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THE FOCUS OF THIS ISSUE: MINING AND COMMUNITIES

Mining is a destructive activity that has particularly serious impacts on forests and on the communities who depend on them. It is a direct cause of deforestation and some of its impacts are discussed in this bulletin.

But what is behind mining? In answering this question, we look at the factors that are driving the expansion of the mining industry and in this sense could be considered underlying causes of deforestation: above all, a model of so-called development that is blind to the limits of nature. Such model fosters an indiscriminate and increasing demand for consumer goods benefitting ever bigger corporations while leads to the expansion of mining in order to produce them.

Mining also contributes to global warming and thus climate change. However, REDD projects implemented under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are being used by mining companies to clean up their image.

But the destructive advance of the mining industry has come up against the fertile resistance of communities around the world who are leading the way. This bulletin is theirs.

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OUR VIEWPOINT

- "Sustainable" mining: a contradiction in terms

One of the natural resource extraction activities that generates the most negative impacts, while also generating the most profits, is mining. Perhaps this is why the big global mining companies are now competing not only over mineral reserves but also to portray themselves most convincingly to the public as prime examples of "sustainability".

Many mining companies operate in tropical forest areas. The publicity campaigns of so-called "sustainable" companies often highlight an activity aimed at favourably impressing the public: in areas where forests have to be cleared to reach the minerals in the sub-surface, some companies reforest the entire area, and not with eucalyptus trees, but with numerous species of native trees. This is meant to convince people that they strive to ensure the recovery of the natural environment as a whole, and as a result, there are no negative impacts from their "sustainable" operations. But is this really true?

First of all, it would be interesting to know if neighbouring communities agree that by planting native tree species, it is possible to reproduce the forest that formerly occupied the area where mining operations were carried out. Obviously, it is impossible to fully recover the former wealth of biodiversity, of water resources, of the multiple roles, including spiritual roles, that were once played by the forest, the product of a process that took thousands of years to develop. Nor is it possible to heal the trauma suffered by neighbouring communities subjected to the destruction, pollution, dangerous and poorly paid employment and human rights abuses that are typical of the vast majority of mining operations established in a region of conserved ecosystems. This is what is leading to the emergence and strengthening of local, national and international resistance networks to oppose destructive mining activities.

Secondly, the negative impacts of mining on the environment and local communities are not limited to the extractive process, but also spread wider and deeper through the construction of roads, railways and canals needed to transport the minerals; through large plants where the various minerals are processed and used, such as steel mills and nuclear reactors; and finally, through final products that are also sources of pollution and even contribute to global warming, such as cars, trucks and planes, not to mention the amount of waste generated throughout and at the end of

the entire process.

Thirdly, the mining industry is characterized by enormous social inequality in terms of the distribution of wealth and benefits. The countries and regions of Africa, Latin America and Asia that are the leading producers of minerals are mostly regions and countries whose populations suffer all manner of violations, particularly women. In the meantime, the industry is dominated by transnational companies based in the highly industrialized countries of the North -such as the United States, Europe and Japan- where most of the final products end up. The average per capita consumption of natural resources including minerals in some of those countries is 16 tons – reaching even as high as 40 tons! – while countries like India, for example, consume an average of four tons per capita annually. (1)

Fourthly, it is interesting to note that, in the discussion and promotion of alternatives related to the so-called “low carbon” and “green” economy, many supposedly “green” high-technology solutions depend on the exploitation of minerals (see the article on the EU in this bulletin). This significantly undermines the credibility and, obviously, the sustainability of these purported alternatives.

There are basically two real alternatives that need to be pursued with the utmost urgency: measures to drastically reduce the exploitation of mineral resources and levels of consumption, primarily in the industrialized countries; and the search for means to make more efficient use of these resources, in other words, to do more with less. A new UNEP report points in this same direction (see the related article in this bulletin).

Finally, replanting native trees is a praiseworthy activity, but not when it is linked to intentional and destructive deforestation. It is more than obvious that there is an urgent need for structural changes in the current model of unsustainable production and consumption in the industrialized countries, which has now been copied by emerging economies like China, Brazil and India.

(1)

<http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/Publications/Decoupling/tabid/56048/Default.aspx>

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MINING: IMPACTS AND RESISTANCE

- European Union: Take the metals and run

Faced with rising prices for raw materials and the hoarding of minerals by certain emerging economies, Europe is sharpening its claws. And, as always, it is the countries of the South with large natural reserves of coveted resources that will end up on the losing side, especially their populations.

Recently, the giants of the global mining industry gathered at a luxury hotel in Barcelona for a meeting that went largely unnoticed, as did the mysterious conclusions reached there by Barrick Gold, Rio Tinto, Goldcorp, BHP Billington and others among the 150 transnational mining companies that control practically all

global mineral production.

Nevertheless, the information available about trade in raw materials over recent years allows us to draw a few conclusions of our own.

Roughly 70% of manufactured consumer goods in the European Union (EU) depend on metallic and non-metallic mineral substances that Europe is forced to import. Manufacturing a mobile phone, computer or TV screen requires between 40 and 60 different raw materials such as lithium, tantalum, cobalt and antimony, which are becoming increasingly difficult to acquire. The demand and prices for these substances are rising and will continue to do so, and are largely defined by emerging economies like China and India, which account for between 40% and 50% of global consumption of the main metallic raw materials. China's copper consumption has grown from 12% to 40% of global consumption in a single decade. Moreover, while it is currently the world's largest consumer of metals, China also restricts exports of its own raw materials, such as aluminium, copper, nickel, rare earth metals (the common name for two series of chemical elements, actinides and lanthanides), antimony and tungsten (also known as wolfram), being the world's leading producer of the latter three.

Other industrialized countries, such as the United States and Japan, recognized their critical dependence on raw materials much earlier, and subsequently set about defining and accumulating the most essential ones. Until very recently, however, the EU had not adopted integrated policy measures to ensure access to raw materials considered crucial to its economic development. But now it recognizes itself as highly dependent, threatened by the emerging economies, and vulnerable in this regard.

To protect its interests, in 2008, the EU launched its Raw Materials Initiative as a basis for guiding its policies. Sprinkled with terms like "sustainable mining" and "development aid", it is essentially an aggressive trade strategy aimed at competing with emerging economies. Public dissemination of the initiative has been rather discreet and behind the scenes, largely out of sight of the general public, but its timeline has been strictly followed.

"Let's cooperate, but the gold is ours"

One element of the EU's Raw Materials Initiative is "raw materials diplomacy". This consists of persuading countries with mineral resources to eliminate trade restrictions on raw materials and establishing trade agreements and development cooperation policies that contain clauses guaranteeing access to raw materials. The EU offers assistance to build "know how" in developing countries. This facilitates the extraction of raw materials, as well as negotiations with mining companies.

Thanks to this diplomacy, the Raw Materials Initiative is now being actively implemented in Russia, Africa and South America. Its accomplices in this well-planned plunder are all of the industrialized countries and their zeal for unlimited growth.

Despite the fact that the already widespread crisis is only growing more acute, the

EU promotes policies of excessive growth and consumption that heighten the demand for raw materials. Its strategy for overcoming the crisis focuses on technological innovation and improved business and social processes and models. The Raw Materials Initiative falls under the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy and the motto “Global Europe: Competing in the World”.

