



WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT
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OUR VIEWPOINT

- Food sovereignty and struggles for territories and forests

October 16 is World Food Sovereignty Day. At its last international conference in Indonesia, this past June, La Via Campesina placed heavy emphasis on food sovereignty as a “global alternative”, not only for peasant farmers but for society as a whole. This emphasis is well deserved, because the threats to food sovereignty are many.

Transnational corporations pose the greatest of these threats, due to their insatiable “hunger” for ever more land and “natural resources” around the planet. In an attempt to “control” their activities, corporations are called on to adopt instruments like “certification” or “safeguards” – usually on a voluntary basis – promoted by banks, governments and big conservation NGOs. For example, the latter may ask for respect for the land rights and way of life of local communities, or demand the consent of the communities affected by the corporation's plans.

One of the reasons that corporations have been able to deal with “certification” and “safeguards” with very few problems is the strong and powerful alliance they continue to share with national governments. This allows companies to simply impose their plans, thanks to government-granted concessions that overlap with community territories and forests – concessions that are granted without informing anyone in the community in question, much less obtaining their consent. This has been the general rule, despite the adoption of “certification” or “safeguards”. Another corporate tactic used to undermine community rights has been to take control of the land of peasant farmers without necessarily acquiring ownership of it. For example, companies have enticed peasant farmers with promises of attractive income if they allow monoculture plantations on their lands, with the obligation of turning over their production to supply the companies' processing plants. Through schemes like these, the companies are supposedly “respecting” the community's land rights and “sharing the profits”.

However, the companies hold an enormous advantage in these types of arrangements, and usually negotiate individual contracts with local community members. Moreover, in the long run, this type of outsourcing poses a threat to the communities involved, particularly with regard to their food sovereignty and that of the neighbouring population. As is clearly demonstrated by the current situation in various parts of Latin America, Asia and Africa, where agribusiness has heavily expanded, the resulting trend is reduced local food production accompanied by price increases for the food available locally, which is increasingly imported from outside. This is great for corporations in general, since it benefits the lucrative food trade, which they also control. For local communities, it has a perverse impact that totally undermines their food sovereignty.

Historically, peasant communities have ensured their food sovereignty by practising ways of life based on control over their territory, as well as over the forests on which they also depend for food. Therefore, struggles to guarantee people's rights to their territories and to these forests are also struggles to guarantee food sovereignty. When they explicitly incorporate the struggle for food sovereignty as well – through proposals headed up by communities in which they aim to maintain, strengthen or regain community control and management of their territories – these struggles gain greater power and solidity. They can serve as an important example, as an inspiration for other communities, even for those who have not managed to hold back the advance of companies over their territories.

The interconnection of struggles for territories and the struggle for food sovereignty is urgently

needed to fight back against the dominant model of production and consumption that seeks to turn us all into mere consumers dependent on the market, with the promise of bringing “development” and “modernization” to entire regions. But we know that in practice this model does not live up to its promises. Reality demonstrates that it results in greater poverty, environmental destruction and hardship, leading humanity into an ever deeper crisis, while the corporations continue to rake in profits. The “alternatives” proposed as a solution to this crisis under the banner of the so-called “green economy” are not actually alternatives, because they are in no way aimed at structural changes in this model; they are therefore false solutions.

In this edition of the WRM Bulletin we have sought to present a series of inspiring examples, from different continents, of communities who are fighting for their territories and carrying out inspiring initiatives based on community management of forests and other biomes that comprise the immense and rich biodiversity of the different regions of the global South. We believe that greater interconnection and exchange among these communities and others who are waging similar struggles could contribute to advances in popular struggles and the attempt to halt the advance of agribusiness and its corporations, for the good of food sovereignty and of local and regional economies and societies. At the same time, it is crucial to emphasize the importance of the global campaign underway to dismantle corporate power and end the impunity of transnational corporations.

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FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND FORESTS

- Brazil: Community management of the forests and Cerrado in defence of territories and food sovereignty



Since the colonial era, the history of land tenure in Brazil has been marked by the expulsion of indigenous, quilombola (1) and peasant communities from their territories by large landholders, including companies. As a result of this process of “deterritorialization”, the population of Brazil is now roughly 85% urban, and the country has one of the most unequal distributions of land ownership in the world. Another consequence of this process is the rupture of ties between communities and their territories and biomes. Many new generations of indigenous, quilombola and peasant communities are no longer able to learn or practice a way of life based on the rich diversity of plants and animals in some of Brazil's main biomes, such as the Mata Atlântica (Atlantic Forest), Amazon Rainforest and Cerrado (tropical savannah).

