

**WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT
MOVIMIENTO MUNDIAL POR LOS BOSQUES TROPICALES**

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OUR VIEWPOINT

- Climate change: Stop playing the fiddle!

Climate change is already happening. The recent hurricanes in the Caribbean, Central America, Mexico and southern US –and their terrible death toll- are not normal natural events: they are human-made disasters resulting from well-known causes. Unless those causes are seriously addressed, millions of people will continue to suffer from climate change impacts, ranging from extreme droughts to extreme flooding and storms.

In spite of their stated commitments, governments –North and South- have until now done little to solve the problem. The story goes that while Rome burned, Nero played the fiddle. A similar situation is now happening: while fossil fuels and forests burn, our governments choose to play the fiddle, pretending that the market will eventually solve the problem. Unfortunately, it won't. On the contrary, it is the market itself which makes the absurd seem reasonable and the reasonable to appear impossible.

It is clearly absurd to pretend that planting millions of hectares of trees will in some way “compensate” carbon emissions from fossil fuel burning. It is obvious that the net biospheric carbon pool will continue to increase as more carbon is extracted from the underground and pumped into the biosphere. But the market –and the oil industry- loves this approach. A new commodity –carbon- has been created and much money can be made out of it. The absurd has become reasonable.

We, they, everyone, knows that drastic political measures need to be put in place, regardless of whether they make economic sense or not. If a loved one is seriously ill, no-one thinks in terms of “how much will it cost to save him or her”? One does whatever is necessary for saving that life. The planet's climate is very sick and a similar approach is needed. Phasing out fossil fuels as fast as possible should be number one on the agenda. This would be the reasonable thing to do. But deeply entrenched economic interests oppose it and declare it “unviable”. Halting deforestation should be number two on the agenda, but “market forces” continue to promote forest destruction for economic gain, thus making forest conservation impossible.

It would be simple to put the blame on the current US president, but the truth is that few –if any- governments are actively doing something to seriously address climate change. Northern and Southern-based oil companies continue exploiting and exploring for yet more oil. Oil is made cheap while alternative energies are made expensive. Energy efficiency and conservation are but marginal cosmetic measures to reassure the public that something is being done. Some forest areas are declared as “protected” to allow for the continued destruction of the remaining forests. Carbon sink tree plantations continue being implemented in the South in spite of their absurdity.

Within such context, the only possible solution lies in the hands of normal people, who are still capable of distinguishing between what's reasonable and what's not. It is them who will put pressure on governments to implement the necessary measures to halt climate change before it's too late. Nero may have had the excuse of being mad; our governments don't. The peoples' message must be loud and clear: stop playing the fiddle and act now!

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LOCAL STRUGGLES AND NEWS

AFRICA

- Cameroon: What poverty means to the Bagyeli people

To outsiders, the Bagyeli may appear very poor. They have next to nothing in the way of material possessions, little or no money, and are still often without a permanent house. Yet one of the most important indicators of wealth for these peoples is the access they enjoy to the forest and its resources and the amount to which they are able to participate in decision-making processes relative to their livelihoods.

In 2000, Cameroon's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper was approved by the World Bank, making the country eligible for debt relief. However, Friends of the Earth Cameroon raised concerns that the voices of indigenous and tribal peoples such as the Bagyeli have not been heard, and that their perception of poverty and aspirations regarding development are not represented in the strategy.

The Bagyeli 'pygmies' living in the Campo Ma'an national park in southwest Cameroon have sustained themselves for centuries using their vast knowledge of the plant and animal life of the surrounding forest. They traditionally survived by hunting, fishing and gathering honey, fruit, wild yams, caterpillars and snails. When they track animals, they cover themselves with a powder made from the bark of the Moabi tree as camouflage. A nomadic people until recently, they sheltered themselves in temporary huts made of sticks and leaves.

Although a few Bagyeli still follow the traditions of their elders, intensive logging, agriculture and a pipeline traversing their lands have threatened their traditional lifestyles as well as those of other pygmy groups. For the Bagyeli, limited access to the forest affects their traditional livelihoods and leads to marginalization, discrimination and impoverishment.

Since the inception of the Campo Ma'an national park, which was created by the government as compensation for the environmental damage caused by the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, the food security and even the very survival of the Bagyeli people has been threatened due to restrictions placed on their hunting activities. This area is known for its remarkable biodiversity – nearly 390 invertebrate species, 249 fish species, over 80 amphibian species, 122 reptile species, 302 bird species, and around 80 species of large and medium-sized mammals – all of which have been conserved and sustainably managed by local and indigenous peoples for generations.

Since 2003, Friends of the Earth Cameroon, the Forest Peoples Programme and the Rainforest Foundation have supported the Bagyeli in the documentation of their use of the forest and its resources through a process called "participatory mapping". Participatory mapping, widely used by indigenous communities in Latin America and Southern Asia, entails the collection of detailed information by community selected cartographers about the land, its features and its resources. The outcomes clearly highlight the importance of the forest and its resources for the subsistence strategies of indigenous populations in Cameroon.

For the Bagyeli, the creation of protected areas on their ancestral territories has infringed upon their individual and collective rights, marginalizing and impoverishing them. They believe that any poverty reduction strategy proposed by the government or by external funders must include their participation, and must be based upon their collective right of access to land and forest resources.

"If you do not collect fruits, you cannot have soap; if you do not go fishing, you cannot eat salt; if you do not cultivate plantains to sell you cannot buy clothes. I am dirty and without clothes because I do not do anything. I have already been forbidden from entering the forest." (Indigenous Bagyeli person).

Adapted from "Nature: Poor people's wealth. The importance of natural resources in poverty eradication", July 2005, Friends of the Earth International, <http://www.foei.org/publications/pdfs/poverty.pdf>

- Madagascar: Ilmenite mining in exchange for forests and people

Mining giant Rio Tinto, the world's second largest diversified miner, has been given permission to open up an enormous mine on the Indian Ocean island of Madagascar that will involve digging up some of the world's most unique forest on Indigenous territory.

The \$775 million titanium dioxide mining projected to be carried out in the Fort Dauphin region of the island is being developed by QIT Madagascar Minerals, a subsidiary of Rio Tinto, with 20 per cent owned by the government and support from the World Bank.

Up to 1,000 hectares of land and coastal rainforest bordering the Indian Ocean will be dug up in different phases to extract ilmenite, the mineral which can be used to produce the white titanium dioxide pigment used more and more to colour paint, paper, plastics and toothpaste as lead paint is discontinued due to health impacts. The huge economic growth of China has led to enormous demand for the white pigment, at a time when other ilmenite mines in Australia and South Africa are being exhausted.

The first production will begin in 2008, once a new port has been built, partly with \$35 million of funding from the World Bank. The mining project is expected to have an initial capacity of 750,000 tonnes a year and the whole operation could last for 40 years.

Friends of the Earth has opposed the plans from the outset, and even one of their leading directors, Andrew Lees, died 10 years ago in the same forest while investigating the controversial plans for a mine. A botanist with a special passion for waterlands, he was investigating the effect it would have not only on its wildlife, but also on the Malagasy people, many of whom live in the forest.