Development aid?

To implement its global strategy through development cooperation, the EU does everything possible to promote free trade. Under the pretext of development cooperation, it offers training for technicians in the emerging economies and developing countries of the South and attempts to influence public financial policies, facilitating negotiations for mining companies – it helps to “clear the way” for its own activities and reaps the financial benefits.

With regard to development aid, Europe also benefits from technology transfer, especially since it is currently the world leader in extractive technology. In other words, the more extractive projects there are, the greater the opportunity for selling the technology. Development aid is increasingly conditioned on the obligation for the countries receiving aid to acquire technology from the countries providing aid. And alongside the technology, the costs in terms of environmental and social destruction are also transferred to the countries of the South.

Europe channels a large portion of its development cooperation aid through the European Investment Bank (EIB), and part of the money is allocated to mining projects and related infrastructure. Every year, millions of euros in EU public funds flow into mining projects under the guise of development.

However, the mining sector’s contribution to development has been repeatedly questioned by politicians, academics and civil society organizations. Numerous cases demonstrate that current rules and regulations are insufficient to guarantee positive development. The threats and impacts of mining activity in the countries of the South are so great that networks have been formed by communities affected by mining activity, who have chosen the path of resistance as a means of defending their lives and integrity. In Latin America, these include the Mexican Network of People Affected by Mining (REMA), the National Coordinating Committee for Life and Sovereignty in Ecuador, and more recently, the Colombian Network Against Large-Scale Transnational Mining (RECLAME). Numerous organizations are working with the same objectives in other countries like Argentina, Brazil and Guatemala. The Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros en América Latina (Latin American Mining Conflict Watch), or OCMAL, is a network of organizations from throughout the region, while networks have also been created by people affected by the activities of a single company, as in the case of Brazilian mining giant Vale (see the article in this bulletin).

Neither “green” nor responsible

High technology is one of the main reasons behind Europe’s high demand for raw materials. “Green” technology depends on batteries; nanotechnology uses electronic components and photovoltaic cells to produce “green” energy. But how “green” is a

technology that is enabled through mineral (exploration and) extraction activities that are increasingly associated with land conflicts, environmental destruction, and serious human rights violations, including threats, intimidation and sometimes even the murder of people opposed to the establishment of mining operations in their communities?

These cannot be considered “exceptions”: there are a growing number of cases reported and exhaustively documented in countries like Argentina, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Mexico. Various local and national governments as well as transnational mining companies have been involved in shady incidents that are very difficult to monitor, which makes assigning responsibility for them difficult as well. Human rights abuses are becoming increasingly common, because mining exploration continues unabated and new mining projects emerge every day. Added to this are the social and environmental impacts and opposition struggles related to infrastructure megaprojects like highways, ports, airports, hydroelectric plants, etc., associated with the mining industry.

All of these conflicts are taking place in the midst of publicity and advertising campaigns touting “corporate responsibility” and “responsible”, “sustainable” and even “green” mining. Tragedies like the one in Copiapó, Chile, where 33 miners were trapped 700 metres underground for more than 60 days while the world watched breathlessly, are not a chance occurrence. They are proof that political and economic systems are based on the irrationality imposed by the *de facto* power of companies that literally do whatever they want, however they want, in the name of profit-seeking disguised as “development”.

Policies related to raw materials are formulated by politicians and industry with no popular participation of any kind. While these unacceptable events occur, the EU justifies its pro-mining policies with the need to promote competitiveness, growth and employment. The backdrop to this, however, is ensuring the supply of raw materials to industry for continued growth and profits for the transnational companies, with little attention paid to the way those profits are made.

Large-scale mining is an extractive activity that is not and will never be sustainable. This is obvious from the meaning of the word mining itself and the description of this industrial activity. Despite the EU’s claims with regard to access to raw materials, “unlimited growth” and “sustainability” are utterly incompatible goals.

Extracted and adapted from the report *Saca el metal y corre*. Los países emergentes, la Unión Europea y las materias primas no energéticas del Sur global , June 2011, by Guadalupe Rodríguez, Rainforest Rescue, email: guadalupe@regenwald.org, <http://www.salvalaselva.org> (weekly protest actions in defence of the environment and human rights) and <http://www.facebook.com/salvalaselva> .

The full version of the report, submitted by the author, is available at http://wrm.org.uy/deforestacion/mineria/Saca_el_metal_y_corre.pdf

- Mining and resistance

That mining can pose a threat to the integrity of forests is obvious. Clearance of surface vegetation and soils to gain access to sub-surface minerals has evident and often long-lasting impacts. Surface scarring by mines themselves, with associated erosion and siltation, is exacerbated by spoil heaps, tailings dams, associated mining works, disrupted water tables, and local chemical changes, including acid mining drainage and the release of heavy metals and the consequent pollution of soils and waterways. Mining operations use, and too often pollute, vast quantities of water.

Mines can also be massive consumers of timber for construction. Where mineral resources are extensive, the damage can affect substantial areas either through huge open-cast mining operations or through the combined impacts of a multitude of small-scale mines. Any local communities previously dependent on the renewable natural resources in these areas suffer immediate losses as a result, with their livelihoods undermined, their social organizations disrupted and their cultures transformed. Cash compensations, if paid, cannot restore these losses and the dark legacy of mining continues even after a mine is abandoned.

The impacts of mines, however, often spread far wider than this. Mining can be very lucrative, and large- and medium-scale operations may command huge investments and generate substantial returns. Mining in remote forest areas thus often implies the establishment of major infrastructures – roads, ports, townships, river diversions, dams and power plants – all needed to make the mines themselves workable and productive. Downstream processing of ores requires additional industries, making further demands for energy, water and land.

Big mines often constitute the spearpoint of even larger development plans, which are designed to transform whole regions. Brazil's Grande Carajas project, for example, which centres on an iron ore mine operated by mining giant Vale, forms the centrepiece of a huge complex of railways, ports, dams, plantations and colonization schemes which is affecting tens of millions of hectares in the eastern Amazon in Brazil.

Vale was founded and operated for 55 years as a Brazilian state-owned company, until it was privatized in 1997. It is currently the second largest mining company in the world, with operations in 38 countries, and accounts for 15% of global iron production. (1)

Whether planned or unforeseen, mines and their associated infrastructures trigger widespread economic and social changes and environmental transformations. Roads, and the lure of employment opportunities in new mining districts, bring settlers into forest areas, overwhelming both local communities and the capacity of government institutions to regulate access to lands and forests. The power of the mining industry also has more enduring impacts on the political ecology of forests. Large-scale mines are the province of wealthy corporations and international capital

and the over-enthusiastic promotion of mining thus results in enduring shifts in power away from local people and civil society in favour of international corporations and national elites. (2)

Many communities affected by mining operations do not accept the right of mining companies to invade their territories and oppose mining as incompatible with their culture, their economies and their traditions.

This past May, after years of resistance in various parts of the world, communities opposed to the activities of the Brazilian mining giant Vale joined together for the Second International Meeting of People Affected by Vale. (3) Over 50 delegates from around the globe gathered in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, including delegations from Mozambique, Indonesia and Canada, as well as representatives of the Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros en América Latina (Latin American Mining Conflict Watch), or OCMAL. They discussed the company's current economic and political status, shared experiences of the company's impacts in different parts of the world, and developed strategies for resistance against the social and environmental consequences of the company's activities, defining future methods and activities for the short and medium term.