However, large landholders have not always succeeded in breaking the ties between these communities and their territories. The resistance and determination of many communities have

proven stronger. In search of freedom and a way to overcome the panorama of violence and loss, many peasant, quilombola and indigenous communities have resisted and organized to fight back, not only to regain control of their territories, but also to show that their ways of using and managing these territories, in close connection with local biodiversity, are far more beneficial for the communities themselves, for local economies and for nature than so-called “modern agriculture”. Traditional peasant agriculture, based on agroecology and agroforestry systems, represents a stark contrast to the vast stretches of relatively unproductive pastureland and large-scale monoculture plantations that use massive amounts of toxic chemical pesticides and fertilizers – which currently predominate in the Brazilian rural landscape and are primarily geared to export. This so-called “modern” agricultural model causes many deaths due to the intensive use of toxic products, exacerbated by the use of transgenic seeds. In the meantime, peasant, indigenous and quilombola agriculture contributes to food sovereignty and stimulates life in these territories, while providing 75% of all of the food consumed by the Brazilian people.

Here we present a few examples of struggles waged in Brazil (2) which, beyond guaranteeing territorial rights, have strengthened and motivated the communities involved, as well as inspiring others who, alongside the fight for land, have implemented land use practices that generate life and diversity, autonomy and food sovereignty, self-sustenance and income. Through the community-based management of their territories, the communities involved have managed to strengthen their resistance and achieve advances in the hard-fought struggle to guarantee their control of the land.

- Vereda Funda, Minas Gerais: The struggle against industrial eucalyptus plantations

More than 30 years ago, an area of more than a million hectares of land in the north of the state of Minas Gerais was taken over by companies that operate large-scale industrial plantations of eucalyptus trees for the production of charcoal, used as a source of energy for the region's iron smelters. The companies were mainly interested in the high plains areas called chapadas. These lands were used by the traditional communities of the region, known as geraizeiras, to graze their cattle and gather the many fruits and medicinal plants of the Cerrado. As a result of the invasion of eucalyptus plantations, these communities were left trapped in the valleys, and their streams and springs dried up. When they tried to gather firewood in the chapadas, they were deprived of the freedom to move about in their own territory and were even prosecuted as criminals.

Motivated by meetings promoted by the Alert Against the Green Desert Network, several communities in the north of Minas Gerais, including the 130 families of the community of Vereda Funda, began to organize to recover their territory, which had been leased by the state government to Companhia Florestaminas, a plantation company. When the lease contract expired, the community, inspired by other struggles, mobilized in 2005 and with the support of La Via Campesina reoccupied its traditional territory of approximately 5,000 hectares.

After a great deal of struggle, confrontation and persecution, the community gained control of the area, pressuring the Minas Gerais state government to transfer the land to INCRA – the federal government agency responsible for agrarian reform – and establish an agro-extractivist settlement. On the settlement, each family was to have its own area to plant crops, and there would also be collective areas for agro-extractive production and livestock grazing. With the support of the union of rural workers of Rio Pardo de Minas and the Centre for Alternative Agriculture of Minas Gerais, the community drew up a plan for the reoccupation of the territory and a map indicating the areas where they would promote the rehabilitation of the native Cerrado vegetation and those where they would plant crops. The recovery of their territory breathed new life into the community, especially the older members. Once the plantations were removed, the streams began to flow again and wild animals

began to return to the area. The recovery of their freedom was one of the community's main victories.

Currently, the members of the community of Vereda Funda are implementing an agroforestry system and they are once again growing their own food: corn, beans, cassava and other crops. They plan to expand food production using agroecological practices, as opposed to the heavy reliance on chemical products of the former eucalyptus plantations. The women of the community, who actively participated in the struggle to recover their territory, have started up a small industry for the production of fruit preserves, generating income and creating employment for themselves and their families.

- Antonino and Guaraqueçaba, Paraná: The struggle against a REDD project

Since the end of the 1990s, a forest carbon project has severely affected dozens of traditional communities, including caçara (3), indigenous and quilombola communities, in the municipalities of Antonino and Guaraqueçaba. This project is currently classified by the Brazilian Forestry Service as one of the "REDD actions that have yielded good results."

But this forest carbon project, promoted by SPVS, a Brazilian nature conservation NGO, led to the expulsion of traditional communities from the region, one of the best preserved areas of the Atlantic Forest in Brazil. The fact that this area of forest is so well preserved is precisely due to the communities who have traditionally lived in the region and have always sought to live in harmony with the forest, growing crops on small areas of land to feed their families and carrying out other activities that never caused the destruction of the forest.

The SPVS project, undertaken in partnership with the US-based NGO The Nature Conservancy (TNC), blamed the local communities for the destruction of the forest and began to persecute them if they attempted to enter the forest, prohibiting them from fishing, hunting, raising crops, etc. Numerous people have been detained by the police, who act on behalf of the SPVS. In fact, however, those responsible for the deforestation were ranchers who were using the area for buffalo farming.

One of the communities, Rio Pequeno, organized with the help of the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) and occupied an area of land that was used by its members, but for which the property title was held by a large rancher who planned to sell it to the SPVS. In this area, which was considerably degraded by the deforestation caused by the rancher, the community not only resisted the police's attempts to evict the families, but also began to collectively implement an agroforestry system. This system has been a success because it has not only guaranteed the recovery of the land, but has also generated income for the community's families at the same time, combining fruit trees with various crops to provide food for the community and for sale in the region. For example, the settlement currently produces food through this system for a federal government programme that supplies food to public schools in the region.

