Shell in the Peruvian Amazon

Rainforest Action Network (RAN), Amazon Watch and Project Underground remain deeply concerned about Shell's activities in the Peruvian Amazon and have decided not to participate in the workshops organized by the company to discuss the Camisea Project that took place in Washington DC on December 12 and in London on December 15. In a letter sent to Shell, they express that this forum was not structured in a way in which constructive dialogue is possible, since the current process remains a discussion on how to proceed with gas development in Camisea, as opposed to any consideration of whether or not this is a sound project from a development, energy policy, environmental, or cultural perspective. Like local communities in the Camisea region, international environmental and human rights organizations are invited to “discuss” on items only established by Shell. “From the beginning, Shell's consultation process has actually denied local communities' critical and pertinent rights. Specifically, during early stages of the consultation process, Shell failed to provide the affected communities with adequate information on the complexity and severity of impacts of industrial fossil fuel projects in rainforest areas” states the letter. Shell ignored the rights to full information and consultation codified in the International Labor Organization's Convention 169 and in the 1993 Peruvian Constitution. Shell Peru's current "dialogue" process is just aimed at gaining project approval and neutralising NGOs criticism, but not at really taking into account rootgrass opinions.

The Project deserves also specific critiques: despite the mitigating measures Shell may take during the development phase of the project, the environmental impact of this 40-year industrial project in a primary, frontier rainforest area remains unknown; Camisea is a “model project” for further initiatives that can lead to further destruction, in particular of the pristine areas of the western Amazon that are threatened by the proposed Brasil-Bolivia pipeline; Shell has never opened up for serious review of the threat the project poses for the more vulnerable indigenous populations in the region, especially the nomadic ones.

Shell’s depleting activities at the Ogoni region of Nigeria are not a good antecedent to trust on the company’s capacity to dialogue.

Source: Rainforest Action Network, December 1997.