Madagascar has more groups of unique animals than anywhere else on earth. There are 24 families of species that are found only on the island. Best known of Madagascar's animals are the lemurs, monkey-like creatures with large eyes, of which there are 32 different species. Other creatures under ecological stress are the ploughshare tortoise, the world's rarest tortoise, of which only a few hundred survive today, and the sideneck turtle.

Tony Juniper, head of Friends of the Earth, is aghast that the project has got the go-ahead. The day he got to know of the decision, he said: "This is a very sad day and very bad news for the people of Madagascar. Rio Tinto is exploiting natural resources in the developing world and, once again, it is the local people who will pay the price. This mine will not solve the terrible problems of poverty on the island, but it will damage its precious biodiversity". He said that it was time international laws were introduced to protect the interests of people and the environment. "It is becoming increasingly clear that companies cannot be trusted to do so."

Christine Orengo, Lees's partner said. 'There is terrible poverty in Madagascar, but this is not the best way to alleviate it. Thousands of foreigners will come in to take the jobs, and there are worries about the spread of diseases such as HIV. I fear it's going to destroy one of the most beautiful regions in the world.'

Rio Tinto has tried to preserve its image against criticisms and promised to replant the tropical forest they have to trash to get to the ilmenite working in areas of 50 hectares at a time. They would remove the ore from the sand and then replace the sand and replant it with trees. As if you can "plant" a thriving and biodiverse ecosystem like a forest!

Juniper said no company could guarantee that its plans would work out in the best way possible. 'You might have lots of plans for environmental protection, backed by lots of experts, but we are looking at a mine which will operate for 40 years.'

"What are we going to do if, at the end of it all, there are species which become extinct and a habitat that is ruined and people who are still impoverished? Who's going to be held accountable for that? No one. It's the age-old story of multinationals getting exactly what they want, whatever the environmental cost."

Article based on information from: "Madagascar's unique forest under threat", August, 2005, The Observer, Guardian Unlimited, <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,1544101,00.html>; Rio Tinto Mine Lifts Hopes of Madagascar Progress, Planet Ark, Mines & Communities Website, <http://www.minesandcommunities.org/Action/press704.htm>

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- Tanzania: Privatisation or piratisation of our forests?

The privatisation mania has gripped us like an unpreventable plague. The privatisation list is being expanded inexorably. Whether we admit it or not, and whatever the language we may use to rationalise it, the fact remains that privatisation is thrust down the throats of African governments by the BWIs (Bretton Woods Institutions) and the dominant Western powers. Even the so-called debt relief by the G8 is predicated on privatisation as one of the conditionalities. And the BWIs have a peculiar way of arguing.

The failures of privatisation are used to argue for more privatisation of more resources. The argument goes, "if you don't privatise enough, you cannot reap its benefits". And, of course, the success of privatisation per force calls for more privatisation. Either way, the argument is self-fulfilling.

The first rationale was that loss-making parastatals were a burden on the taxpayer. Privatisation would ensure that they were turned into efficient, tax paying enterprises. Yet, of course, the first parastatals to be privatised, like the breweries, were not loss making. You have to be a genius to make a loss in a beer business. Their "quick successes" in terms of turnover and tax revenues were used to justify other privatisations.

Obviously, no private investor would want to buy a loss making enterprise. So they have to be sold at dirt-cheap prices without liabilities and losses. Liabilities have to be taken over by the state, which means the very taxpayer who was supposed to be rescued from the loss making parastatal in the first place. Invariably, one of the first casualties of privatisation is workers, thousands of whom are made redundant. The new owners refuse to pay retrenchment benefits. The government has to do it, if at all. So the taxpayer assumes another liability while at the same time some of the tax payers fall out of the tax payers list as they join the queues of job-seekers.

No private profiteer would want to put in his capital unless he makes profit, and, not just profits, but high rates of profit. Africa today offers very high rates of return on capital, what with its rich resources and dependent governments. As Mwalimu (Julius Nyerere) once said, Africa attracts only missionaries and mercenaries: missionaries to console its poor, and mercenaries to oversee its pillage.

But profit-making assumes certain minimum conditions. It is the state which has to take on the burden of creating the enabling environment for capital to make profits: build the infrastructure and supply water and electricity and telecommunications at cheap rates; control recalcitrant workers; maintain law and order and facilitate various service providers -from the entertainment industry to catering to security companies- to service the new "community of expatriates". It is believed that Africa today has more expatriates than at the time of independence.

But then our water and electricity and telephone parastatals are not efficient. Their tariffs are high. Our markets are below standard; our meat is not hygienic and our tomatoes and onions and oranges do not meet the minimum size. So utilities too have to be denationalized, if not by outright sale, then via leasing and management contracts. Squatters have to be cleared to make way for supermarkets and expatriate villages to supply roasted meat from South Africa and cereals from Switzerland.

But it is not easy to turn around utilities into profit making ventures. Their plants and machinery are outdated. Their billing systems have lots of leakages. Since profits or commissions depend on revenue, more efficient water

meters and electric meters have to be imported. Once again the state is called upon to provide enabling finance for rehabilitation. It is obliged to take loans from the World Bank and elsewhere to help the investor to import the necessary machinery. Of course, the loans have to be serviced and repaid from the taxpayer's money -whether the existent or yet-to-be-born. While public debts mount private profits rocket, all in the name of development.

But corporate profit making has to look for new terrains constantly. From producing commodities to turning public goods into commodities, the corporate capital moves from manufacturing to public services, education and health and water and energy and from commoditizing land to privatising forests.

Privatisation and commercialisation of forest products is the new trend. A recent story in Tanzanian newspapers reported the deal to lease out the Longuza Teak Plantation to Kilombero Valley Teak Company (KVTC) and is only a tip of the iceberg. Forests have become important to corporate capital not only for timber resources but for bio-resources. By the same token, the implication of delivering forests to corporate capital goes beyond the issues of deforestation, as corporate capital turns them into producers of raw material for their veritable workshops of genetic engineering.

Privatisation of forests and forest products has elicited a lot of resistance in Latin America and Asia and even some developed countries including Canada and the United States. The implication and effects of privatising forests are far reaching. These have been debated and discussed in other countries.

We need to learn from the experience of others and re-assess our own. Let the Longuza incidence open up a wide ranging debate on the issues of privatisation generally, but more particularly, the implications of privatising - in whatever form -one of the most important resource and heritage, our forests.

Let us not deliver our future livelihoods into the hands of corporate pirates.

By Issa Shivji, Pambazuka News, <http://www.pambazuka.org/index.php?id=29614>

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- South Africa: Following a road of impoverishment with monoculture tree plantations

Like other countries invaded by monoculture tree plantations (or the "green cancer", as some South Africans call them), South Africa shows that those schemes have not been aimed at ameliorating local peoples' quality of life. On the contrary.

Adding to the information delivered by the report on the impacts of outsourcing on forestry (see WRM Bulletin N° 96), shocking statistics came out of the first forestry sector empowerment charter workshop held in East London on September 12.

"The issue of labourers getting paid between R20 and R22 [3-4 US dollars] per day is of major concern to us," said Thami Zimu, a South Coast sugarcane and timber farmer, who spoke on behalf of contractors.

"The broad-based black economic empowerment (BBBEE) charter should seek to give guidelines on how to avoid this."

She said the low labourers' wages were largely due to the very low rate at which sub-contractors were paid by major contractors.