The experience of this community is not only an example of resistance to REDD projects, but also demonstrates the importance for communities to organize and to design and implement proposals to defend their territories so that they remain under community control. This in turn demonstrates how it is possible to live well and, when necessary, to rehabilitate the land, guaranteeing the autonomy and food sovereignty of communities. There are currently efforts underway to create a solidarity network among all of the communities in the region affected by the REDD project to strengthen resistance.

- Baixo Parnaíba region, Maranhão: The struggle against Suzano's biomass plantations

The territories of dozens of traditional communities in the Baixo Parnaíba region of the state of Maranhão have been invaded in recent years by the pulp and paper company Suzano, which has deforested areas of chapada – transitional areas between the Cerrado tropical savannah and the Amazon Rainforest in northeast Brazil – to establish eucalyptus plantations. Suzano's objective is to produce wood pellets to be exported to the United Kingdom for use in biomass energy plants, as a supposedly “renewable” source of energy.

But there is nothing “renewable” about the devastation caused by Suzano, which has been destroying thousands of trees, including the bacuri, a symbol of the traditional communities of the Baixo Parnaíba region, who make use of the tree's entire fruit. Its pulp is used to make a delicious and nutritious juice, and its sale provides an important source of income for local communities, since bacuri is an extremely popular fruit in the urban centres of the state. Its skin or seeds can be made into a tasty jam. The oil extracted from the seeds is used to treat skin ailments, and the fruit can also be used as an anti-inflammatory. The bacuri is a mysterious and fascinating tree, and has been little studied, as is the case with the natural environment of the Cerrado region of Baixo Parnaíba as a whole. The Cerrado, like the bacuri tree, moves at its own pace and sets the rhythm for the human beings who make use of its abundance. The local inhabitants, following the rhythm of the bacuri, normally wait until the mature fruit falls to the ground in order to harvest it. Anyone who knocks down the fruit that is still in the tree can be certain that it will yield less pulp and that the tree will not produce fruit the following year. In this way, the inhabitants of the chapadas of the Baixo Parnaíba learn about the limits of nature and, above all, the importance of respecting them.

At the same time as they have resisted the advance of eucalyptus plantations, placing themselves in front of the machinery used to deforest the Cerrado, the local communities have developed small collective projects for community-managed intensive production of bacuri to boost their income and increase cultivation of the fruit at the very time that it is being threatened. Small areas where bacuri trees are managed can provide a good income for local communities. The local inhabitants criticize the currently dominant concept of productivity applied by state government technicians, usually agronomists, who often consider the Cerrado to be “unproductive”. This is because they do not take into account its thousands of bacuri and pequi trees, laden with valuable fruit, the babassu palms, whose seeds are the source of valuable oil, the buriti trees, whose fruit is used to make everything from jam to wine, and the small clearings on the slopes where the local residents plant various crops all mixed together: rice, cassava, beans, corn, squash, watermelons. In the view of the technicians, productivity means large-scale monoculture plantations and the intensive use of inputs like fertilizers and toxic pesticides. But nobody in the communities of the Baixo Parnaíba region eats eucalyptus, and soy, the other crop grown on large-scale industrial plantations, does not form part of the local “menu”, either.

Final considerations

Community-managed agroforestry systems – a centuries-old indigenous tradition throughout the continent – have demonstrated, with their diversity of trees, including fruit trees, tremendous capacity not only to promote the rehabilitation and conservation of the land, but also to provide a source of food for families and even to contribute to local economies throughout the year. The three experiences described here highlight the rich biodiversity and the value of these biomes for the traditional communities who live in them. By developing these initiatives and improving them through practice, while fighting for their territory, these Brazilian communities now have an important additional weapon with which to wage the unequal battle against companies and other large landholders who

are supported, without exception, by governments. These communities deserve the recognition of their practices by society and governments as a viable solution for confronting the multiple crises that humankind is currently facing.

Notes: (1) Quilombola communities are traditional communities of descendants of Africans who were brought to Brazil by force in the colonial era to work as slaves. (2) More information on the experiences of these communities can be found in WRM bulletin articles and other publications available on the WRM website. (3) Traditional communities of the southeastern and southern coastal regions of Brazil.

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- Cambodia: The struggle of rural people for their “community forest”, an essential part of their food sovereignty



Although many of the original forest areas in Cambodia have been destroyed in the past decades, for many communities the remaining forests still play a fundamental role in guaranteeing their food sovereignty. It is in the forest where they collect different types of vegetables, mushrooms, honey, small animals; the forest also provides resin oil from the rattan tree, used for example to protect the wood of their boats used for fishing in the rivers, another pillar of their food sovereignty; also, the forest provides firewood for preparing meals, and offers wild herbs and other elements for traditional medicine. Especially for women and the traditional activities and roles they exercise, the forest areas are extremely important. “The forest for us has one thousand utilities,” one of the women in a community recently visited by WRM.