The first international meeting had taken place a year earlier, and since then, various initiatives have been carried out by the activists involved: participation in a number of Vale shareholders meetings, where they voiced the complaints and criticisms of local communities; the publication of a report on the impacts and damages caused by Vale around the world; and the filing of a lawsuit against two directors of the CSA steel company in Rio de Janeiro (CSA is a joint venture between Vale and German company Thyssenkrupp).

Participants in this year's meeting defined specific lines of action for the future. They will be fighting for the official designation of mining-free territories, for the right to "say no" to new mining operations, and for mandatory prior consultation of communities that will be affected. In cases where mining operations have already been established, they are demanding comprehensive reparations for the impacts and compensation for individuals and communities.

They also stressed their condemnation of the criminalization of those who participate in resistance efforts against mining, and demanded an end to the state subsidies received by Vale, which come from the public coffers.

Among their plans for the future, they will seek to widen the debate on the social function of mining, taking into account the current debate on the rights of nature and the right to well-being for all.

This article is based on information gathered from (1) Quanto Valem os Direitos Humanos? Relatório da Federação Internacional de Direitos Humanos e de Justiça Global a respeito dos impactos sobre os direitos humanos da indústria mineira e siderúrgica de Açailândia, 18/05/2011, <http://www.justicanostrilhos.org/nota/732>; (2) "Undermining the forests. The need to control transnational mining companies: a Canadian case study", by Forest Peoples Programme, Philippine Indigenous Peoples Links and World Rainforest Movement,

- Iron mining threatens Guatemalan mangroves

Government authorities in Guatemala continue to promote metal mining, despite the widespread opposition of local communities and indigenous peoples. Consultations carried out among local populations have clearly demonstrated that they are completely against the further development of mining activities.

For years, metal mining projects have been planned and carried out in the country's mountainous areas. What came as a surprise was the news two years ago that four reconnaissance and exploration permits had been requested for the potential exploitation of iron and other metals on the country's southern coast.

Together, the companies Tikal Minerals, a subsidiary of Mayan Iron Corporation, and Fire Creek Resources, a subsidiary of G4G, have received authorization and permits from the Ministry of Energy and Mines for the exploration of a total of more than 3,000 square kilometres. Tikal plans to explore the iron sands along the southern coast beaches, while Fire Creek is focusing its reconnaissance activities on metal deposits in the coastal seabed. Both initiatives pose a grave threat to the natural environment of the region in general, but particularly to the mangrove ecosystem.

Guatemala's mangroves provide a wealth of benefits to local communities, who depend on them for subsistence and commercial fishing activity, as well as the harvesting of other edible species, including shrimp, crabs, crayfish and snails, among others.

Tikal Minerals submitted an environmental impact assessment (EIA) to the Guatemalan authorities for its proposed "Porvenir Central" project in December 2010. The company's proposed area of operations spanned a total of 98 square kilometres. Located within the area specified is one of only two protected mangrove areas in the entire country, Sipacate-Naranjo National Park, as well as other associated ecosystems such as wetlands, marshes, coastal lagoons and sandy beaches.

The EIA was challenged by numerous environmental organizations, including the SAVIA School of Ecological Thought, the Guatemalan Coordinating Committee for Mangroves and Life, the Residents Association for the Integrated Development of Champerico, Redmanglar International, and the Citizens Alliance for the South Coast.

The Ministry of Environment recently announced its rejection of the EIA, on the grounds that the negative impacts of the project would outweigh the benefits. But those of us who know what mining companies are capable of doing in order to achieve their goals are fully aware that we cannot simply sit back and declare victory. We will remain alert to any appeals filed by the company's legal representatives to overturn the decision to reject its proposal, as well as further attempts to explore and

exploit the metal deposits in our characteristic black sand beaches in the future.

The voracious greed of these companies has come up against a formidable obstacle. The opposition of the people who live along Guatemala's coasts is growing by the day, and they are fully prepared to do whatever it takes to defend their beaches, wetlands and mangroves, united in a common cause: Mangroves yes, iron mining no!

By Carlos Salvatierra, Executive Secretary, Redmanglar International,
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- Mining and indigenous women in the Philippines

There are around 110 ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines and they constitute almost 15% of our population. Most of them live in mountain ranges and coastal areas. (1) Nine million or roughly 30% of our total land area is mineralized including some of the mountains inhabited by those groups.

Meanwhile, the mining industry only contributes an annual average of a mere 1.2% of the Philippine Gross Domestic Products (GDP) while a long list of externalities, including depleted resources, damage to environment and natural habitats, pollution, health impacts and socio-economic costs, pass on communities.(2)

Indigenous communities have long ago realized that mining will affect their means of livelihood and in the end leave their lands useless and their mountains bare and susceptible to disaster. It is for this reason that there is a united struggle against mining here.

Inarguably, the primary concern of indigenous peoples (IPs) in the Philippines is the issue of land tenure. Mining causes massive displacement of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands. Development aggression (3) such as mining, has threatened indigenous way of life because of the intrusion in their ancestral domain – their farms, homes, forests, and sacred places of worship. Also the increased migration from other communities seeking work affect negatively local people. Deforestation and flattening of mountains for mining make them susceptible to landslides and other disasters that affect upland and lowland communities.

Impacts on women

IP women and children are greatly affected by mining activities. In 2009, Emi B. Carreon of Innabuyog, a regional alliance of indigenous women's organizations in the Cordillera Region, reported in the Asia Study Session on Women and Mining the different impacts of mining to indigenous men and women.

Occasional disasters such as mine tailing dam failures aggravate the pollution of soils and rivers caused by toxic chemicals and acid mine drainage which have serious impacts on the health of indigenous communities, especially of women. Air, water and land pollution contaminate their food and water intake while mineworkers

and communities at the receiving end of toxic mine tailings face a range of serious health threats such as asthma, tuberculosis, skin diseases, gastrointestinal diseases and even cancer. Women also risk to suffer reproductive health problems such as spontaneous abortion and malformed babies.

As homemakers, women are also greatly affected by the disintegration and social disorders caused by mining among which destruction of traditional values and customs, and even family unity, are sought by bribery methods that try to undermine mining communities.

As care givers, women also experience difficulty in gathering food and water for the family since the forests are no longer their homes – they will now need to adjust to the money-based economy which indigenous peoples are not used to.

Carreon further reported that in many cases there has been an increase in the number of domestic violence against women, and incidents of alcohol and drug addiction, gambling, incest, and even wife swapping and infidelity.

Moreover, militarization impacts indigenous communities with special cruelty on women: there are reports of extrajudicial killings and sexual harassment, rape, physical and psychological torture of women. (4)

Mining is also seen as one of the drivers of prostitution. In Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga del Sur for example, police reported in 2010 some cases of child labor and prostitution in exchange for money. AJ Jacinto of GMANews.tv reported that “Many have been lured into prostitution in exchange for money — (Philippine Pesos) P1,500 for three hours of sex in thatched houses that serve as dens to miners wanting a good time after putting in a hard day’s work”(5).

