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Communities Facing Deforestation, False Solutions and Corporate Interests



West Kalimantan, Borneo. Ph: David Gilbert/RAN

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The articles in this Bulletin are written by the following organizations and individuals: Muyissi environnement, Gabon; Zidane, Sawit watch, Indonesia; NGONO OTONGO Martin Romuald, Center for the Environment and Development (CED - Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement); Luis Romero Rengifo, Waman Wasi Center, Lamas, Peru; Marquardt, Kristina, Pain Adam and Bartholdson Örgan, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences; Verónica González Correa, Latin American Observatory on Environmental Conflicts (OLCA – Observatorio Latinoamericano de conflictos ambientales); and members of the WRM international secretariat.

Communities Facing Deforestation, False Solutions and Corporate Interests

Our Viewpoint

Adding Fuel to the Fire



“Shock” is a common reaction when a crisis emerges... or when it comes to light. Governments all over the world – especially from the global North -, multilateral organizations, companies and citizens from all corners of the globe have been “shocked” and expressed their disapproval and disdain in one way or another to the current Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro's reaction to the forest fires in the Amazon.

In this case, **expressions of “shock”, however, also provide a convenient smoke screen for governments, financial institutions and companies behind which they can hide their own role in and responsibility for this crisis.** The underlying causes of the fires point as strongly to them as they do to the current president of the extreme right in Brazil. Most of the media frenzy is characterized by superficial analyses and attention will die away as soon as the rains in the Amazon will have extinguished most of the flames.

Undoubtedly, the government of the extreme right in Brazil has been terrible news for Indigenous Peoples and their territories, and forests in general. Neither protection of forests nor respect for traditional ways of life and use of the Amazon are of interest to this government. The president himself keeps inciting violence against Indigenous Peoples and

encourages the invasion of their territories by agribusiness and mining companies. He has even suggested that Indigenous Peoples should be “integrated” into society, a government policy that was – at long last - abandoned by Brazil's Constitution of 1988.

But let's also not be fooled. **Large-scale deforestation, including extensive burning across the Amazon, is not a new process.** President Bolsonaro and his aides in government are undoubtedly fanning the flames. But forests have been destroyed and the trees set ablaze before he came to power. Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has been rising again since 2012. Many of the same governments, multilateral organizations and companies that are now claiming to be “shocked”, have in fact, in one way or another, facilitated and benefitted from past as well as recent large-scale deforestation in the Amazon. **Their “shock” over the fires is tainted with hypocrisy.**

Indigenous Peoples have for centuries been at the frontlines, defending their territories and lives, inside and outside the Amazon. They see these forests as a fundamental part of their existence and livelihoods and they have shown over and over that they know how to conserve and coexist with these territories.

Countless forest-dependent communities in the Amazon have also been long struggling and continue to resist the logging industry, the meat industry, the ever-expanding monoculture plantations for the pulp and paper industry as well as the food industry with their ever-increasing demand for soy and palm oil, the mining industry, the mega hydro dams, the infrastructure construction of railways, roads, ports and waterways. This infrastructure does not serve people, it primarily serves the needs of these industries for ever faster transport at ever lower cost. **The corporate profits come at the expense of forests and forest-dependant populations.** (1) **They also fight against the false solutions to the environmental and climate crisis.** These false solutions start from a biased problem analysis and promote policies and programmes that leave the corporate drivers of large-scale deforestation untouched and instead restrict peasant farming and the use of and access to forests. Even worse is that many of these false solutions – REDD+, certification, zero-net deforestation pledges - also greenwash corporate destruction. (2)

Let's also not be fooled into believing that **Northern governments and multilateral banks like the World Bank** are the saviours of the day. They are still **key actors in driving deforestation.** The government of Norway, for example, has suspended donations allocated to the Amazon Fund due to grave concerns over the management of the Fund and the increase in deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon. But, in fact, the operations of companies of which the government of Norway is a co-owner - oil firm Equinor, fertiliser-producer Yara and aluminium producer Norsk Hydro – are implicated in deforestation. Norsk Hydro, for example, has a bauxite mine and a refinery in the Amazonian state of Para. The hypocrisy does not stop with the Norwegian government.

Multilateral institutions like the World Bank have for decades promoted a destructive narrative of “progress and development” along with “free trade.” In reality, this “development through globalization” ideology meant subsidies and loans that funded and government policies that paved the way for corporations to invade and destroy forests and territories. By 2014, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank's private-sector arm, was managing 156 projects in 34 countries worth US 260 million dollars for advisory services to promote private-sector development. The Bank's policy

reforms prescriptions ease access to land at the expense of family farmers, pastoralists, and Indigenous Peoples. (3) Countless examples like this exist. (4)

Bilateral aid programmes also promote false solutions and make corporate destruction as a main driver of forest loss invisible by falsely blaming deforestation on peasant and indigenous farming. **The promotion of REDD+ by Germany's GIZ, Norway's NORAD and the US's aid agency USAID** is the latest – but far from the only (5) – example. In the Amazon state of Acre, for example, the German development KfW has been funding the REDD Early Movers programme. Not only has the programme failed in preventing the devastating rise in deforestation in Acre in the last year or so. It has also undermined Indigenous Peoples' resistance by presenting REDD+ funding to the government of Acre as a “donation”, and funding cultural activities in indigenous territories far away from the deforestation frontier while phasing out funding for demarcation of indigenous territories.

If you are “shocked” by the fires in the Amazon and other forested territories, **join in radical solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and other forest-dependant communities around the world to halt the underlying causes of deforestation.**

Join the struggle!

(1) See some examples from the WRM bulletin on forest dependant people's struggles against:

* *Logging*: The Mundukuru peoples in Brazil: forestry concessions imposed on indigenous lands, WRM Bulletin 217, <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/the-mundukuru-peoples-in-brazil-forestry-concessions-imposed-on-indigenous-lands/> and Peru: Corporate logging devastates forests and local communities, WRM Bulletin 207,

<https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/peru-corporate-logging-devastates-forests-and-local-communities/>

* *Pulp and paper industry*: Women Stand Up to Fight the Suzano Paper Mill in Maranhão, Brazil, WRM Bulletin 244, <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/women-stand-up-to-fight-the-suzano-paper-mill-in-maranhao-brazil/>

* *Oil palm plantations and mining*: Brazil– mining company VALE promoting oil palm in Pará: Impacts of the “green economy”, WRM Bulletin 218, <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/brazil-mining-company-vale-promoting-oil-palm-in-para-impacts-of-the-green-economy/>

* *Livestock farms*: Living on the run: devastation of the Ayoreos' lives [IP in isolation] and land at the hands of livestock farmers, WRM Bulletin 216, <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/living-on-the-run-devastation-of-the-ayoreos-lives-and-land-at-the-hands-of-livestock-farmers/>

* *Food production*: Food Production and Consumption: Resistance against domination, WRM Bulletin 230, <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/food-production-and-consumption-resistance-against-domination/>

* *Hydrodams*: Brazil: The Struggle of the Xinguara Peoples in the Amazon, WRM Bulletin 244, <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/brazil-the-struggle-of-the-xinguara-peoples-in-the-amazon/>

* *Waterways*: The Amazon Waterway in Peru vs. Flowing Rivers, WRM Bulletin 244, <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/the-amazon-waterway-in-peru-vs-flowing-rivers/>

(2) See, for example, Halting Deforestation? REDD and the protection of the fossil fuel and conservation industry, a compilation of articles from the WRM bulletin and declarations from Indigenous Peoples against REDD policies and programmes, September 2018, <https://wrm.org.uy/books-and-briefings/halting-deforestation-redd-and-the-protection-of-the-fossil-fuel-and-conservation-industry/>

(3) The highest bidder takes it all, Counter Balance, April 2019, <https://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/2019/04/the-highest-bidder-takes-it-all-the-world-banks-new-scheme-to-privatise-land-in-the-global-south/>

(4) Broken Promises, How World Bank Group policies and practice fail to protect forests and forest peoples' rights, 2005, <https://wrm.org.uy/books-and-briefings/broken-promises-how-world-bank-group-policies-and-practice-fail-to-protect-forests-and-forest-peoples-rights/>

(5) As contradições da cooperação alemã na Amazônia, Ponto de Debate, (available in Portuguese) https://rosalux.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ponto_debate_ed5_final.pdf

OLAM Palm Gabon pretends to use the Forest Definition to implement its 'Zero Deforestation' pledge



OLAM oil palm plantation close to Sanga village/WRM

Industrial oil palm plantations expansion is a notorious driver of tropical deforestation and this has since years been a burning issue for investors in the oil palm business and for consumers. But the problem seems to be solved. At least, that is what the oil palm industry wants us to believe. Their recipe is called “zero deforestation”, an idea launched by big conservation NGOs in Brazil in 2007. In the past years, several of the biggest oil palm plantation companies have made commitments to keep their business with “zero deforestation”.

For oil palm companies assuming a **“zero deforestation” pledge** is definitely attractive. First, because such a commitment **takes the attention away from the large-scale deforestation these companies have provoked before**. It is therefore helpful for cleaning up their images and reputations, and **opens the doors for receiving more money from banks and more sales to concerned consumers**. The name is also very attractive because it speaks for itself: “zero deforestation”, over and out! However, a fundamental question remains: how can companies uphold such a commitment in practice and expand their business - especially those that operate in forested countries? **The Singapore-based OLAM company, for example, has secured access to 500,000 hectares of land in Gabon to set up large-scale oil palm plantations, a country with 89% of forest coverage. How can OLAM then claim to follow a “zero deforestation” commitment?**

OLAM's Zero Deforestation Pledge versus the Reality on the Ground

OLAM is active in Gabon in a joint venture with the Gabonese state and is the main industrial oil palm company in the country. (1) The Gabonese government has a 49% stake in the OLAM Gabon company. In December 2016, the US conservation NGO Mighty Earth evidenced in a report that OLAM had deforested approximately 20,000 hectares in Gabon for its industrial oil palm plantations. (2) Only three months later, in February 2017, Mighty Earth signed an agreement with OLAM by which the company commits itself to a moratorium on further deforestation. (3)

It is hard to believe that OLAM changed its mind only to get rid of the bad record that Mighty Earth evidenced. **The appetite for more lands and thus forests to increase production and profits is an intrinsic part of the business logic of monoculture plantation companies.** The issue then is to uncover the strategies and tactics OLAM pursues to be able to claim “zero deforestation,” legitimized by conservation NGOs like Mighty Earth, while continuing its profitable business in a forested country like Gabon.