The Cambodian law guarantees the right of communities to hold land title, and more recently also to have their so-called “community forest” recognized and demarcated. But in practice, communities often face a hard struggle to have their rights guaranteed. One threat to this recognition is the ongoing process by which the central government gives away land concessions that overlap with communities' territories to corporations. These concessions also often include the forest areas the communities depend on. Another problem for communities with forest areas is the ongoing profit-driven logging practice of extracting the very valuable timber inside the forest areas - which is cut for the export market.

The Pheapimex land concession

In Kampong Chhnang Province, since the early 2000s, communities are facing the problem of the Pheapimex land concession. Pheapimex is a Cambodian company that received a concession over 315,628 hectares covering the Kampong Chhnang and other provinces, and that has strong relations

with and therefore support from the Cambodian government (see <http://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/cambodia-the-curse-of-concessions/>). Pheapimex is the Cambodian partner of the Chinese Wuzhisan company, active in the concession area, and also subcontracts the area to other companies. Over the years, many families have been expelled by the company activities, but also community members have resisted against this company by, for example, filing complaints with the authorities, blocking the roads and stopping the machinery used for deforestation and cultivation of the monocultures that the concessionaires replace the forests with. Because of protests, the company had to desist from its initial plans of planting huge areas of lemon grass; they also dropped an attempt to introduce large-scale eucalyptus plantations. However, in Pursat province, in forest areas where few people lived and where it therefore was difficult to organize the resistance, most of the community forest area has been destroyed and large-scale cassava monocultures were established by the company. Agrottoxins are being applied by workers without protective equipment (see photo below), exposing them even more intensively to these poisonous substances. Although cassava is a food crop and could benefit the local market, it is being exported to be processed in China, according to community members.



Where community forest areas are overlapping with the concession area, the community needs both to mobilize constantly to protect these areas, as well as it needs to struggle with the authorities to get these areas recognized as community forest. As a result of the resistance struggles against the company, communities in Kampong Chhnang and Pursat provinces received a total of 60,000 ha of land titles that include the areas they are actually using for their living, basically their rice fields and residences. But they complain that while the maximum size on paper for such a land title is limited to 5 hectares, in practice much smaller areas are being demarcated, creating uncertainty for the families of how to take care of the future demand for land by their children. Furthermore, these titles do not include community forest areas, so the struggle to recognize and demarcate these areas continues. And also the resistance against the company continues, because even in those areas where the company has not introduced any monoculture yet because of the opposition by communities, like in Boribo district, new irrigation systems are now under construction.

The struggle for the Pray Long Forest

In another region of Cambodia, an organization called the Pray Long Network is active to defend the Pray Long Forest, with 360,000 ha one of the last best conserved forest areas in Cambodia, and on which about 200,000 people depend directly and indirectly for their livelihood. "Pray Long" in the

local language means “Our Forest”.

Some of the Pray long Network members in Kampong Thom province are, together with other community people from Srea Choeng and Kbal Khla villages, patrolling their community forest area on an almost permanent basis. The community forest area that is being patrolled by this group is located on the border of the Prey Long forest, and has a size of about 4,500 hectares but has not been officially demarcated yet by the government. It is being threatened by the activities of a Vietnamese company (CRCK) with a concession in the region to plant rubber trees in monoculture plantations. The community members even face the problem that some community members, influenced by often powerful outsiders who aim to profit from the valuable timber inside the community forest, invade the community forest area and cause deforestation. A small group of community members, concerned to conserve their forest for their and future generations, patrol the forest area day and night and when a group of “invaders” is discovered they mobilize and try to prevent further forest destruction. By doing this, the patrolling group has been able to keep destruction of the forest containing valuable timber to just 100ha over the past few years, a number that without the patrolling probably would be much higher.

An important recognition of the Pray Long Network has recently come from outside the country. The Network gained a Human Rights Award for their work to conserve the Pray Long forest from the Alexander Soros Foundation. But inside Cambodia, the community people from Pray Long Network and also the communities in Kampong Chhnang and Pursat provinces still face a hard struggle with their authorities to defend their livelihoods including their forest areas against the threats of concessions and logging.

To obtain motivation and inspiration and strengthen spiritual common values, community people in the different provinces that were visited have built in several places in and close to their community forest, small and simple temples, asking the spirits to protect the forest and also to protect them in their hard struggle. It shows how forests are important, not only for the physical – food sovereignty – well-being of communities, the spiritual and religious role of forests make them more than crucial for communities.

By: Winnie Overbeek (winnie@wrm.org.uy), based on a field visit in October 2013

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- Indonesia: Gold in Bukit Tiga Jurai affecting food sovereignty



Sumatra Copper Ltd.