Women on the forefront in the struggle against mining

IP women in the Philippines have joined organizations that help them in their advocacy. They play a critical role in educating and disseminating information and resources amongst other women and communities on different issues. They are actively engaged in community campaigns and mobilizations (i.e. human chain, mass arrests, rallies, etc).

The women and children of Barangay Anislagan in Placer, Surigao del Norte, have showed it: the community’s livelihood is mainly farming, planting crops, rice and coconut trees. Women have been aware that mining will impact their livelihood, contaminating their water source and denuding their remaining forest. So they have fought against Anglo-American mining company and Manila Mining Company and are in the forefront of the campaign for food sovereignty and to stop mining in watershed areas.

Led by the people’s organization Anislagan Bantay Kalikasan Task Force (ABAKATAF), they filed a petition and engaged in local elections that led to the Barangay Resolution to not allow mining there.

Convened by the struck of the church bell the whole community, including women and children, organise human barricades. This led Anglo-American to announce its

decision in November 2008, to pull out and cited the community opposition as one of their main reasons. (6) Today, they still continue to struggle against Manila Mining Company, which started in the 1980s.

Indigenous communities and support organizations continue to push for their right to self-determination and human rights. They strive to strengthen their position to defend their right to ancestral lands and right to the path to development they opt to pursue.

Here, indigenous communities will not stop fighting to watch miners take their land. It is a difficult struggle but they know that they will not give up their lands without a hard fight.

By Farah Sevilla, e-mail:farahsevilla@gmail.com, member of GenderCC in the Philippines, Policy Research and Advocacy Officer of Alyansa Tigil Mina (Alliance Against Mining), <http://www.alyansatigilmina.net> (6).

- (1) Data from Koalisyon ng Katutubong Samahan ng Pilipinas (KASAPI).
- (2) Alyansa Tigil Mina publication: A Legacy of Disaster, February 2010.
- (3) Development aggression in indigenous communities is defined by the Technical Committee on the Promotion and Action for Equal and Inclusive Development of Ethnic Minorities as activities such as extractive industries, hydropower, mining, oil, gas, land concession, plantation projects, etc. coupled with militarization in some countries resulting to the displacement of communities.
- (4) There are reported cases of rape and harassments in Abra and Mindanao.
- (5) "Illegal mining breeds child labor, prostitution in Diplahan", GMA Network, www.gmanews.tv/story/186685/regions/illegal-mining-breeds-child-labor-prostitution-in-diplahan
- (6) Report from Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center – Kasama sa Kalikasan (LRC-KsK/Friends of the Earth-Philippines) and their video documentary that may be viewed in <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnA7hqM-84U>
- (6) Alyansa Tigil Mina (Alliance Against Mining) is an alliance of more than 80 organizations from mining-affected communities and people's organizations all over the country. For the past five years, it has actively engaged in challenging the government's policy of promoting the large-scale mining industry in the Philippines.

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- New UNEP report calls for reduced mineral resource consumption

A new report released by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), titled "Decoupling natural resource use and environmental impacts from economic growth" (1), reveals some alarming figures with regard to global consumption of natural resources. If the industrialized countries of the Northern hemisphere maintain current patterns of consumption, and the so-called "emerging" economies of the South continue the current trend of an accelerated increase in consumption, UNEP predicts that by the year 2050, the global consumption of minerals, ores, fossil fuels and biomass will reach 140 billion tons annually, an amount three times greater than today.

With regard to minerals, including those used in construction and industry, consumption could rise from 25 billion tons today to 75 billion tons in 2050. What's more, high quality sources of certain essential minerals like copper and gold are already becoming scarce, which means they require ever increasing volumes of fossil fuels and freshwater to process, making current patterns of exploitation and consumption even more unsustainable.

To prevent this from happening, the UNEP report advocates "decoupling" the rate of natural resource consumption from the economic growth rate. While some steps have already been taken in this direction, they have been far from sufficient to be able to speak realistically about "green" or low-carbon economies. Decoupling demands "doing more with less": freezing the consumption of natural resources in the countries of the North, and ensuring that consumption in the "emerging" countries follows other, more sustainable patterns. Currently, the industrialized countries of the North consume four to five times more natural resources per capita than the poor countries.

Of the various scenarios put forward in the report, the one that would lead to the least impact on the environment, but would be the most difficult to achieve from a political point of view, involves a two-thirds reduction in per capita resource consumption in the industrialized countries of the North, and the maintenance of consumption at current rates in other countries. This would result in global rate of consumption of 50 billion tons of natural resources annually in 2050, the same rate of consumption as in 2000. Nevertheless, the report's authors point out that even this best case scenario would be insufficient, for example, for the purposes of combating climate change. "These scenarios challenge our current thinking and assumptions about development," they state.

According to the authors, "If investments in developed and developing countries are made today that lock humanity into a business-as-usual or moderately improved resource intensive growth path, the risks of running into ecological and supply constraints will worsen." In view of this, UNEP plans to focus future reports on ways to make more efficient use of resources and the search for viable alternatives. As this report makes abundantly clear, this is the path that needs to be followed, because the unlimited exploitation of mineral resources simply cannot be sustained.

(1)

<http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/Publications/Decoupling/tabid/56048/Default.aspx>

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- Mining for REDD in Indonesia

In 2009, Rio Tinto, one of the world biggest mining companies, explained how it hoped that it could use REDD, "as an economic tool to offset Rio Tinto's carbon footprint and to conserve biodiversity". That, in a nutshell, explains the mining industry's interest in REDD. Companies hope to continue mining, while investing comparatively small amounts of money in REDD credits to "offset" the destruction.

A look at the involvement of the mining industry in REDD in Indonesia illustrates how the industry is hoping that REDD will allow business as usual to continue.

For example, the Kalimantan Climate and Forest Partnership is a REDD-type project taking place on the Indonesian part of the island of Borneo. BHP Billiton, one of the world's largest producers and marketers of export thermal coal, was one of the founding members of the KCFP, together with the governments of Indonesia and Australia. The project has come in for serious criticism from indigenous peoples living in the area. On 8 June 2011, a group of indigenous leaders released a statement explaining that the project was not respecting their rights and demanding that the project be stopped.

While BHP Billiton is investing in REDD, it is business as usual at the company's 335,000 hectare coal mining concession in Maruwai, Central Kalimantan. The company is also planning to expand its iron ore mining operations to the tune of A\$48 billion. Clearly, it is going to need an awful lot of cheap carbon credits to offset all that pollution.

Shell Canada Energy and Gazprom Marketing and Trading helped to fund studies related to the Rimba Raya conservation project in Central Kalimantan. The project aims to preserve 91,215 hectares of forest, of which 47,006 hectares was threatened with conversion to oil palm plantations. The project hopes to avoid more than 96 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions. The Project Design Document thanks Shell Canada Energy for "generous support and tireless work in developing the peat methodology". Clearly though, Shell and Gazprom are not only interested in funding REDD studies. Both companies have their eye on REDD credits to offset their polluting operations, such as Shell's tar sand mining in Canada and Gazprom's destructive oil and gas operations off the coast of Sakhalin Island in Russia's Far East.

Mining companies are not only interested in REDD credits. At least one company hopes that its involvement in REDD will increase the chances of new mining projects being approved.