One important tactic is the way OLAM defines “zero deforestation”. In its so-called “Living landscape” document, (4) it explains that “**zero deforestation**” means adopting “**net-positive principles**”, resulting in a “net positive impact”. The “net” word might appear insignificant, but it is crucial. It **allows companies to continue destroying areas, including forests, as long as they compensate for that destruction by protecting other “comparable” areas** in terms of biodiversity and vegetation type, which they claim would be at risk of destruction. The word “positive” in the formulation “net positive impact” goes even further: it is supposed to express that a company not only compensates for its destruction, but it also protects other at-risk places, creating a “net positive” impact in comparison with the previous situation. This idea has increasingly been adopted by corporations and is the **basic principle that goes behind the mechanism of “biodiversity offsetting”** (5). However, this is wrong. Each place is unique in its own diversity, and is rooted in a specific time and space; and thus, it cannot be compared to or replaced by other areas. Moreover, these places, are often used by and for communities’ livelihoods, and therefore should not be destroyed! But OLAM goes further and claims that its “net positive principles” are producing a “triple positive impact”, resulting in: “prosperous farmers and farming systems”, “thriving communities” and are “regenerating the world”.

These claims however stand in stark contrast with the situation communities living around OLAM’s plantations are facing in their daily struggle to survive. **Communities face more restrictions than before on the access to and use of forests in OLAM’s concession areas**, which now the company could use as compensation. These areas are traditionally used by communities for agriculture, hunting, fishing and collecting non-timber products. Moreover, **OLAM is now advancing its plantations into so-called savannas or prairies.** This heavily affects local communities because these are very useful, valuable areas for them to hunt, fish, collect mushrooms, among others (6). This reminds what happened in Brazil years ago, when national and international big conservation NGOs focused on defending the protection of the Amazon forest only, making agribusinesses moving its focus on the much less protected Brazilian savannah biome called “*cerrado*”, starting the large-scale destruction of this equally extremely valuable biome.

A False but Profitable Solution for OLAM: Define a Forest based on the Carbon per Hectare!

One of the most perverse and dangerous tactics OLAM and its partner in business, the Gabonese government, suggest is to **change the Gabonese forest definition to benefit OLAM's business**. In 2018, the Gabonese Ministry of Agriculture proposed to modify the current forest definition based only on tree coverage - as most definitions worldwide are following FAO's definition (7) - into an unprecedented one. The proposal would consider a forest not only as an area with trees but also would set **a parameter of a minimum quantity of carbon that a forest area should contain**. According to the proposal, (8) made by Lee White, the current Ministry of Forests, from Gabon's National Agency for National Parks (ANPN), "a forest is an ecosystem with a surface of at least 4 hectares of endemic forest trees with an average of at least 5 trees of dhp [diameter at breast height, in French] > 70cm/ha and/or a biomass of > 118 Tons of Carbon/Ha".

If this definition gets adopted, it would create a dangerous precedent. Not only is including the carbon parameter within a forest definition risky, but also the suggested minimum quantity of 118 tons of carbon per hectare would simply exclude secondary forests and forests in regeneration from the forest definition. **The overall purpose becomes then very evident: OLAM can expand its plantations into areas of secondary forests and forests in regeneration while claiming to be upholding its international "zero deforestation" commitment towards banks and consumers.**

The proposed new forest definition reinforces two underlying causes of deforestation. First, **it strengthens the problems of the forest definition promoted by FAO**, which determines a forest as a bunch of trees only, perpetuating business and profits of the logging, timber processing and pulp and paper industries. FAO's definition also perpetuates the marginalization and discrimination of the many forest communities' views in relation to their forests: a complex unity of life, with plants, animals and human communities, which they usually call their home; it weakens even more their struggles to conserve and defend their forest territories. Second, **it follows and further reinforces the false solutions that use forests to supposedly combat climate change**, by reinforcing the vision that what really matters is the carbon stored in the trees. This is what REDD, the main international forest policy from the past 10 years, defends. REDD imposes a series of restrictions on forest-dependent communities for use of their forest. Similar to what the communities inside OLAM's oil palm concession areas are experiencing now.

What about the Oil Palm Plantations and RSPO?

The Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), since its creation 15 years ago, makes the false claim that it can make the industrial oil palm sector sustainable without structurally changing the destructive and violent model of large-scale monoculture plantations that it is based on. The rejection to this model was once again expressed by 110 national and international organisations in an open letter to RSPO at the eve of the last RSPO general assembly in 2018. (9) Nevertheless, **RSPO insists that it can transform the model by "improving" it, also as a way to respond to the critiques**. Deforestation is probably the most urgent issue raised by RSPO members, among which are banks, including the International Financial Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank, and palm oil buying companies.

The pressure resulted in RSPO adopting during its last assembly a new standard, from which one of the main changes is the promotion of a “zero deforestation” policy. Before November 2018, RSPO only demanded that in the certified plantation areas, the vegetation types that were defined by the company as “High Conservation Value” (HCV) and “High Carbon Stock” (HCS) forests, most often primary forests that supposedly store more carbon than other ecosystems, to be protected. Meanwhile, secondary forests often very valuable for communities could be destroyed. But under the new RSPO standard, besides primary forests, secondary forests and forest in regeneration also fall into the category of forests that cannot just be destroyed to make place for oil palm plantations. Hence, in practice, RSPO adopted a “zero deforestation” policy, depending on how and who defines these forest categories in reality. OLAM is an RSPO member, it has part of its plantations RSPO-certified and is in a process to certify all of its plantations in a way to have RSPO endorsing its “zero deforestation” policy. The question that remains then is **what RSPO has to say about the tactic pursued by OLAM and the Gabonese government to change the forest definition to continue destroying forests?** And what about the other development banks, like the IFC/World Bank, planning to concede a major loan to OLAM Gabon?

The case of OLAM in Gabon shows that “zero deforestation” is far from a simple, straightforward commitment to halt deforestation. In the hands of the oil palm sector, companies like OLAM and the RSPO certification scheme, it appears to be much more an opportunistic public relations tool than a tool to address the deforestation crisis. While creating a smokescreen for banks and consumers, **it promotes that oil palm companies, especially those active in forested countries, use their political power and influence to impose new tactics and strategies that ensure they can and will continue their business and make profits, while upholding an image of a company that protects forests.**

What is worse, on the ground, **“zero deforestation” commitments tend to deepen the problems faced by forest-dependent communities in and around the oil palm concession areas.** In Gabon, these communities struggle to maintain and regain the control over their territories, including the forest areas OLAM did not destroy yet.

Muyissi environnement, Gabon, and WRM

(1) WRM Bulletin 230, “Green” oil palm plantations are a scam: The case of OLAM, May 2017, <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/green-oil-palm-plantations-are-a-scam-the-case-of-olam/>

(2) Mighty Earth, Palm Oil’s Black Box, December 2016, <http://www.mightyearth.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Palm-Oil-Black-Box-PrintApproval4.pdf>

(3) While OLAM first reacted in 2016 on Mighty Earth’s report stating that “We agree with Gabon’s sovereign right to convert a tiny percentage of its least valuable forested land for agriculture, so long as it is responsibly and transparently done” (see in Mongabay, Palm oil giant defends its deforestation in Gabon, points to country’s right to develop, December 2016, <https://news.mongabay.com/2016/12/palm-oil-giant-defends-its-deforestation-in-gabon-points-to-countrys-right-to-develop/>), three months later it apparently changed its mind and assumed a very different commitment, declaring to “suspend further land clearing of forest in Gabon for palm and rubber plantations for a year (a period that can be extended).” (Mighty Earth, OLAM and Mighty Earth agree to Collaborate on Forest Conservation and Sustainable Agriculture in Highly Forested Countries, February 2017, <http://www.mightyearth.org/olam-and-mighty-earth-agree-to-collaborate/>)

(4) OLAM, OLAM living Landscapes Policy, April 2018, https://www.olamgroup.com/content/dam/olamgroup/pdf/Olam-Living-Landscapes-Policy_English.pdf

- (5) For more information about biodiversity offsetting see the case of Rio Tinto on Madagascar in <https://wrm.org.uy/pt/livros-e-relatorios/rio-tinto-in-madagascar-a-mine-destroying-the-unique-biodiversity-of-the-littoral-zone-of-fort-dauphin/>
- (6) Later this year (2019), Gabonese NGO Muyissi Environnement and WRM will publish a briefing about the impacts on the ground on communities due to OLAM's zero deforestation commitment.
- (7) WRM, Forest Definition, <https://wrm.org.uy/browse-by-subject/deforestation/underlying-causes/forest-definition/>
- (8) WWF-Gabon, la rédefinition de la forêt, quels enjeux pour le Gabon? November, 2018
- (9) WRM, Statement "RSPO: 14 years failing to eliminate violence and destruction from the industrial palm oil sector", <https://wrm.org.uy/other-relevant-information/sign-the-statement-rspo-14-years-failing-to-eliminate-violence-and-destruction-from-the-industrial-palm-oil-sector/>

Dynamics and Processes of Change in the Peruvian Amazon: Learning from the Kechwa-Lamas Peoples



Waman Wasi Centre, Peru

Peru has the seventh largest forest area of the world. Deforestation in Peru began later than in Brazil, and its deforestation rates have been lower in comparison. The State's expansion into the Amazon began in the 1980s, through subsidized colonization projects. With the neoliberal government of Fujimori (1990-2001), the Amazon was further opened up with the development of highways, which led to large-scale migration of populations from the Andes. Additionally, several large-scale projects were launched to extract minerals, oil and natural gas.