One participant said it was unfortunate that the major contractors in the forestry sector were not part of the public hearings. "If they were here we would detail to them the great pain and abuse that we, including women and the youth, endure while working as labourers in rural areas. "A number of women are loaded on the back of trucks and are ill-treated, while getting low wages," said the representative of the ORTambo district.

Unequal power relations between sub-contractors and major contractors were denounced as a key cause of problems in the sector and related to the state's high outsourcing rate, estimated at about 90% of all forestry activities.

Adding to a legacy of social, economic and environmental devastation from the old colonial structures, monoculture tree plantations have nothing but followed a road of impoverishment, more inequality, exclusion and environmental degradation.

Article based on information from "South African forestry labourers are paid as little as R20 a day", Zine George, <http://www.dispatch.co.za/2005/09/13/Easterncape/dpay.html> sent by Phillip Owen, GEASPHERE, E-mail: wac@geasphere.co.za, www.geasphere.co.za

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- India: Adivasis and forest management

India's forests, the foundation of the nation's ecological security, are being lost to a plethora of commercial enterprises at an alarming rate. The latest statistics released by the Forest Survey of India shows that the country has lost over 26,000 sq. km of its dense forests during the period 2001-2003. With over 3000 species of flowering plants and about 200 species of animals of the country having been already categorized as being threatened, this massive loss of forest is surely to have added to the decimation of biodiversity.

This is happening at a time when the whole world, sans USA, is counting down to the year 2010 by when substantial reductions in the loss of global biodiversity should be achieved through the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to which India is a Party. India's massive failure in the sustainable management of its forests largely lies in the exclusionary and regimental nature of the forest management regime shaped by the colonial legacy and informed by the casteist worldview that regards with contempt those at the bottom of the social pyramid.

At the root of the deepening forest crisis is the displacement of the Adivasis, the country's indigenous people, as the traditional caretakers of India's forests. The Adivasis, the original custodians of our forests, who had defended the forests from the savage assaults by the British colonialists and struggled against a multitude of commercial exploitations in the post colonial political order, have been systematically disenfranchised and alienated from the forest management by the conservation regime, including the wildlife and forest laws. The proposed Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill is, therefore, not only a means to undo the historical injustice done to the Adivasis as the introduction to the draft bill rightly claims, but also provides the much-needed opportunity to win back the world's largest population of indigenous people as the caretakers of our forests.

It is not surprising that some elements have come out against the proposed law, which in some ways marks a paradigm shift. The doctrine that generates opposition to building partnership with Adivasis in the management of forests holds the autochthons and the rest of the marginalised as the Other and cannot come to terms with even an infinitesimal elevation in the status of the subaltern. Conservation is only an alibi for this doctrine. For, the world has already discarded the exclusionary dogma of conservation that characterized the approach that we had imported from the West.

The CBD, which is legally binding, is based on the triple objectives of conservation, sustainable use and equitable benefit sharing and provides for the participation of the indigenous people in the management of biodiversity. One of the three ongoing working groups established by the Convention process is to address the issues associated with the use and protection of the traditional knowledge of the indigenous people. However, India has made a mockery of the CBD by creating a national law- the Biological Diversity Act- which limits itself to addressing issues related to regulating access to biodiversity, blissfully feigning ignorance of the existence of the indigenous people

(in a manner reminiscent of defeating the spirit of the innovative Man and Biosphere Program by simply redesignating some existing protected areas without reforming the management system)

The Agenda 21 adopted by the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in all its four component programs addressing terrestrial living resource management underlines the role of the indigenous people and in addition includes a specific thematic program for strengthening the role of indigenous people in the sustainable management of such resources. Further, the Johannesburg Summit, held ten years after the UNCED, in its Plan of Implementation, calls for enabling the indigenous people to contribute to the implementation of the objectives of CBD and explicitly recognises their role in conserving and using biodiversity in a sustainable way.

It has been the World Parks Congress, its 1962 session in particular, that was largely instrumental in pushing the doctrine of violent and exclusionary form of protected areas in the developing world, modeled along the US' Yellowstone National Park, in the establishment of which over three hundred native Americans were killed and several thousands displaced. In a turn around, the 2003 edition of the Congress underlined the importance of participatory and collaborative forms of protected area management, and specifically called for the restitution of the traditional lands taken away from the indigenous communities, which is what the draft bill is seeking to achieve. There has been a marked increase in the number of protected areas across the world in recent years exceeding over one hundred thousand sites, covering more than ten per cent of the earth's terrestrial area. It is pertinent to note that a large number of the recently created protected areas are indeed sustainable resource use reserves.

Addressing the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment that for the first time put environment on the global political agenda, the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi told the West that poverty was the worst form of pollution- a statement subsequently made famous by our conservation bureaucrats in successive multilateral forums. However, a few months after her return from the Stockholm Conference she was to deepen the poverty and destitution of a huge mass of Indians, ironically in the name of conservation, through the Wildlife Protection Act that challenged the very existence of Adivasis whose life is organically linked to the wildlife, as if the havoc played by the illegitimate Indian Forest Act, 1927 that formalized the colonial appropriation of India's forests weren't enough. The tragic disappearance of tiger from Sariska, in spite of having spent Rs ten million (US\$ 232,500) per individual tiger within the reserve over the past 25 years, as revealed by the Tiger Task Force, is instructive of the failure of the regimental conservation project.

There is no reason for India to prolong the twin crises of accelerating biodiversity degradation and endangering the Adivasi population even after more than half a century of formal independence. The enactment of the Adivasi forest rights bill should be seen as the first essential step in reforming the country's forest management regime in order to seek the partnership of the most original conservationists to protect and sustainably use the country's most critical ecological endowment.

By S Faizi, e-mail: ecology@zajil.net

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- Indonesia: A national park, its failure and impact on livelihoods

Local conversations about the classification of the Mount Merapi forest area into a national park often end up questioning why it was established as a park at all.

Mount Merapi forest ecosystem is located at 600 to 2968 meter above sea level, in Yogyakarta Province, Republic of Indonesia. With an area of 8,655 hectares, it is mostly covered by mountain tropical forest which is the source of living of a million people in four districts.

Surface water that comes from Mount Merapi is divided into 3 directions: Progo watershed in the west part, Opak watershed in the middle and Bengawan Solo watershed in the east part. These watersheds have been supplying

water for consumption, irrigation, and industry for more than 5 million people of the Jogjakarta and Central Java provinces.

Unsustainable management of Mount Merapi is threatening its very existence. Water privatization by a commercial company is preventing about one thousand farmers from planting their farms; sand mining exploitation reaches 3,5 million cubic meter/year, wellspring sources have been quickly degraded, and flora and fauna is being destroyed.

But the paradigm of the government is still the same: exploitation of resources for cash without any consideration of long term use. Economics is put beyond environment and sustainability.

Many in the area expressed their opposition to the government's plan to classify the area into Mount Merapi National Park (MMNP), when the process began in 2001. Disregarding opposition, the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry issued a decree that officially changed the forest into a protected area on May 4, 2004.

We who oppose the measure denounce that the ministerial decree violates legal principles as well as principles of transparency, democracy and human rights, and is an expression of government's arrogance.

The decree goes against an earlier decree from the same ministry that sets out due process prior to the gazetting of a national park. The decision also contravenes Law No 22/1999 on regional autonomy because it ignores the authority of regional governments and legislative councils in the area.