In May 2011, a Canadian mining company called East Asia Minerals Corporation, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to buy 50% of Carbon Conservation, a company set up to profit from trading REDD credits. East Asia Minerals explained that the deal will help develop a "green" brand for one of its existing mines on the Indonesian island of Sumatra and "potentially facilitate a smoother process for approval of, and support for, mining permits". The company has several mining projects proposed in densely forested areas, including inside the Ulu Masen National Park, which a Carbon Conservation project is supposed to be protecting.

On 19 May 2011, Indonesia's president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, signed a two-year moratorium on new forestry concessions in primary forests and peatlands. This deeply flawed moratorium is part of a Norwegian-funded US\$1 billion dollar REDD deal. The day before, President Yudhoyono signed an even more industry-friendly ruling, allowing underground mining in protected forest areas. "Both of these regulations allow business as usual practices," as Avi Mahaningtyas, of the

Indonesian NGO Partnerships for Governance Reform pointed out to [AlertNet](#).

The Norwegian government is an enthusiastic proponent of REDD, with US\$1 billion offered to Indonesia, US\$1 billion to Brazil and US\$250 million to Guyana. But Norway does not only invest in schemes that are (at least in theory) supposed to protect forests. As research by the [Environmental Investigation Agency](#) shows, Norway's Government Pension Fund Global (the world's biggest sovereign wealth fund) also invests in palm oil companies that are busy converting forest to monocultures. Norway also has more than US\$10 million worth of shares in Gunns Ltd, a company responsible for clearcutting vast areas of Tasmanian old-growth forests.

Norway also invests in oil and gas companies and mining companies. While Norway divested its holdings in Rio Tinto in 2008 and Freeport McMoRan in 2006 (because of the companies' involvement in the notorious Grasberg mine in Papua), Norway still has almost US\$580 million invested in BHP Billiton, US\$1.1 billion in Gazprom OAO and US\$3.89 billion in Shell, for example. Meanwhile, earlier this year, Norway's state-owned oil company, Statoil, expanded its operations in Indonesia.

The Norwegian Government is doing the same thing as the mining industry. It's the old magician's trick of distracting the audience. The distraction is REDD, and the trick is continued extraction and burning of fossil fuels.

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

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- Colombia: Popular revolt against gold mining

The price of gold is rising for the tenth consecutive year. As a result, more and more investors, financial market operators and central banks are turning to gold as a safe haven in the face of global economic instability. This has troubling consequences, because gold mining is one of the most destructive and polluting of all mining activities.

Mining companies have set their sights on Latin America, and a genuine gold rush has broken out in Colombia. In response, popular opposition to mining activity, in defence of life, water resources, the environment and local cultures, is growing stronger by the day.

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos insists on the importance of promoting large-scale open-pit mining for the country's development. The exploitation of the country's non-renewable natural resources is viewed as the "engine" of its economy. In fact, the Colombian Ministry of Mines maintains that there is mining potential in every region of the country, and has granted some 10,000 mining titles representing a total area of 43,000 square kilometres, of which 4,000 are already under exploitation.

However, the current Mining Code, amended in 2009, is not particularly respectful when it comes to land use (mining projects can be declared to be for the "public

benefit”, denying local authorities the right to oppose mining activities in their jurisdictions), ethnic groups (there are seven indigenous reserves in which mining rights have been granted that cover their entire territory), or the environment (Colombia suffers from the highest level of mercury contamination in the world). According to the Colombian Association of Miners (ASOMINEROS), the country’s total gold production in 2008 was 34,300 kilograms.

Gold mining in the Andes

AngloGold Ashanti (AGA) is the biggest mining company operating in Colombia. Its gold exploration activities in the La Colosa mine in Cajamarca, in the central-western department of Tolima, poses a threat to one of the country’s most important hydrologic systems, which supplies water to more than four million people. The project is located on the last surviving fragments of the páramo and high Andean forest ecosystems. These regulate the water supply for the municipality of Coello, which would be contaminated with cyanide.

The territory affected is rich in biodiversity and considered the “food basket” of Colombia, which is now endangered by mining activity. Water shortages have already led to a decline in rice production. The integrity and fertility of the area’s soil will be affected in the short term.

AGA violated Colombian legislation (Law 2 of 1959) by carrying out mining exploration in a forest reserve area without authorization. According to the reports of people affected, the company obtained information on potential gold reserves in the region through fraudulent means.

Unfortunately, AGA’s actions have already created deep rifts within the community itself and the institutions of the river basin, as well as divisions between communities in the upper basin and communities in the lower basin who are water users. The social conflict created by this polarization has led to the shunning and stigmatization of organizations and individuals who attempt to demonstrate the negative impacts of large-scale mining operations in this part of the Andes.

AGA’s abuse of its economic power is reflected in various aspects of daily life in the department. What AGA calls “pre-investment” is nothing other than coercion through the use of economic clout. This is the only possible explanation for the large numbers of staff hired (with salaries higher than the regional average) before mining operations have even begun. Added to this is the economic and technical support given to social organizations, money invested in the infrastructural upgrading of roads that will potentially connect to the mining operations, donations to community councils, Cajamarca city hall and the local hospital, sponsorship of the Tolima football team, proposals of support for the University of Tolima, the purchase of land at prices far above market value, and now proposals to finance environmental organizations like the Environmental Action Fund, among various other initiatives.

AGA’s immense economic power has allowed it to buy up land in strategic areas, particularly in terms of potential water supply. It has also been able to formalize requests for mining titles throughout the region and in much of the rest of the country, fully aware of the fact that local peasant communities do not have the same capacity

to request water concessions.

The company's actions in the region have nothing to do with fostering development, or generating employment, or supporting education, or sports, or local government capacity, or improving roads, or promoting transportation cooperatives.

Social movements in the area are working to develop mechanisms to ensure that gold mining operations never happen in this region of the country, much less large-scale operations. They warn that "this could open the door to the modification of the country's environmental assets as a whole, and society will have no participation in this whatsoever."

Gold rush in the Pacific coast tropical rainforests

Another gold mining hotspot lies in the heart of the tropical rainforest along Colombia's Pacific coast, namely in the municipality of Buenaventura, in the department of Cauca. This area forms part of the Chocó biogeographical region, and is covered with dense rainforest and criss-crossed by major rivers like the Dagua, a source of life fed by many others like the San Cipriano River, for which a tropical rainforest reserve is named.

Zaragoza is a settlement made up of Afro-Colombian communities. Mining activity has provided it with a few meagre benefits in exchange for drastic deterioration of the environment and has turned the river into a chemical waste dump.

Following the discovery of gold reserves, since 2009 entrepreneurs have descended from all corners of the country, including Medellín, Cali and Bogotá, to indiscriminately extract the precious metal. The population has skyrocketed from around 100 families to over 10,000 fortune hunters.

Gold extraction activities currently stretch between kilometres 23 and 38 of the Buenaventura-Cali highway, affecting numerous towns that have been turned into "lawless cities". "This mining activity is spreading like a cancer to other rivers on the Pacific coast," declare activists in Buenaventura.

The environmental destruction is blatantly evident. Aerial photographs depict scenes of total devastation. The poor conditions and illegality of mining operations create the risk of avalanches, landslides and accidents, combined with the danger of the river flooding. The use of more than 250 backhoes has damaged flora and fauna as well as subsistence crops.