The Peruvian government claims that small-scale, or “migratory,” agriculture is to blame for 90% of the country’s deforestation. But this claim is both methodologically and conceptually weak. In the first place, most of the data on deforestation in Peru has been compiled at an aggregate level through remote sensing (via satellite), and regional data has been based on opinions elicited from government officials and NGO workers. This has reflected the official narrative, and lacks empirical evidence and analysis of the factors that determine changes in land use.

Secondly, the term “migratory” agriculture is confusing, and groups together two different processes of forest use. The first is the slash-and-burn systems that indigenous groups, mestizos and river-dwelling peoples practice—which usually does not lead to the permanent conversion of forest to agricultural land. The second is the complete clearing of forests for agricultural use—practiced mostly by migrants. The distinction between these two processes, the actors involved, and their motivations and effects, is important to better understand the factors that drive deforestation and determine what solutions might be appropriate. **Blaming small-scale agriculture as the main cause of deforestation denies the role of the government’s agricultural programs and policies in driving land-use changes. It also ignores the government’s jurisdiction over the rights to access, use and control the land.**

Conservation and Agribusiness: Two Facets of Dispossession

The San Martin region in the Peruvian Amazon was relatively inaccessible until the 1960s, when the main ‘Fernando Belaunde Terry’ highway was inaugurated. In the 1980s, coca had become an important cash crop, which brought large-scale migration, changes in the landscape through forest clearing, and an economic boom. Coca production, in combination with the activities of two guerrilla groups (the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement and the Shining Path), caused instability and a high level of violence. This led to a strong military presence that avoided the separation of land into individual or commercial lots. After 1995, when there was less military presence, deforestation increased. **An estimated 30% of the regional territory was deforested by 2000.** This coincided with the decentralization process of 2002, when the regional government took charge of economic development and forest resources.

There were expectations that regional governments would be able to provide a more efficient and sustainable governance—by further strengthening democracy, including local people in decision-making processes, and improving public services for citizens. However, the *Nueva Amazonia* party (‘New Amazon’), which was in government in the region from 2007 to 2015, developed a **vision of intensive agricultural production combined with “conservation” and ecotourism development**—promoting San Martin as the “Green Region.” Large investments in infrastructure were made, coffee and cacao production increased, and **land was cleared for the agro-industrial production of jatropha and oil palm.**

Additionally, 70 percent of San Martin’s territory was restricted for “conservation,” with scarce consultation with peoples of the region. To date, 1,340,000 hectares have been marked for conservation, with a goal of 2.5 million hectares, as established by the National Program of Forest Conservation for Climate Change Mitigation. The aim is to **control access to and use of the forests.** The Cordillera-Escalera Regional Conservation Area (ACR, by its Spanish acronym) and the Conservation and Ecosystem Recovery Areas (ZoCREs, by their Spanish acronym) have largely overlapped with indigenous territories; and so far, the regional government has not addressed the issue of indigenous communities’ rights, which are protected by law.

So far, conservation and perennial crops (crops that have a long or permanent life cycle) are seen as the region’s answer to deforestation. However, the San Martin government’s actions to delineate and **confine forests through conservation plans constitute an existential**

threat to Kechwa-Lamas communities, who access and use forests. Furthermore, the focus on **perennial commercial agriculture has become a driver of deforestation.**

Migrant peasants move to forest areas that have been cleared in order to produce cash crops (for example coffee and cacao)—areas that Kechwa-Lamas communities consider to be customary territory. **Commercial plantations are also a growing threat.** Communities that are settled in remote areas, deep within forests, constantly patrol their territories to keep migrants away.

One thing is certain. When the distance between forest areas and communities increases, the average size of Kechwa-Lamas peoples' farms decreases, patterns of cultivation shift toward a perennial crop, such as cacao, and forest use decreases. In contrast, when there is easy access to forests, forests are integrated into livelihood activities, providing an important source of food (from plants and animals). Where there is no nearby forest, this use may be limited to occasional hunting in a distant forest.

Thus, we see three dynamics influencing the forest territories of San Martín today. The first is claims by the indigenous population—mostly Kechwa-Lamas—to their customary territories; the second is the logging of the forest, mostly by migrant populations; and the third dynamic—linking the first two—is the expansion of conservation areas and perennial cash crops. **These dynamics in turn have overshadowed the potential of local agricultural systems to promote beneficial and sustainable livelihoods,** as well as the potential for diverse secondary forests (naturally regenerated forests) to be the best protection for native forests.

Land Tenure and Forest Use

According to the law on native communities, the Kechwa-Lamas peoples have the right to use their forests; therefore the state's removal of their property rights to customary forests continues to be strongly disputed. There are no data on the scope of their claims, but according to an informal source, forty-two villages have claimed land within the Cordillera-Escalera ACR, for a combined total of more than 120,000 hectares. The forest areas that communities have claimed vary from 50 to 120,000 hectares. Yuri Lamas, one of the few communities that has obtained title to forest territory, has 31,000 hectares within the ACR. However, the regional government has been slow to address most claims—arguing that it is not because of political reasons that it hasn't followed the law, but rather due to budgetary and technical reasons, as well as the difficulties of traveling to remote areas to make the necessary measurements.

The lack of access to their land rights opens the door for communities to seek other forms of titling, such as concessions. But these two things are very different. Land *titles* offer rights to use forests in perpetuity, largely based on customary practices, though with some restrictions. **Concessions, on the other hand, promote conservation activities implemented with the technical support of intervening organizations**—using experts, techniques, technology and regulations to train inhabitants in the management and preservation of forests, according to specific protocols and standards. Concessions also come **with reduced territorial rights, regulated use of ancestral lands and limited time agreements with no guarantee of extension.**

Therefore, options for the Kechwa-Lamas to maintain control of their traditional territories may be increasingly tied to the need to act as “custodians” or “ecological natives.” But there

are also signs that **the new governance of forests is headed towards a more commercial use of land, to satisfy growing global and “green” markets (for example, palm oil and carbon sequestration).**

Does the Expansion of Perennial Crops Protect Forests?

There has always been a strong emphasis on agricultural production in the region's development plans. **The focus on perennial crops (mainly coffee, cacao and oil palm) is often presented as a kind of expansion that is more environmentally friendly than annual crops, and as a way to stop slash-and-burn agriculture—**thereby reducing the need to open up new lands.

There has been an increase in permanent cash crops in Kechwa-Lamas communities. Farmers have expanded production of coffee and cacao, with an emphasis on the latter. However, **cacao and coffee fields have not replaced slash-and-burn fields in any community.** While slash-and-burn fields used for food crops can overlap with perennial crops during the establishment of the perennial crop shade layer, these two land uses play fundamental different roles.

New Ways to See and Manage Amazonian Forests?

In the last 20 years, livelihood strategies in San Martin's forests have shifted toward agroforestry systems, and increasingly to non-timber products. The regional government and local universities have promoted “new approaches,” based on science (cartography, soil management packages and perennial crops). The latest development has been ecosystem or environmental services. As fee for environmental services and offset programs like REDD have been developed, new interests in land use have emerged. Some see **this emerging market for ecosystem services as the main reason for the low approval rate of forest titles for communities.**

Currently, there are few functioning fee-for-environmental-services projects in San Martin, and those that are underway are targeting forest areas with different levels of protection and small populations. So far, no REDD projects have been established on indigenous territory in San Martin, although **there have been attempts to persuade the Kechwa-Lamas peoples to sell carbon rights.** The REDD process in San Martin, which was organized as a roundtable, was considered to be the most progressive REDD process in the Peruvian Amazon when it began in 2009. But indigenous groups felt they were poorly represented, and several of them jointly organized an “indigenous roundtable.” **The main criticism of the REDD process in Peru and in San Martin stresses that the Peruvian government—in its eagerness to implement this program—ignored the dispute over land tenure rights.** Indigenous organizations fear that REDD and similar programs will open up the Amazon to the exploitation of resources by transnational (green) companies, and will launch another extractive boom around carbon payments—as happened with rubber and oil.

Forest Landscapes or Market Landscapes?

At the heart of conflicts over land control are rights issues. On the one hand, from the perspective of the Kechwa-Lamas, **new actors have appeared, applying new forms of**

confinement and privatization. The state, by way of the regional government, is excluding indigenous peoples through the creation of reserves and conservation areas. Control over people and forests is declared through mechanisms of territorial division—such as the creation of the Cordillera-Escalera ACR and the Conservation and Ecosystem Recovery Areas (ZoCREs). These areas are also **a way to create new “market landscapes,” through carbon sequestration and “pristine” forest landscapes for tourist consumption.** This process also neglects existing legal frameworks that grant customary rights to indigenous peoples. While the government is not openly challenging their rights per se, it is effectively undermining them through masterful inaction.

The development of new commercial agriculture and tree plantations is directly and indirectly promoting the interests of agribusiness capital and the globalization of the regional economy. The expansive activities of Andean migrants—who benefit from the commercial development of plantations promoted by the government—are especially significant. Therefore, **the processes emerging from the socio-economic changes, shifting agricultural practices and new urban dynamics are also creating a “work landscape.”** Processes that might not seem directly focused on forests often have huge impacts on deforestation, forest recovery and the livelihoods of indigenous peoples.

Meanwhile, the practices of Kechwa-Lamas families offer more hope for the future of the forest than the regional government’s conservation initiatives. **So-called forest conservation, and the discussion about REDD and carbon sequestration, have become so pervasive that they have obscured other dynamics at play—dynamics that are essential in the Amazon.** While the Kechwa-Lamas peoples are used as a regional “brand” to promote a symbol of ethnic and cultural diversity, the model being pushed for the use of lands and forests in the region is not based on Kechwa-Lamas practices, but on the rapid growth of cash crops, monocultures and large-scale plantations. **Kechwa-Lamista systems can help us understand essential aspects of production systems and more diverse uses of soil—that combine food production and forest preservation.** Unfortunately, the Kechwa-Lamas population is seen as a “colorful” ethnic group, not as a source of inspiration and knowledge for the future of forests in San Martin.

