net emissions: neither net nor zero

What does "net" mean for the World Bank? An article in the Mexican newspaper "*La Jornada*" warns about the problem of so-called "zero net emissions", a concept strongly emphasized in a recent World Bank report. The author Silvia Ribeiro explains that the term is a trap designed to mislead: it is not about lowering emissions nor "zero emissions" but by adding the word "net", power is given to companies to continue polluting if they propose accounting systems where emissions are supposedly "absorbed" or "compensated" elsewhere, and thus, the result would be zero. In practice, this means no emission reduction, but rather an increase in emissions and profits from a social and environmental disaster. Read the full article (in Spanish):

<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2015/06/13/opinion/021a1eco>

Genetically engineered eucalyptus trees approved in Brazil. How long before we see GE tree monocultures in REDD?

Last April, the commercial use of GE eucalyptus trees was approved in Brazil, despite the strong local resistance and evidence of GE eucalyptus trees intensifying industrial plantations' impacts. This is the first approval of GE trees in Latin America. The application came from FuturaGene, a subsidiary of pulp and paper company Suzano. FuturaGene claims that because its GE trees grow faster, they also absorb more carbon dioxide, however, as an article from REDD-Monitor points out, trees from Suzano are mostly clearcut and converted to paper products, which returns carbon to the atmosphere. The article also asks if the approval of GE trees in Brazil mean that we can now expect REDD payments to go to companies planting vast monocultures of genetically engineered eucalyptus trees? After all, there are still no agreed definitions to differentiate forests from monoculture tree plantations (GE or not) in the UN negotiations. Read full article:

<http://www.redd-monitor.org/2015/04/24/genetically-engineered-eucalyptus-trees-approved-in-brazil-how-long-before-we-see-ge-tree-monocultures-in-redd/>

Discovering the secrets of Benin's forests to improve nutrition,

Although growing international recognition of forests' role on food sovereignty for forest-dependant populations, large amounts of medicinal and highly nutritious plants are disappearing due to deforestation. This is the case of Benin, where 12% of the households have lost food sovereignty, 38% of medicinal plants have vanished and malnourishment is prevalent. An article from The Guardian highlights a research that aims to protect and wisely use nutritional plants for forests peoples in Benin, which are mostly under threat by commercial agriculture and mining. Benin has set a precedent by becoming the first country in Africa to pass a law that protects sacred natural sites. See full article at: <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/jul/01/benin-forest-food-security-nutrition>

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