The concept of national park first emerged in Western countries and was strongly influenced by classical concepts of conservation --a region tightly protected with no one allowed to touch it. It later developed into an eco-fascist conservation model that placed undisturbed "nature" as a top priority even if it meant getting rid of the local inhabitants.

The world's first national park was established in the U.S. in 1872 with the gazetting of the Yellowstone National Park. The park's management did not allow anyone to make use of the natural resources in the park, disregarding the fact that it was the home of indigenous tribes. Conflicts were unavoidable and led to the forced eviction of the indigenous communities from the region.

Unfortunately, many countries, including Indonesia, were inspired by that model. In 1980, the Indonesian government established the first five national parks.

The government applied the concept without considering its suitability to the country's social and economic conditions, apparently preferring to please Western countries rather than its own people. The fact that 42 national parks have been established across the country one after another without comprehensive studies on how the existing parks have been managed, proves so.

The conditions in many of the regions named national parks have worsened since they were gazetted as such. Instead of preserving the area and generating positive spin-offs, the establishment of national parks has often resulted in damage and disadvantage. The Mount Leuser, Mount Halimun, Kutai, Bukit Tiga Puluh, Tanjung Puting, Mount Palung, Ujung Kulon, Lore Lindu, Rawa Aopa, Komodo, Lorentz, and Wasur national parks are examples of how such conservation model leads to social and economic problems, and environmental degradation rather than preservation.

The application of the national park concept in Indonesia is not just at a theoretical level, but also at the policy and management levels. At the policy level, for example, through the National Park Management Body, the government discriminates between the rights of the management body and those of the people, who are considered subordinate to the management body. They have to obey the body without question while it applies fascist regulations that were made for the government's interests. Law No 5/1990 on the conservation of natural

resources and ecosystems, which makes no mention of the people's role and rights regarding natural resources, is an example of this arrogance.

The management body organization, too, is not only government-biased but, like other state organizations, suffers from corruption. As the manager of national parks, the management body holds almost complete authority. There is no room for the rights of the surrounding communities. That national park management is often corrupt is shown through its cooperation with business and the military in illegal deforestation --activities that have long been well known. The massive illegal logging that occurs in almost all national parks outside Java, including the Tanjung Puting and Mount Palung national parks, involves the management body management, businesspeople, and military personnel.

This cooperation also leads to the massive theft of biological resources, the eviction of the indigenous inhabitants and the openings of new mining sites inside supposed "national parks".

National parks in Indonesia do not mean conservation; they mean more damage to nature and the impoverishment of local communities.

One should well ask why the government established the Mount Merapi National Park without conducting comprehensive, participative studies prior to it. To my belief, the same problems in other areas will reoccur in Merapi. Why? Because the local community and the Merapi ecosystem are inseparable and interdependent.

For hundreds or maybe even thousands of years, the surrounding communities have been wisely guarding Merapi because it guarantees their livelihoods through its clean water, green trees and because it provides food, shelter and medicines.

Will the establishment of Mount Merapi National Park fix the problems caused by sand quarrying on the slope of Merapi which in turn has caused damage to its forest and dried out its springs? Will the management of the National Park care about the fate of the evicted communities after the arrival of new "investors"? I really don't think so. The National Park system will never be able to answer these problems; it will instead create new ones that will further tarnish this beautiful area.

The problems of Merapi cannot be answered by classifying it as a national park. Only by empowering the local community and integrating the management of the Merapi area to involve all the stakeholders through the principles of cooperation, trust, participation and conservation, will we answer the area's problems.

What this area needs is a people-based conservation model, not a national park concept that has only proved to be a recurrent failure.

We won't let Merapi be another entry into the long list of national park disasters in Indonesia and also in many parts of the world, will we?

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- Laos: Aiding or Abetting? Internal Resettlement and International Aid Agencies

A massive restructuring of Lao society is currently taking place. Over the last decade, the Lao government has moved tens of thousands of Indigenous Peoples from their remote upland homes to lowland areas and near roads. While the government's programmes are aimed at "poverty alleviation" and "development", the impacts on the resettled communities' livelihoods, food security and environment have often been devastating.

"Tens of thousands of vulnerable indigenous ethnic minority people have suffered and died due to impacts associated with ill-conceived and poorly implemented internal resettlement initiatives in Laos over the last ten years," write Ian Baird and Bruce Shoemaker in a recent report on resettlement in Laos.

The report, titled "Aiding or Abetting? Internal Resettlement and International Aid Agencies in the Lao PDR", criticises the response of many international aid agencies to the problems caused by resettlement.

Baird and Shoemaker, both of whom have worked in Laos for many years, ask whether some aid agencies are in effect "facilitating violations of the basic rights of impacted communities through their support for internal resettlement".

The problems caused by internal resettlement in Laos have been well documented. In 1997, French anthropologist Yves Goudineau led a research team which documented death rates of up to 30 per cent in upland communities that had been resettled. The report was published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In 2000, the Asian Development Bank sponsored a Participatory Poverty Assessment led by anthropologist James Chamberlain. This assessment revealed that many villagers believe that their poverty is newly created and due in large part to government programmes involving resettlement. The report states that by reducing swidden cultivation, the Lao government has not decreased poverty, but actually increased it.

Baird and Shoemaker list 18 other studies by NGOs, UN agencies and academics which confirm the impacts on resettled communities in Laos. "To our knowledge," they write, "there is not a single study reporting that resettlement has benefited indigenous ethnic communities in Laos."

Some organisations, including the Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation, Concern Worldwide and the Canada Fund, are actively resisting further resettlement in Laos, for example by working in villages in remote upland areas, demonstrating that there are alternatives to resettlement.

Others, however, are actively promoting resettlement. Finn Reske-Nielsen, the UNDP Resident Representative in Laos, appears oblivious to the evidence in reports published by his own organisation of the impacts on resettled communities. He argues that "Voluntary relocation makes good sense in a sparsely populated country like Laos, where it is difficult to bring educational, health and other essential services to the people."

Baird and Shoemaker point out that there is nothing inevitable about resettlement in Laos: "It is being forced upon communities through a combination of specific political, social and environmental policies and actions." Some aid agencies, such as the ADB, require resettlement to achieve their long-term objectives. "Regional integration, promotion of industrial forestry and cash cropping, industrialization, and the opening of markets require the type of demographic changes in rural Laos that internal resettlement is helping bring about," write Baird and Shoemaker.

In 2004, Sandro Cerrato, the European Union's chief of mission in Vientiane, produced a concept paper which called for a new dialogue between large aid agencies and the Lao government on resettlement. Cerrato suggests that aid agencies should support resettlement so that it is done better.

Baird and Shoemaker point out that some organisations have criticized Cerrato's concept paper as being based on a series of false assumptions. Cerrato assumes that resettlement will relieve poverty. In fact, resettlement has "contributed to long-term poverty, as well as environmental degradation in the uplands and the lowlands, cultural alienation, and increasing social conflicts," write Baird and Shoemaker.

Cerrato assumes that aid agencies can differentiate between voluntary and involuntary resettlement. But in the Lao context it's difficult to tell the difference, argue Baird and Shoemaker: "almost all of what is classified as voluntary resettlement in Laos is, in reality, not villager-initiated."