* This article is based on research conducted in 2018, entitled *“Forest Dynamics in the Peruvian Amazon: Understanding Processes of Change.”* You may access the publication with complete references at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327927263_Forest_Dynamics_in_the_Peruvian_Amazon_Understanding_Processes_of_Change

Luis Romero Rengifo, Waman Wasi Center, Lamas, San Martin, Peru,
wamanwasi@gmail.com

Marquardt, Kristina, Pain Adam and Bartholdson Örjan, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Indonesia: Violence against Women Workers in Oil Palm Plantations



Sawit watch, Indonesia

The recurrent story of Indonesia's "success" as the world's largest producer of palm oil is in reality not followed by the similar success story for women workers in the oil palm plantation industry. **Exploitative working conditions in this industry are persistent and the main victims are mostly women.** This situation is often overlooked; yet, **the production process of palm oil is strongly influenced by their existence.** Women handle 15 out of the 16 types of work that take place in oil palm plantations, included harvesting. (1)

Oil palm plantations companies hire permanent and temporary workers (casual workers, contract workers and day laborers, known as *kernet*). The maintenance sector, which includes spraying, fertilizing and cleaning work, is not usually seen as core activities, so workers in this sector are mostly with non-permanent working status. Most of these workers are women and they work under precarious working conditions. (2)

Women work in the plantations' maintenance sector for many years and are never granted permanent status. They face increased health risks since they are in direct contact with the chemical substances that are used in the plantations every day. Their rights for menstruation leave, maternity leave, routine checkups, and proper toilets and lactation facilities are never provided by the companies. Generally, the employment relationship is not documented properly in a written agreement. Information related to wages and working hours are delivered verbally by the foreman. **Women workers in oil palm plantations often face gender injustice in the form of marginalization, discrimination, violence and harassment.** (3)

Pregnant Women: Non-stop Working for the Company's Profits

Indonesian NGO Sawit watch found out in early 2019 that **five women workers with one to three months of pregnancy experienced a miscarriage in one oil palm plantation in center Kalimantan, mostly caused by their heavy workload.** *"Pregnant workers are kept in jobs such as weeding, fertilizing, spraying and collecting loose palm fruits. Those are hard*

work. The husband of one of the pregnant women worker asked the company management if they could give his wife a rest period or minor jobs, but the management did not approved it”, said one worker. The plantation’s labor union also demanded that pregnant women should not work or be given minor desk jobs, but the company management responded that everything is already arranged at the Kuala Lumpur Central Office in Malaysia.

Menstruation leave is also complicated even though, according to Indonesian labor regulations, all sectors and companies should give this right to their women employees. But there is no guarantee for women to get this right. “A company doctor said to a woman worker who wanted to process her leave: Are you serious that you want to take a menstruation leave? Don’t you have shame?”, voiced a woman worker.

Women workers with their status as casual or contract workers have usually **no proper reproductive health**. They are employed to harvest fruit bunches. The target depends on the working plot, known as *Ancak*. If the *Ancak* is in a swamp, the target is 1,25 hectares but if it is inland, the target is 1,5 hectares. Usually, companies do not provide specific protection equipment to work in a swamp *Ancak*, known as *Ancak Rawa*. According to a casual worker, an *Ancak Rawa* will bring water up to an adult’s waist, and they are not provided with special clothes. “**We just work, from morning to evening. Half of our body, from the ankles to waist, remains under marsh water. There are no special clothes provided by the company. If we request to have it, they will ban us, we will not be hired anymore**”, said a woman worker.

Women’s Health at the Service of Oil Palm Companies

It is never easy for women working in oil palm plantations to access health services provided by the companies due to complicated bureaucracy. If they want to request a sick leave, the management seems to complicate the process. In several cases, **women who already have recommendations for a sick leave by the company clinic keep working due to management decision**.

In PT TN East Kalimantan, the company, which has 12,437 hectares, provides one clinic for the whole estate. Based on workers’ information, the procedure to obtain health service is too bureaucratic and the availability of medicines at the clinic is also limited. “*One medicine is used for all the illness*”, said one of them.

In another oil palm plantation in North Sumatra, casual women workers are not facilitated with health insurances. If they suffer an illness, the company will not take care of their condition. They do not have the right to paid-leave. If they do not come to work, they will not earn wages. It is different with permanent-workers, since their leave will still be paid at the end of the month. “If we don’t work, we will not earn any wage. If we get sick, we still come to work. Moreover, we can not go to the company clinic because we are only casual workers”, said one woman in North Sumatra’s oil palm plantation.

Casual Working Status: Company Reasons for Irresponsibility

“We work from Monday to Thursday with a wage of Rp. 106.000 per day [around US 7.50 dollars]. Our maximum number of working days is of only 16 days per month. We clean

weeding, collect loose palm fruits, collect empty palm bunches”, said one daily casual worker in North Kalimantan.

“Casual workers sometimes help to fertilize. We have to spend two bags of fertilizer per day (each bag contains 50 kilo). This should be spent on the same day. It is up to you when you go home, but the bags should be finished first”, as one casual worker told Sawit watch.

The PT Agro Kati Lama (PT AKL) company, which is part of the Belgian agribusiness group SIPEF, operates oil palm plantations in South Sumatra. This company employs more than 1.200 casual women workers through 6 contract companies (third parties). Women work in the maintenance division with an average working period of only 8 days per month. They mostly earn their **wages directly from the foremen, without clear pay slips. The amount of their salary is only written in unofficial bills, without any stamp or the name of the payer.** Women who were hired via a third party are obliged to sign a letter stating that they will not sue for health insurance, religious holiday allowances and recovery costs caused by work accidents.

According to the women, since they joined PT AKL, they never received any working or protection equipment, they had to arrange something independently. They have also never been informed about the health impacts related to their work with sprayers and fertilizers. They often ask the company when it could provide them with adequate equipment, but there has been no answer at all. Lately, PT AKL has provided some incomplete stuff and only for some of the workers.

Moreover, the company is not responsible for working accidents. The two women who suffered an accident in 2017, have not yet received any compensation from PT AKL. They turned the responsibility over to the subcontractor.

The regulations that govern employment within monoculture plantations in Indonesia are not so clear to mandate labor protection, especially for women. **The government is even now exercising direct violence against women through many of its policies: industrial plantations expansion, flexible employment, and the absence of women workers’ protection and rights fulfillment in the palm oil sector.**

Although it is true that the government of Indonesia, the world’s largest producer and consumer of crude palm oil, has issued a policy to recognize and respect labor rights, this policy is only applied in written agreement. Wilmar, for instance, issued a Corrective action plan and children protection policy to guarantee the fulfillment of labor rights, Golden Agri-Resources, through its subsidiary company SINARMAS Tbk, is one of the signatories of the UN Global Compact (UNGC). At the consumer level, Colgate-Palmolive, Kellogg, Nestlé, Unilever and Wilmar claim to be working to improve the working conditions throughout the palm oil supply chain in Indonesia. Field facts however show that **thousands of workers, especially women, working in the oil palm plantations industry are employed with serious precarious conditions, facing discrimination and in a hazardous working environment.**

Zidane

Sawit watch, Indonesia, <http://sawitwatch.or.id/>

(1) Sawit watch investigation, <http://sawitwatch.or.id/2019/03/11/sawit-watch-hentikan-diskriminasi-terhadap-buruh-perempuan-di-perkebunan-sawit/>

(2) Guy Standing, "The Precariat", 2011, [https://www.hse.ru/data/2013/01/28/1304836059/Standing.%20The%20Precariat%20The%20New%20Dangerous%20Class%20-Bloomsbury%20USA\(2011\).pdf](https://www.hse.ru/data/2013/01/28/1304836059/Standing.%20The%20Precariat%20The%20New%20Dangerous%20Class%20-Bloomsbury%20USA(2011).pdf)

The New Dangerous Class states that Precariat refers to the absence of guaranteed permanent employment, the absence of protection from arbitrary dismissal, the absence of guaranteed protection from work accidents or illness caused by work, unavailability of safety and health information, lack of opportunity to gain more skills and knowledge through internships, trainings for the sake of increasing competencies, minimum wages and absence of social security. Precariat have also no guarantee over the rights as citizens, including allying to an association.

Some forms of precarious works involve all the forms of undesirable work, including low-paid wage work without any allowances (health, pension fund, bonuses, etc.), involuntary overtime work, working in hazardous conditions as well as in informal sector.

(3) See WRM Bulletin article, March 2018, Indonesia: Exploitation of women and violation of their rights in oil palm plantations, Zidane, Sawit watch,

<https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/indonesia-exploitation-of-women-and-violation-of-their-rights-in-oil-palm-plantations/>

Indigenous Peoples Face Difficulties Accessing Justice on Land Matters in Cameroon



Ph: CED, Cameroon.

Access to justice—a basic element of the rule of law, enshrined in international texts—has a central place in the modern State. It enables management of disputes between the State and those governed, and between governed people themselves. It rests on the principle that every person has a right to have their case fairly and publicly heard by a competent, independent and impartial court, as established by law. Access to justice is therefore understood and as an individual's recognized right to be able to appeal to judicial authorities and other recourses guaranteed by law. An individual benefits from all the guarantees that protect them (reasonable term, right of recourse, independent and impartial judge, etc.), in the event that they believe themselves to be a victim of rights violations. This principle is equally valid with regard to land management.