Sumatra Copper Ltd., a London based mining company, has concessions in forest areas in Indonesia for mining, operating them jointly with the Newcrest Group. One of these concessions, about 300,000 hectares, is located in Sumatra, in the border triangle of the provinces of Bengkulu-Jambi- and South Sumatra. The companies that operate inside the areas are Indonesian affiliates of the two companies, for which Sumatra Copper requests permissions from the respective heads of district or governor.

One of them is operated by P.T. Jambi Gold, a company under the umbrella of Sumatra Copper Ltd in Jambi. It has a forest concession of 7,480 hectares in Sarolangun and Merangin Districts. In Bengkulu, Sumatra Copper Ltd., under the name of PT. Bengkulu Utara Gold, owns 99,979 hectares located in North Utara, Rejang Lebong, Kepahyang, Lebong, Central Bengkulu, and Mukomuko Districts. The concession area overlaps with the area of the Bukit Daun Protected Forest (50,000 hectares) and Kerinci Seblat National Park. In addition, the Group, under the name of P.T. Lebong Gold, has also been granted 57,630 hectares in Lebong District.

In South Sumatra, the Sumatra Copper Group owns forest concessions through two of their sub-companies: P.T. Dwinand Nusa Sejahtera (9,979 hectares) and P.T. Musi Rawasa Gold (75,000 hectares). Both concessions were granted by the Musi Rawas Head of District.

The activities of these companies are hidden from the surrounding communities, as they don't even know that concession agreements have been issued covering their lands and forests. The local people are only aware about certain companies operating with activities of construction and transportation of mining products from inside the forest, using helicopters. Yet, they do not have any knowledge about which company is active and what is the destination of the mining products.

Threats on Last Forest of Sumatera

In the daily lives of indigenous peoples in Jambi, the area around the triangle border of Jambi, Bengkulu, and South Sumatra is known as "Bukit Tiga Jurai", which means the hill of springs from which rivers flow into three different directions (jurain could also mean lineage). These forest areas are located on Bukit Barisan Mountains. In Jambi province, this border covers three districts, namely Merangin, Sarolangun and Tebo, while in Bengkulu it borders with six districts that still have forest areas in the northern part of Bengkulu: Mukomuko, North Bengkulu, Central Bengkulu, to southeastern part of Kepahyang, Rejang Lebong, and Lebong. In South Sumatra, the forest areas are parts of Musi Rawas and Linggau District.

A large number of community members in these areas are still very much integrated with the natural and weather cycles, as they are highly dependent on forest products and the agricultural practices are adapted to the forest ecology and hydrological cycle. Yet the local economic system based on environmental functions which are indeed the strength of the communities inside and around the forests remain invisible, as if non-existent for the Indonesian economy. Thus they are not identified as legitimate part of the State economy that ultimately positioned forests into unproductive areas within the economic paradigm developed by the government, that only considers them "productive" when a concession is given. This "unproductivity" is actually used to legitimate the land and forest grabbing for companies .

The forest like in Kerinci Seblat, in addition to having strong influence on the life and future of the communities within and adjacent to this forest area, also has a very important value to the lives of hundreds of thousands of community members who are not geographically adjacent to this area: the hills feed some important rivers that flow across a dozen of districts. So not only communities living

in and adjacent the forest area of Kerinci Sebelat depend on this forest, this is also true for many communities dwelling on the coast and along the river banks in a broader area.

The landscape changes of forest cover and extraction activities that affect the geomorphological structure of this region will directly impact the agriculture practices and livelihood of farmers and fishermen who strongly depend on water availability. Referring back to local history of naming the area as "Bukit Tiga Jurai", since the old days the local communities considered the forest areas of this triangle as the origin/lineage of the peoples living on the slopes of the west coast (Bengkulu), and east coast (Jambi and South Sumatra). Changing and extracting in the "Bukit Tiga Jurai" region means exterminating the source of life and culture of the people in the three areas.

The Indonesian government has indeed divided the forest areas into various ones with a different status, such as Kerinci Sebelat National Park, Bukit Daun Protected Forest and another area which is a 'limited production forest' that serves as buffer zone to the national park. Geographically, the triangle border forest of Jambi – Bengkulu – South Sumatra is dominated by the area of Kerinci Sebelat National Park, the last biodiversity reserve of Sumatra where Rhinos, Orang Utan, Tapir, Sumatran tigers and elephants still remain and thrive.

Culture, food sovereignty and forests

Batang Asai is a sub-district in Sarolangun of Jambi Province, located on the eastern slope of Bukit Barisan Mountains. It is a portrait of community dualism of being administratively under village government, while the living culture is still based on the clan system.

One of these is the Pengambang Matin clan which is believed to be one of the oldest clans in Jambi. For many generations, they have been aware that the soil beneath their lands and rivers are rich of gold, yet they only extracted gold in traditional manners.

Today the Pengambang Batin community members are restless after having become aware that their lands have been included into the concession area of Sumatra Copper, under the name of PT. Jambi Gold. For many generations, Pengambang people have been living in harmony with the natural cycle of the forest ecosystem around them, by making use of various products and producing their own food, guaranteeing food sovereignty.