The water is no longer fit for domestic consumption, and there have been outbreaks of malaria and dengue. The alterations suffered by the river make it impossible to distinguish its natural flow, and its banks are filled with the plastic and cardboard used to set up makeshift tents as well as restaurants, stores and bars. A scientific study whose results were published in the local press in November 2010 revealed that mercury levels where the Dagua River flows into the Pacific Ocean are three times higher than the recommended limit. The local population's recreation areas have also been destroyed. The gold rush has brought local communities nothing but wreckage and poverty, the destruction of their crops and homes, and the drastic pollution of

their river.

Local traditions and daily life in the area have been seriously impacted. Violence and armed conflict have intensified, leading to forced displacement and destabilizing community life. The control of the area and of mining activity by paramilitary troops is more than evident. Families can no longer move freely in the area. The work of local Community Councils has been obstructed. There have been scores of human rights violations, including over 100 deaths and murders. A local woman who complained to the owner of a backhoe for endangering her house was shot in the back, in front of the whole community.

This April, a number of local organizations in the municipality of Buenaventura joined together to launch the Declaration of Buenaventura (<http://www.pacificocolombia.org/novedades/declaracion-de-buenaventura-colombia/18>), in which they called for unity among Afro-Colombian and indigenous organizations, the defence of the local environment as a contribution to the defence of the planet, and the declaration of a state of social emergency in the Pacific coast region.

Town of Marmato sentenced to death by gold

The town of Marmato is literally doomed to disappear. This is what will happen if the Canadian company Medoro Resources succeeds in its plans for an open-pit gold mine here. The company has not clearly explained its proposed project to the community, which has led to considerable uncertainty. What is very clear, however, is that the gold reserves will run out in 20 to 35 years.

Located in the department of Caldas in the country's western mountain range, Marmato is one of the municipalities with the highest poverty levels in Colombia. The local inhabitants feel that they are being plundered, and have repeatedly denounced to official institutions and the public that the Colombian government has given its backing and active support to the plans for a large-scale mining operation. Under current Colombian legislation, it would be permissible to carry out small and medium-sized mining activities in the area, as has been the case until now, but large-scale operations would not be allowed. Nevertheless, Medoro plans to convert 143 mining concessions in the area into one big open-pit mine operation. Exploration work would be carried out over the course of two to three years and, according to different sources, would involve the drilling of up to 200,000 perforations.

For its part, the departmental government of Caldas has issued warnings of the possibility of rockslides on the mountain and suggested that the people of Marmato move away from the town. Yamil Amar, president of the Civic Board in Defence of Marmato, explained that "as a way of getting the community out of the way they have made up the story that we are all in danger, and it isn't true." It is an open secret that an open-pit mining operation would force the inhabitants of the town to move to the district of El Llano, where many who believed in the risk of rockslides have already resettled.

It is highly doubtful that the small-scale mining which serves as a means of livelihood for many families here would survive the arrival of open-pit mining. Even the

guacheros, the local name for illegal miners who search for gold in the mountain, are becoming worried, because they know they will not be given priority for the jobs promised by Medoro. These concerns continue to grow alongside the general uncertainty looming over the area. The guacheros began their informal mining activities when the last company operating in Marmato, Goldfields, went bankrupt in late 2008 and they were left without jobs.

The inhabitants of Marmato and indigenous communities in Caldas, who are opposed to the town's destruction, argue that "our town is not just mines and its inhabitants are not just those who control the mines and other sources of work. The town of Marmato is us, the people who have lived in it and feel an attachment to it that cannot be measured in monetary terms. It is the scenery we look upon, the cobbled streets we walk along, the unique architecture that characterizes our town, the neighbours with whom we have built ties of solidarity, the stories that our elders tell the young about a long-ago past where the histories of indigenous, Afro-descendent and white peoples are intertwined, the artisanal miners who have always known how to extract gold from the mountain, the mule drivers who make it possible to transport goods along our steep roads, the peasant farmers and indigenous communities who live around us and supply us with their agricultural crops."

Despite the challenges they have faced, more than 50 Colombian social and environmental organizations have joined together to create the Colombian Network Against Large-Scale Transnational Mining (RECLAME), founded in February 2010 to oppose large-scale mining operations and raise awareness of mining conflicts in Colombia. Their resistance struggle has already yielded a number of victories, such as the success of the mobilization against a gold mining project in the Santurbán páramo in the department of Santander planned by the Canadian multinational Greystar, which decided to withdraw its request for an environmental permit.

In this struggle, backed by the force of arguments and waged in the streets of Santander, thousands of Colombians joined together to make Santurbán a symbolic example of resistance to large-scale transnational mining.

Extracted and adapted from the report "El oro de Colombia: rebelión social contra explotaciones mineras sin control", June 2011, by Guadalupe Rodríguez, Rainforest Rescue, email: guadalupe@regenwald.org, based on information disseminated through RECLAME and Rainforest Rescue research studies. The full version of the report, submitted by the author, is available at http://wrm.org.uy/deforestacion/mineria/El_oro_de_Colombia.pdf; see also the article "Triunfó la movilización contra el proyecto minero en Santurbán", Red Colombiana Frente a la Gran Minería Transnacional, <http://reclamecolombia.org/index.php/noticias/17-santander/202-triunfo-la-movilizacion-contr-el-proyecto-minero-en-santurban>

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- Philippines: Attempts to undermine local resistance to mining

The Palawan Province has the best-conserved and most ecologically diverse forest

in the Philippines inhabited by vulnerable indigenous communities, some of them living in partial isolation.

But the region is being threatened by mining companies such as MacroAsia, Iplan Nickel Mining Corporation and LEBACH which have entered protected zones and indigenous land to excavate test-pits and make deep drilling-holes in search for nickel. Also Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corporation (RTNMC) has built roads undermining the integrity of the Bulanjao range, one of the most precious biodiversity hotspots in southern Palawan. Citinickel, Berong Nickel and other mining companies partnering with the Canadian MBMI group also pose a threat to Palawan forest (see WRM Bulletin N° 165).

The resistance of Palawan communities against mining corporations has been continuous; more than one year ago ALDAW Network (Ancestral Land/Domain Watch) launched the Stop Mining Palawan Forest Petition to The President of the Republic of the Philippines (<http://www.petitiononline.com/PA2010/petition.html>) with a special concern towards indigenous peoples (and also calling for a stop of oil palm development in Palawan). The Save Palawan Movement has more recently launched the No to Mining in Palawan petition (<http://no2mininginpalawan.com/>) in search of 10 million signatures to stop mining in Palawan. Support is now being called for both petitions.

A recent move by MacroAsia Corporation shows how big mining corporations try to manipulate opposition. They have power and money and they try to use those weapons to “divide and rule”, so to undermine people’s social cohesion, solidarity networks and, ultimately communities’ ability to fight mining interests in a concerted and well-coordinated effort.

The Indigenous Peoples network ALDAW (Ancestral Land/Domain Watch) has denounced that 30 “fake” tribal leaders, so-called Tribal Chieftains, have been paid by the mining company MacroAsia Mining Corporation (MAC) and appointed by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) in order to show support for MAC, despite opposite views from the majority of the Indigenous Peoples to be directly impacted by mining.