Cerrato assumes that resettlement is inevitable and that aid agencies are powerless to promote alternatives. He assumes that more money and better implementation would somehow improve resettlement, even though there is no evidence to support this. He ignores the fact that upland communities have the right to decide their own future and assumes that they are not capable of doing so.

International aid agencies operate in Laos with very little accountability. They face no scrutiny from the state-controlled media. International aid agencies rarely have to justify their policies or actions to local communities or institutions. They do not need to worry about local monitoring or "watchdog" groups, or the possibilities of legal action when their actions end up harming local communities.

Although Cerrato seems to ignore the extensive research on the impacts of resettlement in Laos, it is unacceptable for the EU to argue that it is unaware of the potential consequences of supporting further resettlement in Laos. Baird and Shoemaker point out that it is still unclear how the EU initiative will develop. But if it goes ahead as currently structured, the EU could be seen as actively complicit in the violation of the human rights of upland ethnic communities in Laos.

"Aiding or Abetting? Internal Resettlement and International Aid Agencies in the Lao PDR", by Ian Baird and Bruce Shoemaker is published by Probe International and is available here:
<http://www.probeinternational.org/pi/documents/mekong/AidingOrAbetting.pdf>.

By Chris Lang, e-mail: chrislang@t-online.de

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- Thailand: "Community forest bill" poses relocation threat for rural communities in conservation forest areas

In an ironic twist, Thailand's Community Forest Bill intended as a formal framework to define rights of communities to co-manage forest areas now threatens to resettle rural communities especially ethnic peoples living in the uplands and conservation forest areas.

On 15 September 2005, a joint House-Senate committee scrutinising the draft law ruled that community forests be prohibited in "prime forest areas". The panel voted in favour of a proposal by the Natural Resources and Environment Minister Yongyuth Tiyapairat to set up "special forest zones" where human activities, including establishment of community forests, are prohibited.

The panel's ruling means all human settlements in these forest zones must be relocated once the bill becomes law. According to Yongyuth, a special forest zone is an area with a slope of more than 30 degrees, with high levels of biological diversity, and located in upland areas.

There are about 2.8 million hectares of such forest areas nationwide, mostly located in conservation forests that include national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, classified watersheds and no-hunting zones. No clear figures exist but it is estimated that one million families throughout the country including ethnic communities live and farm in these areas.

More than ten years of drafting and negotiations between government officials, local community groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) led to the draft community forest bill which would be Thailand's first legislation recognising the legal status of communities living in and around Thailand's National Forest Reserves to use, manage and protect their forests in co-operation with the Royal Forestry Department (RFD).

The forest bill is also one of the first pieces of legislation to use a Constitutional mechanism that allows local people to propose legislation with the support of 50,000 signatures – local people from all over Thailand gathered 52,698 signatures and presented the community forest bill to Parliament in early 2000.

The Lower House of Parliament passed the bill. But subsequently, the Upper House (Senate) blocked the bill and proposed amendments that forced the draft into review by a joint panel comprising members of both the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament.

Permsak Makarabhirom, forestry academic in Kasetsart University and a member of another drafting committee that scrutinised the bill said that the joint panel's proposal for "special forest zone" subverts the original intent of the bill by excluding communities living in protected forest areas and violates the rights of forest-dependent communities.

"It contradicts the spirit of Thailand's Constitution such as Article 46 that supports local rights to management of natural resources," he said.

More than 8,000 "community forests" all over Thailand are being used, protected and managed by local communities, some over several generations. The draft bill was intended to legalise these community forest areas and provide official recognition for local people's forest conservation efforts.

However, the RFD and some nature conservation groups have consistently opposed the draft bill's proposal to establish community forests inside protected forest areas. In its rush to convert reserve forest to protected area status, the RFD demarcated many areas occupied and used by local people as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. This resulted in a situation where most protected areas in Thailand are surrounded or partially occupied by an alienated local population who feel that their legitimate property rights have been appropriated.

The RFD prefers resettlement of village people living in forests or imposes severe restrictions on their use of forests. The RFD approach, however, has so far failed both to prevent the continuing deforestation of Thailand's remaining forests from widespread illegal logging involving powerful business interests and to support the livelihoods of rural communities.

Moreover, previous state attempts at forcible resettlement of communities living in forest areas have mostly increased impoverishment of local communities, worsened rural conflicts and caused further loss of forest areas as displaced people clear forests elsewhere.

Farming along with a mix of other activities including seasonal job-seeking in urban areas provides livelihoods for many village communities. And the potential income generation in community forests is also now widely accepted particularly for economically-poorer families with limited incomes due to moderate land holdings, lack of education or old age that can get access to non-timber forest products.

Decho Chaiyapap, coordinator of the Chiang Mai-based Community Forests of North Thailand, a coalition of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and farmers in northern Thailand, said villagers disagreed with the panel's resolution since it restricts them both from accessing forests and practicing agriculture in these areas. "It is not clear how the "special forest zone" would be specifically defined or by whom. So we cannot say for certain how many families would be affected," he said.

Questions also remain whether the joint panel had the legal mandate to amend the provisions of a bill that had already been approved in the Lower House of Parliament. Civil society groups have petitioned Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in a letter stating that: "The joint panel's amendments violate the draft community forest bill passed in Parliament that allows for community forest to be established in protected forest areas." The letter also stated that the panel's proposal for special forest zones is a violation of the draft bill's intention to "support local management of forest areas both inside and outside the conservation forests since forest management solely by the state has not only proved ineffective but also worsened forest destruction in Thailand."

By Noel Rajesh, Chiang Mai University, Unit for Social and Environmental Research (USER), e-mail: rajesh@sea-user.org

SOUTH AMERICA

- Brazil: Aracruz - Sustainability or business as usual?

Six months ago, indigenous Tupinikim and Guarani people reclaimed just over 11,000 hectares of their land from the Brazilian pulp giant Aracruz Celulose. They chopped down thousands of eucalyptus trees to demarcate their territory and built two indigenous villages with a large meeting house and several other houses on the land. Several indigenous families are living in the houses.

Earlier this month, 300 Tupinikim and Guarani and their supporters occupied the central administration building of Aracruz's pulp mill complex for 30 hours, to protest against Aracruz's interference in the official recognition of their land rights.

Tupinikim and Guarani people have been attempting to recover their lands from Aracruz since 1979. In 1997, FUNAI recognised 18,071 hectares as belonging to the Tupinikim and Guarani people. However, they were only able to reclaim about 7,000 hectares of this land because of pressure from Aracruz on the federal government.

Aracruz Celulose started its plantation operations in the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo in 1967, during the military dictatorship which ruled Brazil from 1964 until 1985. "When the company came, the people left. They weren't able to defy it. They were forced to leave and even threatened," Eugenio Francisco, a Tupinikim of the village of Lancha told researchers from FUNAI, Brazil's indigenous affairs agency in 1994. "The company took everything," he said.

Aracruz built its first pulp mill on the site of a Tupinikim village called the Village of the Monkeys. Aracruz forced approximately 7,000 families to move from the land it occupied.

Today, Aracruz is the world's largest producer of bleached eucalyptus pulp. In 2004 the company produced 2.5 million tons of pulp, 97 per cent of which was exported. Aracruz's largest customers are Procter & Gamble and Kimberly Clarke, accounting for 45 per cent of the company's sales.