For planting rice, the people are using the Kungai river as a source of irrigation for their traditional rice fields , pumping water into the rice fields using a large wheel made of wood.

In the post-harvest season, they use rice fields to graze their buffalo. For Pengambang people buffalo has an important value in addition to using the meat for food, the buffalo is also very helpful in their traditional mode of agriculture to prepare the land as well as providing organic fertilizer. Buffalo also can be a long term financial reserve, for their childrens' education and house construction.

In addition to wetland rice farming, they also practice padi huma (upland/dry rice) farming which is usually adapted to the local seasonal calendar, and planted along with various other crops to divert various types of pests. Although upland rice is planted near the forest , it does not suffer from pest attack, because in addition of being planted during a certain period when particular kinds of pests are declining, also various types of plants and living things that the pests need are still available.

Various non-timber forest products are also used for daily needs, such as kepayang, beside using the fruit as a side dish, they also process the seeds into cooking oil and fuel. In addition to kepayang, there are still many other forest products utilized by Pengambang people for food,

medicine and other daily needs. In general, the natural resources are used, controlled and conserved in a communal system, for instance by applying *lubuk larangan* (customary law) to protect the fish diversity in the river, where people are not allowed to catch fish in certain protected areas of *Lubuk Larangan* during a particular period of time.

Conflict and Environmental Destruction

The issuance of the gold mining concessions in the region without prior knowledge of the local communities will create conflicts between the companies and community members in the various districts in the three provinces.

1. Conflict about forest areas used and managed by communities

The forests that have been turned into concession areas of Sumatra Copper Group in almost all districts are bordering and administratively overlap with the areas of indigenous communities. Thus it will create conflicts with the community members at the village, sub-district, clan and district level, as the communities who are administratively and culturally controlling and managing the areas will be threatened and lose their sources of livelihood when the companies begin operating.

It also would threaten the existence of the *Suku Anak Dalam* community in Jambi whose territorial area is located in the *Masurai* and *Sebelat* mountains. The *Suku Anak Dalam* people will be severely harmed by the company's operation as their areas for nomadic culture will vanish, and at the same time it would mean the extinction of various natural resources, the main sources of their livelihood.

2. The conflict of traditional mining vs corporate mining

Traditionally people in *Lebong District* have practiced gold mining for generations. While in *Sarolangun District*, recently small-scale gold mines have been operated in the river stream by migrants using the mechanical separation method.

The presence of the companies will turn these two mining practices into illegal activities under the Indonesian legal system, as they are operating inside the company's concession areas that have been issued by the government. The banning and expulsion of the traditional and small-scale miners will provoke rejection and protests from the community members.

3. Conflict related to environmental destruction

Disposal of tailings into rivers flowing through various districts in the three provinces will reduce the quality of river water consumed by the communities along the river, disrupt irrigation systems for rice fields and livestock raising as well as negatively impact human health.

As in *Buyat Bay*, *Mandailing Natal* and *Papua*, the drastic physical and chemical changes in the river water quality will directly affect the people who consume the river water, and in the future will drive turmoil and collective protest.

The rejection of some villages of *Marga Batin Pengambang* of *Batang Asai Sub-district*, *Sarolangun District*, *Jambi Province*, is just the tip of the iceberg of communities who have directly witnessed the activities of the company. In addition, the brief overview of their lives before the presence of the mines is also a portrait of local wisdom, guaranteeing food sovereignty, of the people living inside and adjacent the forest in other provinces in Sumatra. Mining the gold in *Bukit Tiga Jurai* would mean instigating conflict and trouble for the government and the company themselves.

This a situation, where the government, on the one hand, is facilitating large-scale mining which would make this forest area “productive” while, on the other hand, destroying living systems like forests and rivers, highly productive systems that provide community food sources, affecting heavily food sovereignty and the overall future of these communities.

By Zenzi Suhadi, WALHI/Friends of the Earth Indonesia

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- Nigiera: A unique example of community based forest management at the Ekuri community



Introduction / Background

Nigeria in West Africa is the most populous country in Africa with an estimated population of 170 million. Nigeria's ecosystem from the south, consist of the mangrove, tropical forest, savannah and semi arid zone to the north. Nigeria tropical forest during pre-colonial and after independence in 1960, was relatively intact. However, deforestation, degradation, fragmentation and changing land use patterns for agriculture, illicit logging, overhunting, unsustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products, uncontrolled fire, unsustainable collection of firewood and urbanization have gravely depleted the Nigeria' rainforest. According to RainforestsMongabay.Com “ deforestation is a serious problem in Nigeria, which currently has one of the highest rates of forest loss (3.3 percent) in the world. Since 1990, the country has lost some 6.1 million hectares or 35.7 percent of its forest cover. Worse, Nigeria's most biodiverse ecosystems—its old-growth forests—are disappearing at an even faster rate. Between 1990 and 2005, the country lost a staggering 79 percent of these forests and since 2000 Nigeria has been losing an average of 11 percent of its primary forests per year—double the rate of the 1990s. These figures give Nigeria the dubious distinction of having the highest deforestation rate of natural forest on the planet” . Cross River State, a sub-national government in Nigeria on the border with the Republic of Cameroon is currently host to 50% remaining forests in Nigeria and is one of the “biodiversity hotspots” in the world.

