



Tree Monocultures: Communities resisting pressure over their territories

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OUR VIEWPOINT

Listening to those in struggle in the territory against monoculture tree plantations

This bulletin shows that the fight against monoculture tree plantations and the model they represent is very strong in the Global South, especially among women. Whether it is in Indonesia, Thailand, Liberia, Brazil or Colombia, communities continue to resist and make progress.

This bulletin brings together testimonies from movements and communities around the world who are building resistance against these practices and fighting to defend life. Listening to these communities is essential. Their stories reveal the reality behind these projects, tearing away the mask of “sustainability” that project promoters work hard to uphold. The daily impacts of these projects on the environment, culture and lives of communities – and in particular on women – leave no room for doubt: monoculture tree plantations are an arm of patriarchal, racist and colonial capitalism (1).

In 2025, European companies that have monoculture tree, rubber and oil palm plantations, such as Socfin, continue to operate in several African countries, in areas from which entire communities have been expelled (2). These companies continue to deprive community members of access to the lands where they used to grow food and gather native oil palm fruits, activities primarily carried out by women. Employees of these companies allow women to enter these areas in exchange for sex, so that the women can collect palm fruits on their own ancestral territory – which is now fenced off and protected by company security guards (3). What else can we call this but patriarchal, racist, and colonial capitalism?

Suzano Papel e Celulose, the world's largest company in this sector, occupies 2.7 million hectares in Brazil (4). Agrarian reform would enable some 100,000 peasant families could live in this area, but the area is currently allocated to a single company that is destroying the environment and concentrating land and money (5). These corporate expansion processes are characterized by illegal land appropriation and the expulsion of peasant families. Women who live in areas where there are disputes over land, sparked by companies like Suzano, suffer directly from the impacts of these green deserts. These plantations kill all life around them and dry up springs and rivers with their thirsty roots. Among other issues, women are exposed to an overload of work, since they have to venture increasingly further away to seek water and food for their families and communities. This is what women in the MST denounced during their recent protests, stating that "Suzano sows hunger" (6). This is not to mention the threats they suffer for denouncing and fighting against companies like these. What else can we call this but patriarchal, racist, and colonial capitalism?

Since women are the ones who suffer the most from the impacts of monoculture tree plantations, they are often the ones who lead community organizations and territorial defense (7) (8). This bulletin takes a close look at this matter, by visiting different territories in conflict with multinational oil palm, rubber and eucalyptus companies. This bulletin puts its feet on the ground in communities that are resisting tree plantations. It brings stories from those who have witnessed

the arrival of these projects and their impacts firsthand. These texts were written by female and male community leaders, and by organized movements from places where there is an intense struggle against this model of extractivism. These texts come from places where women are rising up to defend their communities and nature as a source of life.

The **first article** takes us to Indonesia. The authors are members of the resistance movement, Buol Plasma Peasants Forum (FPPB), which is fighting against oil palm multinational PT Hardaya Inti Plantations. They tell us how they were deceived with false promises that led them to accept collaboration agreements with companies – in a program the government dubbed as "Plasma." The result? Food shortages, debt, and the threat of flooding caused by oil palm monocultures, all of which especially affect women. They are currently organizing to confront this trap and to recover their lands and their traditional way of life.

In the **second article**, members of the Cajibío Interethnic and Intercultural Territory of Life movement from Colombia (TEVIIC, by its Spanish acronym) tell us how they united indigenous peoples and peasants in this movement to stand up to one of the world's largest cardboard and paper multinationals: Smurfit Westrock. They are organized and fighting to advance agrarian reform through autonomy and the recovery of lands usurped by the company.

The **third article** features the testimonies of two women – one from Thailand and one from Brazil – who are active in local peasant movements fighting for their land rights. In both cases, women are at the forefront of the occupation of lands, which they are recovering from industry giants. Where before there were only monoculture tree plantations, thanks to these women, there is now space being opened up to grow agroecological crops.

Finally, the **fourth article** takes us to Liberia. An exclusive interview with a female and male leader of the Joghban clan reveals details of the multiple forms of violence they have suffered with the arrival of rubber multinational LAC-Socfin and palm oil multinational Equatorial Palm Oil (formerly LIBINC). But the main focus of this interview is how the women and men, working together, achieved a historic victory: the partial recovery and recognition of their traditional territory that had been invaded by one of these companies.