Aracruz owns 252,000 hectares eucalyptus plantations in the states of Minas Gerais, Bahia, Rio Grande do Sul and Espírito Santo. In addition, the company runs a "Forestry Partners Programme" covering 71,000 hectares of eucalyptus trees, managed and planted by farmers.

To make way for its plantations, Aracruz destroyed more than 50,000 hectares of Mata Atlântica forest. Pairs of tractors with a chain tied between them drove through the forest, destroying everything in their path. Animals were crushed by falling trees or machinery. Aracruz has also been fined by IBAMA, Brazil's environmental protection agency, for planting in protected areas.

Rivers and streams have dried up as a result of Aracruz's eucalyptus plantations. The company has dammed rivers and diverted water from the Doce River to its mills, further impacting water flows in the region. Fishing has largely disappeared from many of the rivers in the region.

In January 2004, in an attempt to improve its image, Aracruz hired a UK-based consulting firm called SustainAbility. SustainAbility was founded in 1987 by John Elkington, the author of such books as "The Green Capitalists" and "The Green Business Guide". He describes his work over the last 25 years as "focusing mainly on trying to achieve sustainability with business, through markets."

SustainAbility is developing a Sustainability Plan for Aracruz. Jodie Thorpe of SustainAbility explained that SustainAbility "identified three areas of Aracruz's framework as initial priorities for improvement: stakeholder engagement, transparency and governance."

But SustainAbility's web-site includes very little information about Aracruz and nothing at all about Aracruz's record. It makes no mention of the Tupinikim and Guarani's struggle for land.

None of the reports that SustainAbility has produced are publicly available. "While we encourage and support transparency, I hope you can appreciate that we are not at liberty to share this work publicly," explained Thorpe.

Far from criticising Aracruz, SustainAbility's web-site states that "Aracruz Celulose has a long-standing commitment to sustainability."

I wrote to Elkington to ask him how he responds to the criticism that SustainAbility is helping to greenwash a controversial company. "That absolutely is not the intent" he replied. Elkington explained that the SustainAbility web-site refers to Aracruz's "clear corporate commitment" to sustainability. "In my mind," he wrote, "there is no question that Aracruz still has a huge amount of work to do before it can claim to be anything like a 'sustainable company'". On this last point, then, we agree.

I visited Aracruz in August 2001. I was there to take part in an international seminar on the impacts of eucalyptus plantations. Aracruz was also invited. I was looking forward to hearing how Aracruz staff would respond when faced with hundreds of community members who live with the impacts caused by the company. Aracruz, however, declined to attend the seminar.

While I was there, I visited Tupinikim and Guarani villages, and listened to the problems they had faced since Aracruz had taken over their land. I saw the vast areas of sterile, industrial eucalyptus plantations. A Tupinikim village I visited was surrounded by plantations. I saw Aracruz's massive, stinking pulp mill. I heard about how the company releases its waste water at night. And I took part in a march with hundreds of people through Espírito Santo to protest against Aracruz's activities.

A few years ago, Elkington wrote that "Much of what passes for sustainable development looks very much like business more or less as usual." Elkington's consulting firm, SustainAbility, it seems, is currently proving this statement to be true.

By Chris Lang, E-mail: chrislang@t-online.de

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- Chile: Pulp mill takes death to the sea

Celulosas Arauco and Constitución pulp mill, better known as Celco, located in Valdivia, belong to the Chilean Angelini group. It recently re-launched their operations after having been closed for 64 days following the scandal arising from the mass death of black-necked swans in the Rio Cruces sanctuary where it discharged its effluents.

Days before it reopened, the company had received the backing of President Ricardo Lagos and the local environmental authorities in taking this decision. On announcing its reopening, the company stated that it had "gained experience" and begged the "pardon of the community of Valdivia for the trouble and concern that it had had to face."

"The plant is in a condition to restart operations, but with its capacity limited to 80% as it must make changes and technological investments to adjust to the new demands established by COREMA [regional environmental authority] X Region and return to its originally authorised production," stated the company.

Celco also adopted other provisions. To start off with, it decided to implement the project of building a pipeline to

the sea, alleging that this solution had been "reiterated by the President of the Republic during his recent visit to Valdivia." The project also has the approval of the Corema.

The management of Celco recently acknowledged the alternative of transporting and dumping liquid industrial waste in the sea, using pipelines that would flow into a sector between the Queule cove zones or in the vicinity of Puerto Saavedra, in exchange for participating in the construction of a new sea port in the area, benefiting the plantations companies that would be able to take their products out of the zone directly for export.

The project would impact on the Mapuche Lafkenche communities, inhabiting the coast, and extending to the southern zone of the VIII Region, for whom the sea provides for their livelihood. The Mapuche and environmentalist organisations of the IX Region had announced this during a mobilisation under the slogan of "Meeting in diversity for the defence of environmental rights" which took place in Temuco on 9 July.

Furthermore, a demonstration at the port of Valdivia, with the participation of vessels from various coves in the province, the trade unions and fisher-people associations, social organisations and Mapuche-Lafkenche communities in the region expressed their rejection of the pipeline from the factory flowing into the sea.

"The alleged spearhead technology announced by the pulp mill has already left its mark on the Cruces River and now they intend it to reach the sea. I am telling Mr. [President] Ricardo Lagos that this pipeline will not empty into the sea because we will oppose it," expressed Eliab Viguera, of the Committee for the Defence of the Sea.

A document submitted by the demonstrators states that "The high danger of the pulp mill pipeline which, even with tertiary treatment caused the death of the wetlands (...) was demonstrated in a study undertaken by the Austral University of Chile, the only serious scientific study of public domain."

For many companies and governments, this evidence is only a public relations problem. They hire public opinion consultants, scientists and social workers but to study "how to sell the product better," in this case the investment project, because their decisions are immovable.

Thus the crises are postponed, the companies make money and the affected peoples, to make themselves heard, must take their demonstrations to the extremes of confrontation. When they explode the powers are "surprised" and ask for moderation.

Article based on information from: "Chile, Celulosa Arauco 'pide disculpas' y reabre su planta", Víctor L. Bacchetta, e-mail: vbacchetta@redcalc.org, http://www.rel-uita.org/agricultura/ambiente/celulosa_arauco.htm; "Celulosa Celco ahora va por el litoral Lafkenche", Alfredo Seguel, Mapuexpress Informativo Mapuche, <http://www.mapuexpress.net>

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- Colombia: A forestry law for the foreign capital business

Of the 3,500 million hectares of forests existing in the world, close on 63 million are to be found in Colombia and half of these are located in territories enriched by the cultures of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendent communities. These forests are also host to the richest forms of biological diversity in the world and support the numerous cultures that inhabit them. They are also the location for climatic and water regulation and the habitat of complex and irreplaceable life forms.

However, in what is an unfortunate common feature of numerous countries in the South, the forest-culture relationship and the living conditions of numerous communities have been dramatically affected by the implementation of productive forest chains promoted by USAID through the Colombia Forestry Programme. Other factors have also had an impact: the Colombian State's interest in converting biodiversity and the rest of the indigenous people and Afro-descendent communities' environmental heritage into merchandise at the service of international capital and particularly that of the United States in the FTA; the implementation of highway and port

facilities, mining and bioprospecting mega-projects; the establishment of large-scale oil palm plantations on indigenous and Afro-descendent community territories and vital spaces.