Forest Governance System:

The forests in Cross River State as bequeathed by the British colonial administration, is divided into the forest reserves (controlled by the government), community forest (managed by communities), private forest (by NGOs) and Cross River National Park (by the federal government). According to International Union for Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) Strategy 2010-2014, “ Forests are biologically diverse systems, which offer a variety of habitats for plants, animals and micro-organisms. Forest biodiversity is interlinked to socio-economic factors, providing goods and services that range from timber, non-timber forest products to mitigating climate change and genetic resources” are critical to the daily sustenance of communities including Ekuri and the global

community at large.

Ekuri Community: Who are they?

One of the communities in Cross River State of Nigeria that has substantially and successfully made inroad in community forestry is Ekuri community. Ekuri community which consist of Old Ekuri and New Ekuri villages is 7km apart from each other with a population of 6,000, belongs to Nkokoli tribe who only occupies but 5 villages in all of Nigeria; speaks Lokoli, a unique language spoken nowhere else. Ekuri community due to colonial legacy has 33,600ha of primary forest on her land, the largest and relatively intact communally controlled forest in Nigeria and perhaps in West Africa.

Origin of Ekuri Community involvement in formal community forest management:

In 1981 without external influence, the Ekuri community conceived the idea of a formal community forest management initiative first to sustain the inheritance of forefathers, livelihoods, to promote community development, poverty reduction and to avert negative lessons learned from communities that have lost their forests. This idea continued to be developed over the years through active involvement of the chiefs, elders, women, men, youths and children to safeguard the commonwealth that the community depends upon for daily survival. More so, Ekuri as diminutive minority in Nigeria realized that her sustainable development is hinged on her forest as there is little chance of state or federal government initiating or advancing development schemes that would benefit Ekuri.

Problems in Ekuri that triggered community forest management:

At the inception of this idea, Ekuri people trekked four hours through the undulating forest to the nearest motorable road to market light but high priced forest products and bought essential goods which they head-loaded also back home. There were no other community facilities; diseases, illiteracy, poverty and mortality was rife and these motivated and intensified united efforts and commitments by all in Ekuri community to overcome this malaise. In 1992, the Ekuri community established Ekuri Initiative, as a community based NGO with a mandate in conservation, sustainable forest management, community development and poverty reduction.

Achievements:

Since its inception, the Ekuri Initiative has recorded inspiring achievements:

- Though the Initiative has a Board that makes policies for the organization, draft of policies are tabled before the general assembly meeting of Ekuri community for competing inputs and such inputs are integrated into new policies guaranteeing community's ownership of decisions and sustainability of policies, programs and activities.
- The harvesting of timber from two-50ha inventory plots and sustainable harvesting of NTFPs- afang, bush mango, cane ropes, achi seeds etc have generated incomes used for the construction of a 40km dirt road with bridges, culverts to both Ekuri villages, partly funded a health centre, built a school block, a town hall, awards of scholarships, skills development of youths to relieve pressures from the forest. The Initiative has also provided technical capacity to Ekuri farmers in sustainable agriculture, improved crop varieties, housing subsidy, payments of medical bills for the vulnerable, boundary maintenance to deter trespasses etc.
- The Initiative with supports from donor partners implemented a perimeter survey of Ekuri community forest (33,600ha); a land use plan jealously guarded by the Ekuri villagers; a detailed 5-year plan for the use of the land; an agriculture and non-timber forest products plan; successful legal fights over illegal and fraudulent logging concession in Ekuri community forest and various capacity

building activities etc.