ALDAW denounces that by creating ‘ad-hoc’ “tribal leaders” NCIP and MacroAsia have bluntly disregarded local decision-making processes that are customarily facilitated by elders and traditional leaders, which are recognized and respected by their respective communities

Recently, ALDAW has facilitated the organization of a mission composed by genuine Palawan indigenous representatives who have travelled to Manila for bringing their voices and grievances to the attention of NCIP and, thus, to counterbalance the ‘fabricated’ testimonies of the ‘fake’ tribal chieftains. (See recent press releases at <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/12798/palawan-tribal-folk-hit-use-of-fake-leaders>, <http://lopezlink.ph/csr/1920-indigenous-people-say-no-mining-in-brookes-point-palawan>, and <http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=694390&publicationSubCategoryId=63>)

As of now, the Palawan delegation’s negotiations with the newly elected NCIP chairman (Zenaida Brigida Hamada-Pawid) and other government representatives

have been successful. This has led to new hopes such as NCIP final decision of not endorsing the so called 'certificates of preconditions' to those mining companies encroaching on the indigenous ancestral lands.

Article based on information provided by ALDAW and their press release "Indigenous Palawan Leaders Soon To Confront The National Commission On Indigenous Peoples (Ncip) In Manila", e-mail aldaw.indigenousnetwork@gmail.com

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- Mining in Africa

The natural and environmental resources of Africa like land, minerals, gas, oil, timber, territorial waters among others have been the object of the persistent scramble for the continent. Natural resources are often at the heart of the scramble for Africa.

Behind the political and military interventions by Coalitions of Western powers outside or under the auspices of the United Nations in countries such as Somalia, Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, The Comoros, Chad, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Central African Republic, Liberia, and of late Libya and Ivory Coast is the issue of access to and redistribution of the resources of Africa.

In the full glare of international military might, the Democratic Republic of Congo signed and sealed some of the worst forms of mining contracts with transnational corporations of a number of the western countries seeking to maintain peace in that country. These contracts up-scaled the grip of transnational mining companies on the mineral resources of DRC.

The rise of foreign direct investment and by extension the rise of capitalist accumulation presupposes the subordination of local productive sectors including alienation of communities from their land. The process of accumulation squeezes value from all other sectors of the economy and the state apparatus. It also then means decreased possibilities of the African state to intervene when and where it matters most.

The extractive sector of Africa, in particular mining and petroleum has been the foremost receipt of the FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) flows to Africa and is one of the areas in which the displacement of whole communities and dispossession of millions of rural populations from access to land through the process of capitalist accumulation clearly manifest. The accompanying disorganization of their economic and social relations remains one of the persistent features of communities in mineral and petroleum extraction areas in Africa.

Resource extraction involves several stages from exploration, site preparation and development, production, processing to decommissioning. Each of the different stages require large tracks of land to facilitate the extraction and refinery of these resources.

Between 1990 and 1998, a single large-scale open mine in Tarkwa in Western Ghana displaced a total of 14 communities with a population of over 30,000. This displacement resulted in a net loss of over 7000 jobs in the area as people lost access to land and could not also be employed by the mine due to skills mismatch. Again Newmont Ahafo mine project in the north-west of Ghana displaced over 355 households in Kenyasi area alone.

Another project of Newmont in Eastern Ghana is set to displace one whole village with a population of over 300 men and women. In addition, implementation of the project would result in destruction of 1465 hectares of land and lost of 3057 farm holdings belonging to 1,208 individuals.

Further, the project would destroy 74 hectares (13%) of the Ajenua Bepo forest Reserve one of the last vestiges of Ghana's forest reserves. Along the West Coast of Ghana, more than 72 villages are complaining of access to fishing grounds due to the intensity of offshore oil exploration and production.

The different types of capital competing for land in Africa i.e. land for local production versus land for food production and export to foreign markets; land for biofuel plantations; and land held as an asset title for financial market activity including trading and speculation further pushes farmers away from local production and undermines the potential growth and development of domestic agriculture, livelihoods and sense of communal ownership.

In Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, most people still live in rural areas, where they farm crops and livestock or derive other livelihoods from land and land-related activities. Land is thus a critical and an indispensable natural and environmental resource. Further to being a factor of production, store of value, space for shelter and recreation, and disposal of waste for animals and human beings, land is also an object that defines a constellation of social and political relations in rural communities.

Rural communities in Africa are already marginalized in terms of access to formal employment, education, health, safe water all year round, and other economic infrastructure. The basis of the popular struggles in communities affected by mining and oil extraction across the continent has been to redress the injustice of being deprived from land, the destruction of livelihoods, the disproportionate share of benefits accruing to mining companies, and general lack of developmental impact.

Clearly it is the liberalized framework that has been the benchmark for agreements that facilitate the massive transfers of land and general expropriation of Africa's natural resources. In the same but opposite measure, the still incoherent and unplanned new phase of land grab can also become a compelling argument for policy and developmental alternatives.

Excerpted and adapted from: "Mining to Undermine Access to Land", Abdulai Darimani, Third World Network-Africa, 20 April 2011, published in Mines and Communities, <http://www.minesandcommunities.org/article.php?a=10858>

- India: Saving Niyamgiri from mining

In a state such as Orissa in which Dalit and tribal groups comprise nearly 40% of the total population, the issue of 'access' to land and resources (forests, water, etc.) has been central to all conflicts. For traditional communities, 'access' is directly linked to civilizational paradigms and cultural ethos, which rather decide their 'economics', and not the other way round that may be true for modern, techno-centric civilizations. So, in traditional milieus, denial of 'access' to resources directly impacts 'food security'. Most mainstream discourses of history have, however, tried to locate the crisis – the visibly ever-growing marginalization of adivasis and Dalits – in the 'absence of state interventions'. But, a dig into the social history points to deeper roots of the crisis: denial of access and ownership through various social and political processes over the past two centuries, which rather intensified after the entry of the 'welfare' State.

The struggle that has been taking place in the Niyamgiri mountains has now rather been well-known. 'Mining happiness...' is the tagline of Vedanta's billboards clogging the urban landscape in Orissa! Just ten years back, the whole Lanjigarh area on the foothills of Niyamgiri, comprising some 25-odd villages inhabited by the Kutia Kandh tribe and Dalits, was a serene landscape dominated by sal forests, intersected by the Vamsadhara River emerging from the Niyamgiri. Today, Vedanta's alumina refinery has turned their pristine habitat into an industrial wasteland. Nearly 15,000 forest-dependent people have become refugees in their own homeland. Large tracts of forests have disappeared to make way for the factory, ash ponds, red-mud ponds, roads filled with hundreds of trucks, while the native forest dwellers are left rambling for some livelihood option somewhere.

Arjun Chandi of Kadamguda village, close to the refinery, rather puts the situation in perspective, 'How can you call this development? Someone else comes here, destroys your forests and lands, decimates your economic sources, pushes you onto the road, and makes a lot of money. Where is development? If you want development for us, first give our forests and lands back, and then talk about development.'