Although this bulletin presents the impacts of monoculture tree plantations in its articles, it is not just focused on denunciation – which is clear from the words of those who have experienced said impacts firsthand. Above all, this bulletin is intended to fuel hope. It shows that the fight against tree plantations – and the model they represent – is very strong in the Global South, especially among women. Bringing together these resistance movements in the following pages is also an effort to bring together struggles and peoples who, despite their differences and geographic distances, share historical similarities and common objectives: they are saying no to monoculture tree plantations and yes to community autonomy.

Enjoy reading!

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"We will fight until our lands are returned", Peasant resistance to oil palm plantations in Indonesia

We are peasants from Indonesia, the world's largest producer of palm oil. In recent decades, we have witnessed the spread of oil palm monocultures in our territory, an expansion driven by multinational companies with government support. False promises led us to accept plantation partnership schemes that put us at risk of losing our land. What was once forest and traditional crops have been replaced by monocultures that have left us with food shortages, debt, and the threat of floods. For this reason, we organized ourselves to end this exploitation and restore our traditional way of life. And here we share the story of our struggle.

For We are peasants from Indonesia, the world's largest producer of palm oil. We write from the island of Sulawesi, a region where the government and private sectors are promoting plans to expand oil palm plantations by about 1 million hectares, through the ambitious "Sulawesi Palm Oil Belt" project (1). This initiative is part of the national plan to develop 20 million hectares of oil palm plantations. In our area, Buol Regency, we have experienced firsthand the negative impacts that projects like this have on peasant communities, forests and the broader environment. That is why, since 2022, we have organized through the Buol Plasma Peasants Forum (FPPB), an association of peasants affected by palm oil partnership schemes who are committed to defending the rights of peasants and plantation workers within the palm oil sector.

Let us start from the beginning. Oil palm is not native to Indonesia. The plant was introduced by the Dutch colonial government and later extensively developed as a monoculture plantation crop. Its expansion has been rapid, and continues to this day: by 2023, the total area of oil palm plantations in Indonesia had reached more than 16 million hectares - almost the size of Tunisia. This vast area was established in a relatively short period of time, largely through aggressive expansion practices driven by major companies.

Many of us peasants still remember when oil palm was first introduced in Sulawesi. At that time, we did not even know what the fruit looked or tasted like. In Buol, the company PT Hardaya Inti Plantations (PT HIP) was the first to bring oil palm in the 1990s. That marked a major transformation that continues to affect our lives to this day.

The arrival of agribusiness in Buol was marked by massive deforestation. Forests that had once been living spaces and sources of livelihood for the community were cleared to make way for oil palm plantations. PT HIP obtained a planting permit for 22,828 hectares of land, which directly affected at least 6,500 peasant families. These families' customary lands and forests were taken without their consent and replaced with oil palm monocultures.

The invasion of oil palm plantations did not stop there. Beyond the permitted concession area, the company also illegally invaded about 5,400 hectares of peasant-owned land. This land grabbing went on for years without justice for the communities. In 2012 a major scandal broke out at the peak of this land grabbing, when the company's owner, Mrs. Siti Hartati was sentenced to prison by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) after bribing the Regent of Buol. The bribe was

related to the processing of a land-use right (HGU) over areas that the company had already planted without a legal permit.

In an effort to expand its monopoly in our region, PT HIP introduced a partnership program through the Nucleus-Plasma scheme in 2008. Through this scheme, the company further expanded its plantations. (2)

The ‘Plasma’ Partnership Scheme

The program, known as the Nucleus-Plasma Partnership, was promoted by the Indonesian government with support from the World Bank. It was presented as a path to shared prosperity, and the company made many promises: peasants would receive plasma plots, gain a fair share of profits, and escape the trap of poverty. Yet behind all this rhetoric lay an agenda to tighten this company's control over our land.

In theory, the scheme sounded promising. The name “plasma” was taken from the model of a biological cell: the nucleus is the company, while the plasma represents the peasant cooperatives around it, supposedly working together in a mutually beneficial relationship. According to its provisions, the plasma program even requires companies to establish plantations for local communities on at least 20% of the total concession areas they obtain. In other words, companies are supposed to allocate part of their concession to smallholders, who in turn manage oil palm plots. Companies are also supposed to provide technical support and guarantee the purchase of smallholders' harvests.

However, the reality in our region turned out to be very different. Instead of sharing land from the concession area they already controlled, PT HIP used the plasma scheme as a tool to tighten its grip on the lands of Buol's people. The plasma plots were not taken from the company's concession, but from the peasants' own land. In other words, a program supposedly designed to improve community welfare has become a tool for land seizure and corporate domination.