- The success story of the Ekuri Initiative has inspired the Cross River State Forestry Commission to rewrite her forestry sector strategy making community based forest management the principle of the entire strategy. Furthermore, Ekuri community based forest initiative is accorded the status of a “flagship community based forest project in Nigeria”. The British's Department for International Development (DFID) has supported the Forestry Commission to replicate Ekuri model in 33 forest communities as well as Living Earth, a British NGO in 5 communities across the State.
- The Nigerian Conservation Foundation has replicated the Ekuri's model in Taraba State in the north-east of Nigeria. Several communities in Nigeria have visited the Ekuri community to learn from her innovative experiences including communities from Nigeria, Cameroon, Uganda, Mozambique and South Africa.
- The Ekuri Initiative has evolved income generation mechanisms ranging from registration fees from buyers of all farm and forest products, sales taxes, gates fees that go into the community's treasury on a daily basis for community uses. The Ekuri community has evolved a system where all trees in the forest and on farms (except planted by an individual) are communally owned. This strategy has drastically reduced degradation of large expanse of forest by the rich for farms or to acquire trees to sell to loggers as happens in other communities to the disadvantage of the poor. The traditional system of land ownership by individuals in Ekuri is through deforestation for farming; however with the new experience, land in the farming zone of the land use plan is equitably distributed among members of the community in a gender sensitive manner ensuring justice, fair play and uncompromising commitments of all to the ideals of the community to protect her “commonwealth”. The Initiative has also the sole responsibility of harvesting timber for commercial sales to meet the needs of the Ekuri community against individual logging practiced in other communities.
- A recipient of UNDP's “Equator Award” in 2004 in recognition of the Initiative successes in reducing poverty through conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.
- The greatest achievement of the Ekuri community based forest initiative is the undying capacity to protect her commonwealth, curtailed logging interest despite various mundane attempts by the powerful moneybags and collaborators in the corridor of power. This has substantially contributed to the relative intactness of Ekuri community forest and sustaining the socio-economic, cultural, environmental development of the Ekuri people. Besides, this has benefitted neighboring communities who also are depended on this forest for daily sustenance as well as water for downstream communities. Ekuri community forest is a storehouse for carbon thus assisting to mitigate climate change beneficial to the entire world. The proactive roles of the Ekuri community to preserve her natural heritage has the genuine capacity to meet the needs of present and future generations and is worthy of emulation by other communities to save mother earth from total depletion of resources and accompanying negative consequences on human being.

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- Video: “Disputed Territory: The green economy versus community-based economies”

This video, produced by WRM in 2012, documents the struggle – described in the article on Brazil in this bulletin – waged by communities in the municipalities of Antonina and Guaraqueçaba, in the state of Paraná, against a REDD project. The video not only shows the impacts of the REDD project, but also the struggle of the community of Rio Pequeno to recover their territory, through collective food production and the implementation of an agro-forestry system.

See: <http://wrm.org.uy/videos/disputed-territory-the-green-economy-versus-community-based-economies/>

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- Indigenous peoples throughout Brazil fighting for their rights, including their right to food sovereignty

During the first week of October, indigenous peoples staged protests throughout the country, including the capital, Brasilia, against the attempt of sectors of the National Congress, particularly a group of legislators with ties to mining and agribusiness companies, to modify the Brazilian Constitution with regard to indigenous rights. Their aim is to obstruct and diminish the rights of indigenous peoples to the territories they have traditionally occupied, which would seriously endanger the ability of these peoples to guarantee their physical and cultural survival, as well as their food sovereignty. For more information, see: <http://mobilizacaonacionalindigena.wordpress.com/>

Many different peoples are waging struggles. Take for example the campaign for the demarcation of the territory of the Tupinambá indigenous people in the south of the state of Bahia, who have been waiting for nine years for the completion of the legal demarcation of the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory. It has been clearly demonstrated that this is traditional Tupinambá land, and the Brazilian Constitution guarantees the “original” rights of indigenous peoples to their territories, yet the Brazilian government has systematically failed to comply with the legal deadlines for the finalization of the legal demarcation process, exacerbating the conflict in the region and threatening the food sovereignty of the Tupinambá people. An international campaign has been launched to demand that the Brazilian state urgently complete the demarcation process, in order to end the violence and guarantee the rights of indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. If you agree, click here to sign the petition demanding the urgent demarcation of the Tupinambá de Olivença Indigenous Territory and please help spread the word!

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- Open letter from WRM and other organizations to the Brazilian government regarding the critical situation of indigenous peoples in the state of Acre

After a field visit to an indigenous village in the state of Acre, together with Friends of the Earth Brazil and the Brazilian Network on Multilateral Financial Institutions, WRM and these organizations sent a letter to the Brazilian government calling for the urgent demarcation of the 21 indigenous lands in Acre that are still awaiting this legal recognition. In the letter we recounted our visit to the Jaminawa indigenous community of São Paulino, near Sena Madureira. The 24 families in this community are now confined to only five hectares of their traditional indigenous land. They are intimidated and

threatened – verbally and even with gunshots – by invaders from the outside when they attempt to carry out traditional activities like agriculture, hunting and fishing within their own territory, which seriously threatens their food sovereignty. The full text of the letter is available at: (<http://wrm.org.uy/other-relevant-information/mocao-publica-de-apoio-a-demarcacao-das-terras-indigenas-no-acre/>)

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- Learn more about the subject of food sovereignty

There are publications, statements and other sources of information on the subject of food sovereignty available from organizations like Friends of the Earth International (see <http://www.foei.org/en/resources/publications/food-sovereignty>), Food First (see <http://www.foodfirst.org/en/Agroecology,+Food+Sovereignty+and+the+New+Green+Revolution>), La Via Campesina (see <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/food-sovereignty-and-trade-mainmenu-38>), and World March of Women (see <http://www.nyeleni.org/spip.php?article189>)

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