Land occupies a central place in Cameroon's "development" strategy. Land is one of the pillars of the successful emergence of development. Hence, there are many investments throughout the country in land, both by public authorities and individuals. **In this context of strong territorial pressure, conflicts over land are inevitable.** Control of, and access to land are the cause of numerous disputes. Resolving these disputes is an important guarantee for social stability and peace. To that effect, the State must guarantee the possibility for plaintiffs to have access to swift, effective and affordable ways to resolve disputes related to territorial rights—through impartial and competent judicial and administrative bodies (1). But while the law should be based on the principle of equality, **land dispute resolution mechanisms in Cameroon offer fewer guarantees to indigenous peoples—whose territories are most coveted in the race for land.**

How Land Laws in Cameroon Led to Indigenous Peoples' Ignorance about Their Territorial Rights

All litigation is based on the loss or violation of a right. However, as plaintiffs, **indigenous peoples in Cameroon have very precarious land rights.** Their way of life, and especially their link to the land, were not recognized by the major agrarian reform of 1974. These texts made development the main proof of land ownership, **and they based the land tenure system on individual rights through the registry of lands.**

The 1974 Ordinances thus led to **a legal appropriation of the lands where indigenous peoples live,** essentially through the denial of their customary land rights—since the way they use spaces is not accepted as proof of development. This reform led to **a series of evictions of indigenous peoples, which made way for large investments (in protected areas, agribusiness, logging companies, mining, etc.).** The evicted peoples were forced to settle on the fallow lands of the dominant ethnic groups (Bantus), where they now live in constant insecurity. In order to adapt to these new conditions, they have changed their way of life with great difficulty, and the most daring have undertaken agricultural activities—with varying success. Being squatters, they constantly have problems with their Bantu neighbors, who do not hesitate to appropriate their fields and other investments that they have made in these lands. In theory, this double injustice should be resolved through the territorial dispute resolution mechanisms.

Discriminatory Resolution Mechanisms for Land Conflicts

The right to a court hearing is understood as a concrete and effective right (2). However, this is not the case for the indigenous peoples of Cameroon. In fact, for these peoples, **the existing mechanisms are discriminatory—both in terms of the proceedings and the composition of the court.** The right of every person to due process includes the right to bring any act that violates their basic rights—recognized and guaranteed by international conventions, laws, regulations and current customs—before the competent national courts (3). This article highlights the need to respect the rights of all peoples with customary rights to land—recognized by international conventions and customs—before the courts. In Cameroon, **the fact that the existing appeal mechanisms do not recognize disputes involving a violation of customary rights constitutes a fundamental obstacle to accessing justice.** Indeed, both the right to access justice and the recognition and protection of customary territorial rights are international obligations of the State, which must take all necessary measures to implement them (4).

Moreover, equitable access to justice requires that certain principles be respected—such as equality before the judge, and non-discrimination in the languages used in proceedings. The courts that are responsible for resolving land conflicts must be impartial to ensure proper administration of justice (5). In Cameroon, the composition of some organizations that are responsible for resolving land disputes raises suspicion about their partiality.

For example, the advisory commission in charge of settling territorial disputes regarding lands in the national domain (unregistered lands) does not offer any guarantee of impartiality with respect to indigenous peoples (6). It is made up of the sub-prefect, representatives of certain local administrations and the chief and two prominent figures from the village or community where the disputed land is located (7). The nature of this composition, therefore, is not reassuring to indigenous claimants. Indeed, **indigenous people's way of life, and the complexity of their customs, make the requirement for representation problematic.** In most villages where these conflicts take place, those called to be on the commission are not chiefs, much less prominent figures. **In this way, indigenous peoples face discrimination with regards to participation, as it is almost impossible for them to sit on the advisory commission.**

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples specifies that in any court decision, the customs, traditions, norms and legal systems of the indigenous people concerned will be duly taken into account, as well as international human rights standards (8). However, in light of the composition of these commissions, it is difficult to see how indigenous people's customs can service as a legal basis in an organization whose members are ignorant of them.

Beyond the procedure,—which is complex—the language used in the conflict resolution process is also critical, given that all claimants have the right to be assisted by an interpreter throughout the whole process (9). **The languages used by the organizations responsible for resolving territorial conflicts are English and French, and in some cases, the dominant language in the locality** where the court is located. So in many cases, indigenous peoples decide not to appeal to these organizations.

A Bad Relationship with the Justice System

Indigenous peoples have a bad relationship with the administration, and in particular with the justice system. **The many violations that they have suffered—at the hands of both administration officials and dominant ethnic groups—have intimidated them from demanding their rights.** Also, for years, some administration officials carried out arbitrary arrests of members of indigenous groups, who were never given the benefit of the doubt against the Bantus, who are considered to be their “masters.” These two factors have created the perception that going to court is a direct ticket to prison.

Over the years, **indigenous peoples have been presumed guilty, because—unable to prove their innocence—they were convicted and sent to prison in most cases in which they were implicated.** This feeling has increased their fear and distrust of administrative and judicial authorities, and above all, law enforcement (military and police). This creates a situation wherein numerous violations of indigenous communities' territorial rights go unpunished, because they are not denounced.

The Need for Inclusive Territorial Reform

The loss of faith in the justice system is the product of an imbalance of power between the richest and the poorest. **The system tends to privilege investors and other economic operators to the detriment of indigenous communities.** The marginalization of indigenous peoples tends to be a structural problem. This is mainly due to the absence of a legal framework that protects them, ignorance about their territorial rights and their weak representation in decision-making circles. Emphasis should be placed on recognition of their customary land rights, through inclusive reform. **Strong, recognized territorial rights will *ipso facto* imply the modification of territorial dispute resolution mechanisms.** These mechanisms must be local and must take into account the rights of indigenous peoples—both in their composition and in their procedures.

NGONO OTONGO Martin Romuald

Lawyer from the Center for the Environment and Development (CED - Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement). He works in the protection and advocacy of indigenous peoples' territorial rights, in the framework of the Landcam Project.

(1) Voluntary directives for responsible governance on land tenure, fisheries and forests, in the context of national food security.

(2) *Airey v Ireland*, European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), Court (Chamber), 9 October 1979, No. 6289/73.

(3) Article 7 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

(4) There is an interdependence between the right to land and the exercise of other basic rights, such as the right to the administration of justice, to health, to a healthy environment. Read Lorenzo Cotula et al, *Le droit à l'alimentation et l'accès aux ressources naturelles : utilisation des arguments et des mécanismes des droits de l'homme pour améliorer l'accès aux ressources des populations rurales pauvres*, FAO, 2009.

(5) Article 7 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

(6) Law No. 19 from 26 November 1983, which amends the provisions of Article 5 of Ordinance No. 74-1 from 6 July 1974, which establishes the territorial regime.

(7) Article 12 of Decree 76-166 from 27 April 1976, which establishes the modalities and management of the national domain.

(8) Article 40.

(9) ECHR, *Luedicke, Belkacem and Koç v Federal Republic of Germany*, No. 6210/73; 6877/75; 7132/75.

REDD+: A Scheme Rotten at the Core



Arajuno river, Ecuador. Ph: Tomas Munita/CIFOR

It has become difficult to get a clear idea of what is really happening with REDD+, the biggest international policy on forests. It has already shown to be a **big failure for the climate, the forests and forest peoples** (1), but many international funding agencies and governments continue to support and promote REDD+. The next round of the UN climate negotiations in November 2019 will discuss REDD+ yet again. This article takes a look at the continued failure of REDD+ to halt deforestation and fundamental flaws of the main international REDD+ initiatives.

The World Bank and REDD+: facilitating more deforestation

Let's first take a look at the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), which was launched in December 2007 as a pilot initiative to help "jump-start" the carbon market for REDD+. (2)

Nearly twelve years after its launch, a perhaps predictable pattern soon became apparent: Big announcements on demanding social and environmental 'safeguards,' 'benefit sharing plans' or 'participatory' processes were sooner or later followed by a weakening of these very rules and promises. Yet, those announcements enabled **the Facility to present itself as a 'trend-setter' and satisfy donor requests while ensuring that enough REDD+ country programmes moved ahead** - even if they had not met the requirements for such a progression. (3) The result: 19 countries have been admitted into the Carbon Fund – the Facility's final phase which enables participating countries to receive payments based on 'results' of avoiding deforestation. What this means, in a nutshell, is that **under 'results-based' payments, the government receiving the money can count the allegedly avoided emission in its own country's national carbon accounting system**. If the payment had been for REDD+ *credits* that the Carbon Fund can sell or that members of the Carbon Fund can use to claim that their emissions are not damaging the climate, the government receiving the money would not be able to claim the reduced emissions from REDD+ in its own national carbon accounting system – because the Carbon Fund would already be claiming the reductions.

Before payments can be made, the World Bank needs to sign a contract with the country participant from the global South. So far, the World Bank has signed three: with the governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique and Ghana. Under these contracts (called 'Emission Reduction Purchase Agreement' - ERPA), **the World Bank will pay US 5 dollars for every tonne of carbon dioxide a government can show to have avoided through keeping deforestation in the country below an agreed limit.**

But that scenario may be about to change...

With the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility due to close in December 2025, and because the purchase agreements are supposed to cover at least five years, all contracts need to be finalized by the end of December 2019. (4) Whether this will be possible without **another round of weakening rules and donors turning a blind eye** to shortcuts taken in order to meet the deadline, remains to be seen.

Furthermore, **the FCPF's Carbon Fund has already submitted an application to be recognized as a registered trader of REDD credits** –i.e. carbon offsets that can be sold and bought- **to the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA)**. (5) CORSIA will allow airlines to increase the number of international flights while claiming that this does not damage the climate because the carbon credits they purchase will compensate for a portion of their projected emissions.

If the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility is accepted as a supplier of carbon credits to international airlines through CORSIA, the World Bank's Facility is no longer just a 'results-based' REDD+ payment mechanism – it will be a REDD+ carbon *credit* trading mechanism. Because when airlines buy a REDD+ *credit*, they buy the right to claim that a portion of the emissions from their flights has been compensated. **Much more stringent monitoring and use restrictions imposed on peasant farming communities are likely to be the consequence.**

Existing drafts point to a repeat of the established pattern whereby REDD+ initiatives **blame deforestation on peasant farming and restrict shifting cultivation and other traditional forest use practises** – while large-scale destruction driven by corporations continues unabated. In this case, the consequences for forest peoples and peasant farmers will be no different than they are under private sector REDD+ projects – just on a bigger scale (see also WRM Bulletin [231](#)). These REDD+ projects have above all brought conflicts, contradictions and lies to communities living in and with the forest. (6)

What about other major REDD+ pilot initiatives?