The Forestry Law Bill that is presently being debated in Congress falls within the framework of these policies. It has already been adopted by the Senate and is going through a last debate in the Chamber of Representatives Plenary.

Several Colombian social organizations have stated their criticism of this Bill, basically regarding the fact that it does not achieve the purpose of putting order in the chaos presently existing in the country regarding the harnessing of forest resources, but on the contrary, it is likely to generate further legal chaos leading to non-application both of existing laws on this subject and of new ones.

In the first place, they claim that, regarding the formulation of the Bill, no participation has been given or consultation made with the Afro-descendent, Indigenous and Mestizo communities, or for that matter with any other social actors involved.

Furthermore, the Forestry Law Bill states that it will regulate tree and forest plantations, but the social organizations declare that "Its contents are primarily to promote timber production in the country through plantations, discarding the possibility of a law for natural forests. This is a policy that lacks a comprehensive environmental perspective, and does not consider forests as an ecosystem as established by the Biodiversity Convention because it modifies the sector's policy planning and formulation bodies and radically changes the corresponding institutions to the extent that most of the control will lie exclusively in the hands of the Ministry of Agriculture and private agents."

They also accuse the Bill of facilitating access by international companies to forestry business by establishing legal figures that enable access to the native forests of the main Pacific and Amazon areas, affecting Indigenous shelters, collective territories of Afro-descendent communities and peasant settlements.

The organizations point out that "the marked eagerness in the discussion process and rapid adoption of the Bill in Congress do not agree with the enormous impact that it will have on the country's forest wealth and on the rights of many Colombians. On the contrary, the influence of foreign bodies and logging companies interested in the promotion and adoption of the project is well-known." "The prompt adoption of this Bill on the eve of the signature of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States promoting the environmental services market, makes the catastrophic results we are warning about even more expeditious."

The support of numerous individuals and organizations has endorsed the public letter setting out the above arguments. It can be accessed at: http://www.censat.org/Biodiversidad_Bosques_PL_Forestal.htm. Those wishing to give their support to the letter should contact the CENSTAT organization at the following e-mail address: bosques@censat.org.

Article based on information from CENSAT: "Declaración sobre el proyecto de Ley Forestal", "Carta abierta al Congreso de la República", http://www.censat.org/Biodiversidad_Bosques_PL_Forestal.htm

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- Peru: Illegal logging – a source of forced labour in the Amazon

Logging is highly selective in the Peruvian Amazon. That is to say, out of the great diversity of species only a few are used, causing reductions in the existence of some species. The consumption of certain woods – such as mahogany – does not forgive even reserve zones.

Illegal logging taking place in these zones resorts to various strategies ranging from extraction contracts in the so-called buffer zones (roughly 15 km wide strips surrounding the reserve area, which help the loggers to pass off the timber logged in the reserve as coming from the buffer zone), to permits for river transport inside the reserve

of timber supposedly logged outside the reserve. Timber is also “laundered”: it is legalized by sawing it with a belt saw to remove the marks of chainsaws which are prohibited as they imply a great waste of wood and papers are drawn up as if the timber were to come out of the zone under contract.

The noise and visibility of these activities, involving people established in well-known, permanent camps, flat barges that transport timber, and cranes, make this illegal activity anything but clandestine. In the Pacaya Samiria National Reserve, located in the triangle formed by the joining of the Marañón and Ucayali Rivers, it has been observed that an average of 20 men work in each camp and there are about 50 camps operating annually.

It is precisely in this sector of illegal logging where labour systems abound that are associated with non-payment, remuneration in kind, prostitution of women in logging camps and sub-human working conditions.

Twenty-first century slavery takes place under the name of forced labour and its victims are the most underprivileged – children, women, and native communities. Those who seem to be invisible. Competitiveness drives the companies to seek cost-cutting in production processes and so these modalities of exploitation occur that should offend peoples’ consciences.

Isidoro Chahuán, a chain-saw operator from the Quichua ethnic group told us “I work for soap, salt, a cartridge, a shirt.” He is what is known as an authorised worker. In the Amazon, over 30 thousand Peruvians from the most distant indigenous communities are in the same inhuman situation. A report for ILO on forced labour in timber extraction in the Amazon by the anthropologist Eduardo Bedoya and the social science expert Alberto Bedoya, tells us of up to three ways it occurs. In two of them the common denominator is the system of inflated debts and meagre pay for the timber extracted. Although this is a long standing phenomenon going back to Colonial times, with the cedar and mahogany boom the timber industry has had to gain ground and for this reason has entered virgin territories, community reserve zones, national parks and localities where non-contacted or incipiently contacted groups reside.

The most frequent case is that of the “authorizing logger” linked to large logging companies, handing out a quantity of money in the town to “trapping bosses” to obtain timber. These offer money or advance food or goods (such as rice, salt, rifles, chainsaws, etc.) to the indigenous communities under the condition that the community members, who know the area and its trees better than anyone else, deliver cut timber. Generally these agreements are made through verbal or written contracts, where no reference is made to the market value of the timber, which the indigenous people are unaware of and they are easily deceived. Thus, when the workers deliver the timber to the “trapping boss” he argues that the timber is no good and arbitrarily reduces payment. As the money is not enough, the indigenous people ask for further loans and increase their debt. Peasants are “trapped” and even sign ten-year contracts.

In the case of logging camps, workers are gathered, usually from outside the communities, to extract timber. The report explains that in the towns they are given an initial amount of money to recruit them and then they are taken to work in the most remote zones of the Amazon. These regions are too distant for them to escape, their documentation is taken from them, they are far from the canoes and they are threatened that they will not be paid if they attempt to run away. The salaries are very low and goods are very expensive. A soda water at a logging camp can cost 10 soles (3 USD), a small sack of sugar 50 (15 USD), a sack of rice the same amount. Thus the vicious circle of debts is started “The major problem at these camps is the incapacity of the workers to mobilize. Labour inspectors do not reach them because of the inaccessibility of the area. The inhabitants cannot pay their debt by seeking another camp as in many cases they receive physical threats” says Bedoya. This is forced labour as there is a loss of freedom.

In many cases, those ending up in a logging camp, formed by between 10 and 40 workers, take their family with them. The wife cooks, the children help but no one is paid. According to this study, there is a high rate of teen-age boys and women are found as cooks and prostitutes, earning planks of wood for their services.

This is the timber curse. Fooling the peasants is not hard for the “trapping bosses” who work for the authorizing loggers, who in turn work for large logging companies. They only have to take advantage of the misery generated by the very system of timber exploitation that has depredated their local economies, displaced the communities from their lands or harrassed them in, taking away the forests that were part of their subsistence for food, medicines and housing.

The great forestry business thrives under these miserable conditions, in close connivance between legal and illegal activities to the point of merging together, and in some cases even enjoying the endorsement of certification seals.