However, after closely witnessing the devastation at the foothills, the Dongria Kandhs who inhabit the Niyamgiri mountains for centuries have put up strong resistance against the proposed mining of bauxite on Niyamgiri; successfully deferring Vedanta's 'mining happiness' to the past. The mining lease now stands cancelled by government orders. The fight of the Dongrias was supported and strengthened by many civil-rights and land-rights groups. After successfully trampling Vedanta's 'mining happiness', they have now intensified the struggle to have the refinery closed down, as they see 'enormous dangers' to their culture and livelihoods from its very presence in the area. But, the state has not relented from repressing the adivasis there; even after the scrapping of the mining project, police and paramilitary forces have attacked Dongria villages many times and have tortured the adivasis. The state is trying to even declare Niyamgiri as 'Maoist-infested', in attempts to take complete control of the region. The locals say that the state is doing this, only to open ways for Vedanta to start mining there in future.

The success – so far partly though – of the Niyamgiri anti-mining movement has gained strength from the history of land-rights movements around the foothills for the past decades: the CPI (ML)-Liberation that organized the landless adivasis and Dalits in the 1990s to stake claim over hundreds of acres of land in and around Muniguda and Bissamkatak areas, and the Lok Sangram Manch which has so far reclaimed hundreds of acres of land usurped by landlords and distributed them among the native adivasis and Dalits.

It is this collective strength that later channelized into the fight against Vedanta and the state government to save Niyamgiri from mining.

Excerpted and adapted from “Expropriation of land and cultures: the Odisha story and beyond”, by Subrat Kumar Sahu, e-mail: subrat69@gmail.com and Mamata Dash, e-mail: mamata68@gmail.com, published in Social Change, 41(2) 251-270, CSD, 2011, SAGE Publications, sent by the authors.

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DEFINING FORESTS

- A definition of forests that reflects their true meaning

We are pleased to announce that we have received a number of translations of the short video we produced to graphically illustrate the mistaken view behind FAO's definition of forests. This means the video is now available in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Portuguese](#), [Maya Tsotsil](#), [Maya Tseltal](#), [Maya Popti](#), [Maya Kaqchikel](#), [Catala](#), [Italian](#), [Aymara](#) and [Finnish](#). We invite you to share it, download it, post it on your blog, website or social networking site, and we also look forward to receiving more translations of the video so we can continue to share it in different languages. The text that needs to be translated can be found at http://www.wrm.org.uy/forests/forests_true_meaning.html

As for the open letter to FAO at http://www.wrm.org.uy/forests/letter_to_the_FAO.html (also available in Spanish at http://www.wrm.org.uy/bosques/carta_FAO.html, Portuguese at http://www.wrm.org.uy/bosques/Carta_aberta_a_FAO.html and French at http://www.wrm.org.uy/forests/lettre_a_la_FAO.html) launched as part of our forest definition campaign, we have received hundreds of signatures from scientists and professionals in different fields related to the study of nature. Please help us continue to circulate it and gather more signatures.

Finally, we would like to remind you of our invitation to send us audio and video testimonies about the meaning of forests. We want to gather personal accounts from people who, in one way or another, have a close, ongoing relationship with the forest (or the jungle, or the woods) to create an audiovisual tool that will be like a mosaic reflecting the rich diversity of bonds that people forge with forests all around the world. So grab a video camera, a conventional camera, a tape recorder, any technology you have at hand, and record the answers to these two questions: What does the forest mean to you? What would your life be like without the forest? To send us your contributions, please contact us at: forest@wrm.org.uy. You can also contact

us at this address for help with any technical issues.

Lend your voices to the forest!

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CARBON TRADING

- FSC continues to lose credibility

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was established in 1993 to certify “socially beneficial, economically viable and environmentally appropriate” management of forests. In 1996, the FSC approved the possibility of certification for monoculture tree plantations, a decision that has been the target of harsh and growing criticism, as millions of hectares of plantations have been granted the FSC label (see the editorial in WRM Bulletin 163). Subsequently, the FSC decided to align itself with the “carbon market”, certifying areas of forest and/or plantations used for the sale of so-called carbon offset credits, calculated in accordance with the amount of carbon supposedly stored by the trees. In so doing, the FSC became actively involved in a false solution to the problem of climate change, helping to guarantee increased profits for large pollution-generating companies (see “Brazil: The case of Plantar – the FSC at the service of the sale of carbon credits” in WRM Bulletin 163).

FERN is an NGO that monitors the European Union’s involvement in forests, coordinates European NGO activities in this area, and defends the rights of forest peoples. In a statement issued 2 June 2011, FERN announced that it was terminating its FSC membership.

In 2009, FERN had issued a statement noting that the FSC “has increasingly certified large-scale monoculture tree plantations and forest operations that do not even meet its own Principles and Criteria.” FERN added at that time that it would withdraw from membership in the FSC under certain circumstances, primarily if the FSC did not reverse its practice of certifying large-scale monoculture fast-growing plantations, and if it became actively involved in the “certification of forest carbon”.

This June, FERN’s observation that the FSC will inevitably “continue on the path of aligning itself with carbon offset standards and issuing certificates concurrently or jointly with carbon offset certificates” motivated the NGO to formally dissociate itself from the FSC, in order to maintain its own credibility.

FERN’s decision, in the meantime, signifies a further loss of credibility for the FSC, which has lost yet another important member from among its affiliated environmental organizations. We will stress once again what we stated in the editorial of our bulletin in February of this year: “What is needed is a critical assessment of what certification has actually achieved over the years: the weakening of the struggles of local communities for their rights and natural resources and the strengthening of corporations that promote excessive consumption as a means of boosting their own profits. The time has come to pursue new paths that do not include certification” (WRM Bulletin 163).

MINING: IMPACTS AND RESISTANCE

- UN climate talks: more carbon trade, no emission reduction

The UN climate talks concluded their second session of 2011 in Bonn in June without addressing the key issue of reducing climate pollution and without discussing how emissions of gases that are the main cause of climate change are going to be cut further, who is going to do it or who is going to pay for it. Climate justice groups have expressed their increasing concern at the failure by rich industrialised countries to take real action to tackle climate change as:

- Their current promises of reductions at just 3 gigatonnes remains dangerously low, quite far from a reduction level that keeps the temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius, (the maximum level assessed by UNEP to avoid global climate catastrophe though considered dangerously high by some concerned groups). Their pledges are in a form that provides no accountability for countries internationally and risk 5 degrees of warming which will mean decimation of life as we know it. Rich countries could even increase their emissions by 2020.
- They are attempting to avoid the already weak agreed international system that enforces emission cuts (the Kyoto Protocol). Canada announced its intention to join Russia and Japan in dishonouring its legal obligation to a second commitment period. These countries are joining the United States in proposing that emission cut proposals are pledges rather than targets.
- Proposals for false solutions as carbon markets have advanced in, as the United States refused to discuss sources of finance for longterm commitments. Papua New Guinea proposed the consideration of new potential markets which they called Blue Carbon. This is supposed to include mangroves but also, potentially, the ocean itself into so called carbon credits. The focus on the expansion of market mechanisms to new sectors is a dangerous distraction from the real focus of climate negotiations: reducing emissions.

The real answer is deep emission cuts now, not more false solutions that create profit for some but do nothing to tackle climate change.

Article based on information provided by Asad Rehman, FOE UK, member of Climate Justice Now!, e-mail: asad.rehman@foe.co.uk