Besides the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, the Amazon Fund, REDD Early Movers and the Green Climate Fund's REDD+ pilot programme are among the most prominent initiatives that have set out to promote REDD+, either as a carbon trading or as a 'results-based' payment mechanism (although the only real difference between the two is how the REDD+ unit is used). Have these other initiatives fared any better in terms of tackling deforestation or supporting forest peoples' stewardship of forests?

The governments of **Norway and Germany have been committed to pay over one billion dollars into the Amazon Fund**, managed by the Brazilian National Development Bank

(BNDES). Norway is by far the largest contributor, with its commitment to pay over one billion dollars into the Amazon Fund if deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon stays below agreed levels. In August 2019, Norway announced that it would be suspending additional payments to the Amazon Fund due to disputes with Brazil's far-right government of Jair Bolsonaro over how the money already committed to the Fund can be spent. Additional payments would have been unlikely anyways since payments are made only after 'results' can be shown that Amazon deforestation is kept below an agreed limit. Under the current government of the extreme right however, the deforestation rate is likely to increase well above the limit. And **failure to produce results means: no payments.**

The government of Germany runs another 'results-based' REDD+ payment programme in Brazil, with the state governments of Acre and Mato Grosso. (7) The **REDD Early Movers programme** is already in its second phase in Acre, where the government received US 25 million dollars between 2012 and 2017 as 'results-based' payments. 'Results' during phase I were easy to obtain for the Acre government, because the limit or reference level had been calculated on the basis of a ten-year average that included the peak deforestation years in the early 2000s. No action was needed to reduce deforestation. In fact, **deforestation could still increase significantly and the government of Acre was still eligible for 'results-based' payments.** The reference level has been lowered for phase II. With a 300 per cent increase in deforestation across the state of Acre in comparison to the previous year, the 2018 /2019 performance in Acre is also likely to be: **no payments.** And as a result, also no funding for government initiatives and programmes that have become entirely dependent on REDD+ payments.

In Mato Grosso, the programme provides payments if (emissions from) deforestation stay below an agreed limit that is the average deforestation in the years 2004-2015. This limit is also very lax because it includes the peak deforestation years. Little is known about how much REDD Early Movers money the German government has disbursed there to date. What is known, however, is that the government of **Mato Grosso used part of the money to purchase satellite images from a private company even though the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research, INPE, is running a widely-recognized satellite-based deforestation monitoring programme** called PRODES. The purchase of private satellite images is even more problematic considering current politics in Brazil. In reaction to the news about the massive increase in deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon since his government took over, far-right president Bolsonaro has been questioning the INPE figures and proposed to replace the bearer of the bad news with the very private service from which the government of Mato Grosso – with German government funds – is buying satellite images.

The **Green Climate Fund's US 500 million dollars 'results-based' REDD+ payment pilot programme** is currently undergoing an evaluation. It has so far approved two funding requests for supposedly 'results-based' REDD+ payments. Both requests were submitted by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) - one on behalf of the government of Brazil and one on behalf of the government of Ecuador. **The Brazilian request for US 96.5 million dollars was approved in February 2019, amidst much criticism and just a month after the Bolsonaro government had taken power.** Key requirements for approval of the Brazilian government's payment request, such as participation of civil society in the body to decide how funds would be used or a commitment to continue implementation of measures to tackle deforestation, seem to no longer be met, and funds may in the end not be (fully)

disbursed. The request from the government of Ecuador was approved in July 2019, with the Green Climate Fund Board accepting forest carbon data with an average of more than 30 per cent uncertainty. **Much of the payment to the government of Ecuador may thus be for 'results' based on data uncertainties rather than actual emissions prevented from release into the atmosphere.**

Finally, in September 2019, **the California Air Resources Board (CARB) approved its Tropical Forest Standard.** Initially, the Air Resources Board had set out to adopt a decision that would allow international REDD+ credits to be used by companies in California who are part of the state's emissions trading scheme. When opposition turned out to be harder to overcome than perhaps anticipated, the Air Resources Board introduced another loop to keep the discussion going: Instead of a decision to approve or reject use of international REDD+ credits in the California carbon trading system, it presented a draft 'Tropical Forest Standard'. The Air Resources Board is keen to underline that "The TFS [Tropical Forest Standard] is not proposing, nor would it result in any new offset credits being eligible for use in the California Cap-and-Trade Program ... and any such future connection would require a future rulemaking proceeding and a separate Board vote." (8) That, however, raises the question of why a California state institution would spend so much energy and resources into designing a standard it does then not intend to use? (9)

Of course all these confusing details about a REDD+ credits versus a 'results-based' payments and who can count how many emission reductions are a **smokescreen that hides at least three reasons for why the REDD+ experiment must be ended urgently:**

- (1) 12 years of REDD+ have been unable to halt or even significantly reduce deforestation.
- (2) REDD+ has been effective as a distraction that turns attention away from the real causes of deforestation and climate change.
- (3) REDD+ projects and programmes have led to more forests and territories of forest-dependant communities being subjected to control and monitoring of a community's land use by outsiders. As offsets, they have also allowed polluting industries to continue or even expand the corporate operations that ruin forests and the climate.

REDD+ as a success? If you ask fossil fuel companies...

The REDD+ public relations (PR) machine has been in overdrive ever since the scheme was given international visibility through its adoption into the UN climate negotiations. Each delay and failure to demonstrate progress was PR-ed away – not enough time, the circumstances aren't right, too many critics, too little research, too little money, etc.

For all these excuses, a credible example or two can probably be found. But **technical points to 'improve' REDD+ miss the reality that REDD+ is rotten at the core: REDD+ was set up as a carbon trading mechanism**, and renaming it 'results-based' payment, jurisdictional REDD+ or calling it any other name has not improved its underlying assumptions.

No amount of public relations spin will change that. It explains why Norway's and Germany's REDD+ pilot 'performance-based' programmes in Brazil are no longer making payments: **once the fake 'results' manufactured by inflating the limits were gone and genuine action to tackle large-scale corporate deforestation would have been needed to produce 'results', the 'results' vanished.**

At the same time, international media attention has turned to the Amazon where the month of August saw fires burning on a much larger scale than in recent years, releasing massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Meanwhile, the 96.5 million dollars that the Brazilian government was awarded for 'results-based' REDD+ payment from the Green Climate Fund in February 2019 is less than 1/300th of the 31.9 billion dollars that governments and banks in Brazil spent on supporting the soy and cattle industry in 2017 alone. That was before the government of Bolsonaro assumed power.

No matter how well-oiled the REDD+ public relations machine may be: *Nature will not be fooled*. Faith that REDD+ 'problems' can be fixed has shown to be misplaced by evidence accumulated over the past 12 years. REDD+ proponents must cut their losses and put **an end to all REDD+-type schemes**, the international forest policy debacle that has stalled meaningful action on tackling deforestation and supporting communities that live in and with the forest.

Jutta Kill, jutta@wrm.org.uy

Member of the WRM international secretariat

(1) WRM (2014): REDD. A Collection of Conflicts, Contradictions and Lies. <https://wrm.org.uy/books-and-briefings/redd-a-collection-of-conflicts-contradictions-and-lies/>

(2) WRM Bulletin 111, "The World Bank: A major broker of carbon purchases", October 2006, <https://wrm.org.uy/bulletins/issue-111/>

(3) An open letter by the Rainforest Foundation UK and others provides several examples of this pattern of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility making big announcements, only to weaken the rules and requirements at a later stage. <https://redd-monitor.org/2017/12/17/ngos-call-for-suspension-of-world-banks-redd-programme-this-approach-to-forest-protection-simply-has-not-worked/>

(4) Documents and Decisions from the 20th meeting of the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility Carbon Fund meeting on 8-11 June 2019 in Washington, DC can be found at: <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/carbon-fund-twentieth-cf20>

(5) The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility application to CORSIA is available at: https://www.icao.int/environmental-protection/CORSIA/Documents/TAB/FCPF_Programme_Application.pdf

For more information on how international aviation is damaging the climate and why its CORSIA plan will fuel, not prevent climate chaos, see the REDD-Monitor post 'Nature cannot be fooled': <https://redd-monitor.org/2019/09/05/nature-cannot-be-fooled-kevin-anderson-on-mitigation-as-if-climate-mattered/>

(6) WRM (2014): REDD. A Collection of Conflicts, Contradictions and Lies. <https://wrm.org.uy/books-and-briefings/redd-a-collection-of-conflicts-contradictions-and-lies/>

(7) Germany has also signed REDD Early Movers contracts with the governments of Colombia and Ecuador.

(8) California Air Resources Board Responses to Comments on the Draft Environmental Analysis Prepared for the Endorsement of the California Tropical Forestry Standard. November 9, 2018, 2-26.

(9) Larry Lohmann, Carbon Confidential. A California Crime Paper. The Corner House, 2019, <http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/resource/carbon-confidential>

Mekong: Rubber Fever Strikes Again



What is referred to as “rubber fever” began in the mid-nineteenth century, when Charles Goodyear discovered uses for latex from rubber trees. With mass production of motor cars a few decades later, and the invention of tires in 1888, the “need” for natural rubber became urgent. Synthetic rubber, on the other hand—which is made through chemical reactions with hydrocarbon products—is trying to compete with natural rubber but failing to replace it.

The rubber tree comes from the Amazon. Many opportunists rushed to these forests in search of fortune, imposing **sub-human harvesting practices and slave labor. In a few years, thousands of indigenous people were killed, raped or tortured** (1). Others went after rubber in West Africa, where colonizers—led by one of the most infamous monarchs, King Leopold II of Belgium—propagated *Hevea brasiliensis* seeds. Once again, thousands of people were killed, enslaved and tortured. **In 1912, the seeds were taken to Asia, where they were propagated on large plantations to lower the costs of production.**

To this day, the industrial production of natural rubber is still largely **synonymous with destruction and exploitation.** Large-scale plantations are responsible for deforestation, destruction of biodiversity, soil erosion, contamination due to the use of chemicals, and abuse and dispossession of local communities. Furthermore, industrial rubber plantations **significantly increase sexual violence and abuse against women and girls in affected communities** (2). Currently, 97% of global production of natural rubber comes from Asia.