Article based on information from: “30 mil peruanos son víctimas de trabajo forzoso en la Amazonía”, Gabriel Gargurevich, Diario La República, May 2005, and “Controles y descontroles: Extracción ilegal de madera en el Pacaya-Samiria”, Alberto Chirif, Actualidad indígena N° 99, March 2005, Servicio de Información Indígena SERVINDI, www.servindi.org, sent by Carlos Arrunátegui, FAdAmazon (Fundación de Adhesión con los Pueblos Amazónicos), e-mail: carrunategui@fadamazon.org; “Esclavos de la madera”, Jimena Pinilla Cisneros, El Comercio, <http://www.elcomerciope.com.pe/EdicionImpresa/Html/2005-05-12/impCronicas0305152.html>

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OCEANIA

- Australia: Nippon Paper in south eastern Australia

Japan's biggest paper manufacturer, Nippon Paper (NP) is known as an industry leader in environmental reform, but how real is this?

South East Fibre Exports at Eden, about 500 kms south of Sydney, is a NP subsidiary.

It is Australia's oldest chipmill and was the first overseas operation of the former Daishowa Paper Manufacturing Company (taken over by NP a couple of years ago).

After more than 30 years of destructive woodchipping in Australia's south east, forest campaigners were excited by the Nippon takeover. The new owner had, after all, a far better reputation than the old one.

To date, however, Eden has survived every round of environmental reform that the new owner has bowled up.

All the signs are that it will survive the next, and yet Nippon retains its reputation as an environmental leader in the Japanese paper industry. It may be time to re-examine this.

Nippon Paper has an environmental policy that looks good on paper. It is committed to sourcing 100% of its woodchips from either plantations or certified forests by the year 2008. Who could argue with that?

The only trouble is that NP looks like recognising some of the less reputable forms of certification, recognised only by industry.

No Australian native forests have Forest Stewardship Council certification and the conservation movement does not support this.

The certification that most governments and logging companies are seeking is the Australian Forestry Standard, which would mean business as usual for loggers.

Eden chips are poor quality, low grade and sell at a lower price than Tasmanian woodchips. They continue to find a market because of their low price.

They are produced from trees felled solely for woodchips. Over 95% of timber felled in the Eden region ends up as woodchips. These are not a by-product of sawlogging. Indeed, like many chipmills, Eden can only process whole tree logs.

Eden currently exports about 860,000 green tonnes of woodchips per year, most of this to pulp mills of its parent company in Japan.

No state forest for a radius of 250kms around Eden is safe while it continues to operate.

In spite of this, the industry and government maintain that this chipmill uses “heads and butts” and after years of expensive propaganda, many voters, especially city dwellers, are inclined to believe them. They want to believe them. The alternative is too uncomfortable to contemplate.

Nippon Paper recently undertook a program of public cyber-consultation asking people what they thought about its woodchip procurement policy.

Once again, an admirable step, or was it?

My Campaign, Chipstop was formed in 1998 and has made many approaches to Nippon Paper. We have written letters, petitions, emails, and sought meetings. Our letters have been written in Japanese and I have visited Japan, hoping to meet with company representatives.

We once sent a major letter signed by over fifty Australian members of Parliament, national, state and regional conservation groups and prominent individuals. Not one of these communications has ever received a response, so we must ask ourselves how genuine the recent “consultation” exercise has been.

As with many Government and corporate processes, conservation input in this one will probably end up as simply greenwash, helping to legitimise a preordained result by giving the appearance of conservation involvement.

The worst thing about the destruction of South Eastern Australia’s native forests for Nippon Paper is that it is totally unnecessary.

Australia has enough plantation hardwood available from existing plantations to replace all its woodchip exports. Without planting a single new tree, we could stop woodchipping native forests. The factor preventing this is price. Paper makers prefer the better quality plantation fibre, but will buy native forest wood if it’s cheap enough.

State Government forestry agencies supply logs to the woodchippers for very low prices, so native forest logging continues.

Nippon Paper itself owns sizeable plantations in Australia, and is not currently using these, preferring to buy native forest chips instead.

Chipstop works with other campaigners against woodchipping for Nippon Paper and we are aware that there are similar concerns in other countries.

Our campaign efforts will continue to focus on closing the Eden chipmill. We are urging the company to apply its policies in a meaningful way, and only accept reputable forms of certification. We also want it to apply its own environmental standards to its own subsidiaries in other countries and trading partners, particularly in such countries as China and Indonesia.

By Harriett Swift, E-mail: fuscipes@dodo.com.au, Chipstop Campaign, <http://www.chipstop.forests.org.au>

FSC: PLANTATION CERTIFICATION REVIEW

- A demand for a moratorium on FSC certification of timber plantations

As it has been already informed, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has started the Plantations Review process (See WRM Bulletin 92).

Several organizations, WRM among them, that since long time ago have been requesting the FSC to review the certification of plantations, have supported the process with documentation and research on the negative social and environmental impacts of those monoculture large scale tree plantations.

During the meeting that launched the process, WRM expressed that FSC "should suspend further certification of large-scale industrial tree plantations until the review was finalized". A moratorium on further certifications is claimed, while the already granted certifications are reviewed.

As the board of directors seems not to have adopted a resolution, several social and environmental organizations from different parts of the world have sent an open letter requesting "a moratorium on the certification and re-certification of industrial timber plantations".

These organizations have also decided to initiate a campaign to gather signatures around the world to send a second letter this time to the Plantations Review Committee before its next meeting on November 7, in Madrid, Spain.

In the letter sent to the FSC board of directors, the organizations stated that: "Industrial timber plantations established as large scale chemical and mechanical intensively managed monocultures, have a wide range of negative environmental and social impacts that have not yet been adequately assessed and comprehensively quantified, and that cannot therefore be meaningfully mitigated against".

It was also said, that although the problems caused by the industrial tree plantations affect also the northern countries: "The problems caused by industrial timber plantations are often more acute in the south, where trees grow fast and high yielding alien plantations have rotation cycles as short as seven years. These short rotations result in abnormally high depletion of soil nutrients, leading to long term soil impoverishment, together with accelerated top-soil losses".

As an example it was pointed out that: "In South Africa, more than 1 million hectares of industrial timber plantations have been certified by the FSC and timber companies use the FSC label to promote their products as 'environmentally friendly'. Yet these plantations have been responsible for major impacts on the scarce local water resource, lowering the groundwater table and drying out countless wetlands, fountains and streams - which severely limit land use options and thereby jeopardize rural people's livelihoods. All industrial timber plantations in South Africa have been established in areas with the highest rainfall and deepest soils, replacing valuable grasslands, and disrupting or displacing the traditional communities that occupied those areas".

The letter concludes: "There is growing and justified opposition to the spread of industrial timber plantations world-wide, and we cannot endorse continued FSC certification of industrial timber plantations using the current flawed principles and criteria. Therefore, the FSC board of directors must suspend certification of industrial timber plantations until the review process has been finalized and the broadly approved findings and recommendations incorporated".

In the letter that will be sent to the Plantations Review Committee the organizations make an urgent call for the full withdrawal of the FSC from plantation certification in case those plantations – both certified and non-certified- are proving to be environmentally destructive, socially unfair and even economically unviable –as is the case of countries where they are subsidized – and de-certified the already certified plantations. They also reaffirm the demand for a moratorium.

The letter is available at: <http://www.wrm.org.uy/actors/FSC/Newletter.html> Organizations that would like to support this appeal can sign in the WRM web page or send their details to Ana Filippini (anafili@wrm.org.uy) before November 4, 2005.

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