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## How to Strengthen Resistance Movements?

*Despite the many profound damages that industries cause in the world's forests, they also cause something else to emerge: the strong and diverse resistance movements of affected communities defending their territories, livelihoods, cultures and even their existence. The struggle continues!*

It is a fact that forests continue to be devastated at a rapid pace. More and more thousands of hectares are being destroyed to make way for mining projects, oil or gas extraction, tree plantations such as eucalyptus or oil palm, dams, logging concessions and mega-infrastructure projects, among many other activities.

But in addition to the many and undeniable profound damages that these activities are causing around the world, they also cause something else to emerge: the **strong and diverse resistance movements of affected communities defending their territories, livelihoods, cultures and beliefs, and even their existence.**

Despite the severe criminalization and violence on the part of corporations and current governments to allow these harmful activities, as well as "development" agencies' and other financial institutions' monetary support for business to continue; communities and peoples have not stopped mobilizing, organizing, coordinating and resisting the onslaught of the so-called "development" model. Without these struggles, forests, watersheds and territories would be destroyed on an even larger scale.

This bulletin is a reflection on the diverse resistance movements and enormous challenges that exist today, and on those that are to come. **We ask ourselves: how can resistance movements and organization at the grassroots level be strengthened in order to stop the destruction of forests and peoples in the current global context?**

An interview with Kum'Tum of the Akroá-Gamela people, at the gateway to the **Brazilian Amazon**, takes us into a personal and collective process in which **recovering memory and voice as a people was key in reconnecting and reclaiming lands and life.** "We do not reclaim land only for production. We reclaim the land because it is a sacred place; it is a place that gives meaning to our existence," Kum'Tum reminds us.

From **Sierra Leone** comes the story of a community in Port Loko, wherein—after almost ten years of struggle against a company that appropriated their lands through trickery and filled them with oil palm plantations—a **court ruled that the lands be returned to the communities.** A process of coordination among local, regional and international organizations seems to have been crucial in the struggle. They are now trying to determine what they should do with the large tracts of land filled with rows and rows of oil palms.

From **India**, an article explores various forms of reinvention and reconstruction of grassroots organizations in Korchi, Maharashtra. With a special emphasis on women's collectives, the article highlights **how they made their voices heard—not only to resist mining but also in new forms of decision-making at the village and supra-village levels.** These collectives develop forest

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strategies with local control, revive their cultural identity, affirm direct democracy and gender democracy and question existing development models, among other actions.

From **Latin America**, another article reflects on **the multiple attacks on women defending territories**. It shares how women achieve different actions that have enabled them to position their unique perspectives, and how on many occasions they have managed to temporarily halt or paralyze extractive activities. They underscore the **healing process as fundamental in the dialogue of knowledge among peoples, contexts and generations—and from a place of vindication of the memory of women ancestors**.

This bulletin also includes **an interview with Cameroonian activist and human rights defender, Nasako Besingi**. Besingi invites us to reflect on what it means that in most African countries' laws, the land "belongs to the State." **He also points us to important strategies and challenges in building strong movements**. "Strengthening solidarity among communities and exchanges among people directly and indirectly affected by development projects—in order to build trust at the community level—is the backbone of any successful resistance," he says.

From **Southern Africa**, an article tells us about **the Permanent Peoples Tribunal**, where more than twenty cases from the region were presented. The Tribunal has been **an important platform for communities to share their struggles and build solidarity**. The case of the community of Xolobeni in South Africa is emblematic. In November 2018, after 16 years of struggle against an Australian mining conglomerate, the court ruled in favor of the community; it stated that, before granting mining rights, the "full and formal" consent of the town of Xolobeni must be obtained.

Another article shares the story of the plantation company, **Green Resources, in Tanzania**. It shows us that these companies always need to ensure access to a large area of land, and that in order to do so, they make a series of false or very poorly-met promises to convince communities to give up their lands. Nevertheless, the community of Nzivi learned about these experiences in time and decided to say no to any company that wants to control significant areas of their lands. This highlights **the importance of sharing stories and experiences among communities facing similar situations**.

The Struggle Continues!