According to a report by the organization, FERN, **there are some 13 million hectares of natural rubber plantations worldwide, and this number is on the rise** (3). It is estimated that the annual consumption of rubber by 2025 will increase by more than 40% as compared to 2010. This could lead to an expansion of 8.5 million hectares of plantations.

The primary buyers of natural rubber are **China, the European Union (mainly Germany, France, Spain and Italy) and the United States.** About 70% of natural rubber goes toward the production of tires, in particular for heavy loads. With the growing using of cars, trucks and airplanes, the use of rubber will also increase. And this does not come without controversy.

“White Gold” in the Mekong

The Mekong region—which comprises Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar—is facing deforestation that is increasing at a staggering pace, largely because of rubber plantations. **These five countries produce over 50% of natural rubber worldwide.** Among other reasons, this is due to their proximity to China—the world’s leading consumer of rubber—as well as to the expansion of oil palm plantations in Indonesia and Malaysia, which have displaced rubber to the Mekong.

In the early 1950s, the Chinese government decided that it should produce its own natural rubber, so it invested heavily in researching whether rubber could be grown in areas previously considered to be unsuitable. Subsequently, **state plantations were successfully established in “non traditional” areas, which greatly facilitated the expansion of this crop.** At the same time, the rise in palm oil prices drove an expansion of oil palm plantations in areas where rubber had previously been grown. Unlike rubber, oil palms are restricted to the humid tropics. In many parts of Peninsular Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, **rubber trees continue to be replaced by oil palm, and rubber is being displaced further north** (4).

Today, commercial rubber production in this region takes place under three kinds of systems: land concessions to state or private companies, independent production by small-scale farmers, or cultivation through contracts between companies and small-scale farmers. **Small-scale farmers predominate in rubber production in Thailand, and to a lesser extent in Myanmar.** This is for several reasons, including current agrarian reform policies that subsidize this crop, and the lack of state capacity to control large concessions. Meanwhile, **in Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos, government policies have promoted and imposed large commercial concessions, affecting small-scale farmers’ control and tenure of lands.**

Companies from China, Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand are investing heavily in **rubber plantations in non-traditional areas in Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.** These plantations are managed through concessions or by contract with small-scale producers. In the case of concessions, companies control both the land and the production of rubber, **turning farmers into landless workers**—most of whom also face very precarious working conditions (5).

In the case of harvest by contract, small-scale farmers still own their land, though they must comply with the conditions of the contract. **The abandonment of traditional agricultural practices** in favor of monoculture, essentially, has serious consequences for families’ food and nutritional sovereignty. Worse yet, diverse materials, foods and medicines—as well as non-timber forest products—become inaccessible, since rubber plantations do not provide them.

Myanmar

Rubber has been grown in Myanmar since the early 1900s, particularly in Mon state. Such “traditional” areas of rubber cultivation are mostly farmed by small-scale farmers seeking other forms of income. However, as the NGO Global Witness shows, **two new patterns of expansion have emerged in Myanmar** (6).

First, the government has been **promoting new non-traditional areas for this crop** over the last decade, which has led to an expansion of plantations in the northern part of the country. The official policy has gone from relying on small-scale farmers to meet national agricultural production quotas, to using private companies to reach national objectives. Second, **large-scale plantations are getting closer and closer to small parcels**, which reduces peasants' access to forests and their livelihoods, further undermining their food sovereignty.

In both cases, concessions are assigned in areas that the government defines as “unproductive land,” mostly in the highlands. But far from being unproductive, these lands are often used and farmed by local communities.

Vietnam

Rubber plantations in Vietnam have been the site of some of the **worst abuses of indigenous peoples in the country at the hands of the French colony**. The climate in the highlands of southern Vietnam offers ideal conditions for rubber trees. Therefore, the colonial government made vast areas of forests “available” to European companies for plantations; meanwhile, it established the necessary infrastructure and provided financial support. **Forced labor was the norm, along with torture, rape and marginalization**. Nonetheless, colonial plantations also became places of radicalization and rebellion, which became apparent in the subsequent wars with France and the United States. Afterwards, the new government chose to operate the industry in line with colonial structures, giving **preference to large foreign companies**. Beginning in 1943, large estates began to take up more and more land for rubber production, reaching 82% by 1970 (7).

While French companies' plantations disappeared in favor of state enterprises after 1975, **conflicts continue between large plantations and family or community cultivation**. A report by the Vietnamese government estimated that over 10,000 children were involved in rubber production, 22% of whom were between five and 11 years old. **Serious reports of trafficking and slavery abound** (8). Meanwhile, Vietnamese companies **are increasingly looking toward Laos and Cambodia** to set up their plantations (9). In a trend reminiscent of colonialism, these corporations frequently **force communities to relocate**, often in an illegal and violent manner (10).

Cambodia

A 2019 study from the University of Copenhagen shows that 23.5% of the forest cover in Cambodia—more than 2.2 million hectares—was destroyed between 2001 and 2015 (11). **Almost a quarter of the deforested area, including “protected” areas, was used for rubber plantations**. Two thirds of these areas are foreign-owned, mainly by Vietnamese and Chinese companies—which usually also control their processing plants.

The study also reveals a strong **correlation between the deforestation rate and the price of rubber**, and warns that if policies that promote the development of commercial rubber plantations are not stopped, forest area will continue to decrease in the country. Such policies include what is called the “Development Triangle of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam,” which is focused on promoting regional “growth,”—wherein the rubber industry occupies a prominent place.

In 2014, a complaint was filed at the International Criminal Court against the Cambodian government for its crimes against humanity. These crimes were associated with a massive wave of land grabbing that led to the **displacement of 770,000 Cambodians**. In most of these cases, communities and indigenous peoples were violently stripped of their lands and forests to make way for large-scale commercial agricultural projects, in particular for rubber trees (12).

Laos

Since the 1990s, communities in the highlands of northern Laos have been **pushed to leave behind subsistence agriculture to work on rubber plantations**—thus reducing their areas for rice cultivation. In a direct attack on their food sovereignty, the rapid loss of forests has also endangered several varieties of rice (13).

As in Cambodia, virtually all large-scale rubber plantations replaced forests. Until 2007, a land titling program **granted land concessions to companies mainly from Vietnam and China**. Approximately 75% of the investment in rubber in Laos comes from foreign companies. Affected families face food and water scarcity and receive little or no compensation. Indigenous peoples and communities who oppose the plantations face violence, arrests and imprisonment.

Certification to Ensure Expansion?

The growing expansion of rubber plantations has led to a slew of serious environmental and social impacts. This has propelled the creation of certification schemes that claim to want to make rubber production more “sustainable.” But is that possible?

One of the initiatives being strongly promoted is the **Global Platform on Sustainable Natural Rubber** (GPSNR), which claims to bring together the different actors involved to address existing abuses in the rubber production chain. The Platform was launched in March 2019 with members ranging from the **automotive industry** (such as BMW, Ford Motor, General Motors), **tire producers** (Such as Bridgestone Corporation, Goodyear, Michelin), **rubber tree plantation companies** (such as the Socfin Group), as well as **international conservation NGOs** (such as BirdLife International, Conservation International, Mighty Earth, Rainforest Alliance and WWF, among others).

These “negotiating tables” or platforms, however, hide a clear **inequality in terms of political and economic power**. Worse yet, they hide the true objective of bringing together corporate actors who profit from the expansion of rubber and conservation NGOs: to **facilitate the expansion of industrial rubber plantations under seals that hide the devastation that this causes**. This has already been made clear with other certification schemes for large-scale monoculture tree plantations (14).

The fact is that **many of the underlying factors that gave rise to the various “rubber fevers” throughout history in different parts of the Global South still exist**. The growing consumption of cars, trucks and airplanes—particularly those that facilitate the global trade of millions of goods transported every day—is an indicator that the expansion of industrial rubber plantations will continue to threaten forests and communities’ territories.

**** If you know about local struggles against rubber tree plantations that need support and/or visibility, contact the WRM team: wrm@wrm.org.uy**

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- (14) See WRM's page about certification of industrial plantations: <https://wrm.org.uy/browse-by-subject/tree-plantations/certification/>

Mapuche Lavkenche Women's Resistance to the Chilean Forestry Model



Ph: Verónica González Correa/Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales (OLCA)

This article provides context about the work of the Network of Women's Organizations of Tirúa, in south central Chile. The network is deploying strategies for life to prevail in this territory, which has been threatened by the invasion of tree plantations (1).

The Chilean Forestry Model and Conflict

The forestry model in Chile is installed mainly in rural areas in the south central part of the country—in what is called the Bío Bío and Araucanía regions, according to political-geographic divisions. The plantation industry is based on the systematic development of large-scale monocultures of exotic pine and eucalyptus species, to supply pulp mills, sawmills and wood products mainly for export.

During the Chilean dictatorship (1973-1990), large areas of land were handed over mainly to two family groups. On one side, the Matte family group owns the holding company, Paper and Cardboard Manufacturing Company (CMPC by its Spanish acronym), with subsidiary Forestal Minico—which manages 667,468.7 hectares. On the other side is the Arauco company of the Angelinni clan, which has an estate of 1,116,788 hectares. **Together, they own 64% of plantations, 100% of pulp mills, 81% of paper and cardboard plants, 75% of wood board plants and 37% of wood chip production (2).**

The dictatorship also implemented the **Decree Law 701 for forestry promotion**, which reimbursed or subsidized 75% of the costs of planting, management and administration, in addition to eliminating taxation. Decreasing costs of manual labor and economies of scale allowed large plantation companies to cover almost all of the planting costs with this state subsidy—which was originally to be in effect until 1998, but was extended until 2013. This Decree provided **important and unprecedented incentives to plant monocultures in forests and on lands declared to be apt for forestry.**

According to official data from the National Forestry Corporation (CONAF, by its Spanish acronym), forestry plantations covered 3,316,789 hectares by 2014 (3). Several investigations recognize that in that same area, the Chilean State has taken 11 million hectares from the indigenous Mapuche people, who now live on just 300,000 hectares (Seguel, 2002: 173).

This situation has caused a **high level of social conflict, especially with the Mapuche people**, who since the late 1990s began to show active resistance to the collusion between plantation companies and the Chilean State. Mapuche historian, Fernando Pairicán (2013), points out that the pivotal moment that ignited the *wallmapu* (entire Mapuche territory) occurred in December 1997, when three truckloads of wood from the Arauco forestry company were burned in the area of Lumaco. The Mapuche communities of that commune stated their intention to reclaim lands from the forestry company, arguing that they had ancestral and sovereign rights in that territory. From that moment on, they began **an escalation of effective territory reclamation processes, which has caused an excessive increase in police presence in several areas. In these areas, the work that takes place on the plantations is guarded by a strong contingent of highly armed police**—paid for by the taxes of all Chilean citizens.

Network of Women's Organizations of Tirúa

The Network of Women's Organizations of Tirúa brings together self-organized women seeking to improve the lives of all women, by carrying out productive initiatives that respect the environment and value ancestral resources and knowledge. They also undertake the organized defense and collective care of their territory, its water, forests, and biodiversity—which are threatened by the plantations—taking on an active role in the defense of the *lavkenche* territory (3).

The women of the network are mainly Mapuche, and they are all peasants who live in different parts of the Tirúa commune. The Network is made up of 27 women's organizations that collectively produce vegetables in their gardens, produce native trees, weave on looms, dry herbs, collect lawen (medicinal plants) and fruits from the forest -maqui (Chilean wineberry), hazelnut, mutilla (Chilean guava), among others- and prepare products with what they have in their fields: jams and preserves, toasted flour, corn, merquen (smoked chile pepper) and ñocha (fibrous plant used to make baskets and others)—both to consume and to sell. Production is mostly for their families, but something is left over to sell or barter with a neighbor or relative.

Since 2014, women have become important agents of change in their territory. They have taken a stand through daily resistance, and have used their intuition to generate alternatives. **They embody both a radical critique of development methods, and a proposal centered around another way of living life.** They are providers of seeds for daily resistance, for daily work of caring for biodiversity. The women of the Network are defending and promoting *iltrofill mongen* (respect for everything that lives), **and they are an alternative to the extractive plantation model.**

How Are They Restoring Balance?

First, they say: Stop eating badly—cold cuts, meat from the city; You have to raise animals, grow your plants at home and water them with your water; Know what you are eating, know what water you are drinking; Pay the *ngen* [protective spirit] of water with offerings, so that it protects you.

Second, **in practice, women are removing eucalyptus from their lands** through various strategies, and it is not an easy task. They are pulling out pine and eucalyptus trees and planting native trees and plants. They are protecting the headwaters of their watersheds, protecting springs and taking care of the water.

Third, they are maintaining, strengthening and disseminating critical discourse against plantation companies, and are raising awareness of Chilean state policies that are responsible for the very serious current situation.

Fourth, they are bringing back economies of care—that is, those tasks associated with human reproduction—and placing them at the center. This sphere surpasses the boundaries of care in the home, toward care of the *ñuke mapu* (*Mother Earth*), taking into account their descendants and life in the community.

A Model from the Ground Up, From the Earth

The women of the Network show that the Mapuche people's reclamation is not just for lands; it is also a cultural reclamation, for knowledge. This unifying logic is essential. From this perspective, they are able to see those who planted pine and eucalyptus trees in their territories not as traitors, friends or enemies, but as people who were deceived: They are their parents, their husbands, the neighbor—people who fell into the game because their confidence in their own ideas was weak. Therefore, to reverse the situation, it is not necessary to remove those people from the community; but rather to strengthen their confidence, and preserve the abundance that the territory provides to those present and those to come.

As can be seen, this is another way of confronting the advance and intensification of the plantation model. The women's model is one from the ground up, from the earth. Clearly, different values underpin the work of the Network. It rejects the capitalist economic paradigm, or at least moves forward with that intuition. It reclaims connections as a structuring matrix, rather than ideas or—even less so—numbers. **It does not want identical pine and eucalyptus trees that all have the same age, appearance and commercial fate; rather, it calls for diverse forests.**

The Network is continuing to fight so that the driving force behind its plans, strategies and actions to overcome difficulties is care—which is an eminently collective issue. Centuries of care constitute a tradition that must be shared, now that we are in a critical situation where extraction is imposing death. **To disregard the work of care is to further perpetuate the invisibility of women.**

Verónica González Correa

Latin American Observatory on Environmental Conflicts (OLCA, by its Spanish acronym)

(1) This article comes out of the master's thesis, "*Resistencia de mujeres lavkenche al modelo forestal chileno*" 2019, Center for Research and Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology, Chiapas – Mexico. The field work was carried out from August to December, 2017.

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(3) The Mapuche people (*Mapu* land, *che* people) are as diverse as a forest. There are different territorial identities that are named after the elements that characterize them: *puelche* (people from the East), *pikunche* (people from the North), *lavkenche* (people from the coast) and *williche* (people from the South). Each of these names expresses the inseparable link between a specific geographic space and the people who inhabit it.

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ACTION ALERTS

Violent altercations at the Kahuzi Biega National Park, DRC, must stop!

The Centre for accompanying Pygmy Autochthones peoples and Vulnerable Minorities (CAMV, for its French acronym) alerts on the disturbing and disastrous situation at the Kahuzi Biega National Park, DRC. There already have been violent incidents in April and July 2019, where people have been seriously injured and killed. And on August 1, 2019, a Pygmy and an eco guard were killed as a result of another altercation in a territory occupied by the Pygmies inside the park. Other clashes between eco guards and pygmies are reported daily. Read the Press Release in French here:

https://wrm.org.uy/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Declaration-CAMV_02-08-2019.pdf

Statement against the second UPM pulp mill in Uruguay

At the end of July 2019, UPM confirmed that it will install a second pulp mill in Uruguay. This megaproject will produce up to 2.33 million tons of cellulose per year, this means significant environmental, social, and cultural damage. This project does not have social license. Several social organizations, local citizens' groups, and stakeholders have expressed their concerns about the ways in which the megaproject will affect their lives and their concerns have not been properly addressed by the public consultation process. The latest version of the contract allows UPM to withdraw by giving only a one-year notice, without providing justification and without material consequences. Read the Declaration here:

<http://www.guayubira.org.uy/2019/08/uruguayan-finnish-and-international-groups-joint-statement-upm2/>

RECOMMENDED

Chile: Territorial voices on the mega-expansion of Celulosa Arauco

The campaign, "Territorial Voices on the MAPA Project: Testimonies about the mega-expansion of Celulosa Arauco," seeks to shine a light on testimonies about the impacts of this project that aims to triple the production of the Celulosa Arauco plant in Chile. The Ojo de Treile Collective has produced a series of micro audiovisual capsules to take a stand against the most ambitious plantation industry project in the history of the country, which is

threatening to further interfere with forests and ancestral territories. You may watch them here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOaZanjwAAEIMgYoQF2xgw>

Documentary that accuses Veracel Celulose of bribery, land appropriation and violence is screened for the second time in Finland

TV Yle, Finland's national public broadcasting channel, has produced a documentary about the participation of Stora Enso, a Swedish-Finnish pulp giant that is part of Veracel Celulose. Veracel Celulose is a company in Brazil accused of land grabbing, bribery and environmental and labor crimes. It is worrisome that the police have arrested people interviewed in the documentary, such as farmer Geraldo Pereira. Pereira claims to have owned part of the land Veracel is defending since the 1970s—a fact confirmed in a local court hearing in Eunapolis that heard from witnesses who told their stories and confirmed their claims to ownership. Watch the documentary in English and Finnish here:

<https://www.futucandonoticias.com/noticia/documentario-que-acusa-a-veracel-de-subornos-grilagens-e-violencia-e-exibido-pela-segunda-vez-na-finlandia>

Africa: The RSPO certification for palm oil plantations is greenwash!

RSPO is the most widely used voluntary certification system for palm oil companies and it hold its 3rd African Sustainable Palm Oil Conference in Accra, Ghana on August 2019. But Friends of the Earth Africa groups exposed it as a greenwashing label. Cases of environmental degradation and rights violations remain visible in many of the plantations that have the label. They also blame the activities of oil palm plantation companies for biodiversity loss, increased poverty, human rights violations and the climate disaster in Africa, among others. Read the Press Release in French here:

<https://foeafrica.wordpress.com/2019/08/19/communique-de-presse-la-certification-rspo-est-un-ecoblanchiment-en-afrique/>

Trees to Solve the World's Problems? From Genetically Engineered Trees for the Bioeconomy – to the Trillion Tree Proposal and Business for Nature

This report -by Anne Petermann and Orin Langelle, Global Justice Ecology Project- examines events and research publicized between 23 June and 4 July 2019 that discuss the mass-use of trees to enable the unsustainable lifestyles of the world's top 1% in the face of looming ecological catastrophe: from trees genetically engineered to feed the "green" manufacture of energy, plastics and chemicals; the planting of trillions of trees to reduce global atmospheric carbon levels; and "reforms" to the economic system to allow future profit-making under the guise of biodiversity protection.

<https://stopgetrees.org/trees-ge-trees-and-nature-to-save-capitalism-from-itself-new-report-out/>

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Editor-in-Chief: Winfridus Overbeek

Managing Editor: Joanna Cabello

Editorial Assistants: Elizabeth Díaz, Lucía Guadagno, Jutta Kill and Teresa Pérez

WRM International Secretariat

Avenida General María Paz 1615 office 3. CP 11400. Montevideo, Uruguay

Phone/Fax: +598 26056943

wrm@wrm.org.uy | <http://www.wrm.org.uy>