At that time, as landowners, we were invited to join the plasma scheme. The company's promises sounded very convincing, and many of us were tempted to participate. They promised prosperity and the opportunity for our children to go to high school and even university. But so far, none of these promises have been fulfilled. Many of our families have made sacrifices, yet our rights remain unrecognized.

Since we entered into the partnership with PT HIP, there has been no training or technical assistance provided on how to plant, maintain, or manage oil palm. The company is only concerned with extracting as much profit as possible, while those of us who have lost our land have been left without knowledge and without guarantees. They have repeatedly promised a profit-sharing system, but we have experienced the opposite: prosperity that has never arrived. We only realized the true consequences of our decision when it was too late.

What we have witnessed is that, in practice, the Nucleus-Plasma Partnership in oil palm plantations actually harms landowners. The scheme has become land grabbing in disguise; cooperatives and partnerships cloak mechanisms that function like a debt trap for peasants. In our

region, the palm oil partnership program has been deeply exploitative, involving not only large-scale palm oil companies, but also government officials and corrupt cooperative leaders. As a result, around 4,934 peasants – with a total of more than 6,746 hectares of land organized through seven cooperatives – have become victims.

All income from the plantations is managed directly by PT HIP together with cooperative administrators, but landowners rarely receive clear and adequate information about the development of the plantations, their maintenance, harvesting, or the sale of Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFB). In other words, we landowners have not been treated as equal partners, but rather as unwelcome guests on our own land.

For nearly 17 years, we watched trucks leave our land, loaded with hundreds of tons of harvest. The oil palm fruits taken from our soil were sold and exported to global giants such as Nestlé, Hershey's, Cargill, General Mills, PepsiCo, Danone, Unilever, and many others. Yet as the rightful owners of the land, we have never received a fair share of the profits from these plantations. Instead, we have been burdened with ever-growing debts, and accusations piled upon us – rather than profits shared with us. Indeed, today we are trapped in debt. This is not because we failed to work, but because the partnership scheme was, from the very beginning, designed to benefit the company rather than ensure the welfare of peasants.

Since 2020, PT HIP has claimed that peasants from seven agricultural cooperatives in Buol owe a debt of around 590 billion rupiah (approximately 37 million US dollars). According to the company, this debt stems from bank loans supposedly used to initiate the partnership, along with excessive charges they arbitrarily imposed that were not contained within the contract: management fees, general expenses, maintenance costs, and various hidden levies."

We ask: where did this debt come from? We have never received any of the supposed benefits of this arrangement. Harvesting has continued; truckloads of palm fruit leave our land, yet we have never seen a share of the profits. Instead, the debt keeps piling up, and it is never explained or justified. Whenever we question the company, their only response is: *"That is your debt."* There is no transparency.

This scheme has put our land at risk of being forcibly taken. Weak government oversight of the palm oil partnerships has trapped peasants in a cycle of crushing debt. The situation is further worsened by cooperative administrators who are not transparent and often act against the landowners' best interests.

As a result, this partnership has stripped landowners of the livelihoods they once secured from their own land. Many people have been forced to work as farm laborers on land that was once their own. Quite a few have been pushed into informal jobs, where they have no safety guarantees in the workplace, or even the most basic rights.

This work is done not by choice, but out of necessity. With meagre wages and dangerous working conditions, many families now live in conditions that are a far cry from the prosperity that the company once promised. Some have been forced to leave their villages to seek work elsewhere. As a result, many women have been left behind by their husbands, and they now bear a double

burden: caring for their families while also struggling to sustain daily life.

Beyond the social and economic impacts, the presence of large-scale oil palm plantations has also brought devastating changes to our environment and traditional culture. Not only do we face the risk of poverty, but also the destruction of ecosystems that sustain our lives.

Before the arrival of oil palm, we cultivated a variety of food crops, such as rice, sweet potatoes, corn, and various vegetables. Our lives were self-sufficient and relatively prosperous. However, since the palm oil program began, these diverse food crops have been wiped out and replaced by oil palm monocultures. As a result of deforestation, the forests that once absorbed rainwater have disappeared. The impacts are severe: if it rains for just half an hour, our rice fields are immediately flooded. We frequently face crop failures, which means we must replant repeatedly just to sustain production.

This damage has affected not only agriculture but also the forest ecosystem. Endemic wildlife that was once part of our daily lives has now become increasingly difficult to find. The forest buffalo (anoa) and the Sulawesi hornbill, which used to be easily seen, are now nearly gone because their habitats have been replaced by vast oil palm plantations.

Recognizing the magnitude of the losses, we established the Buol Plasma Peasants Forum (FPPB) in 2022. This forum serves as a collective platform to share information, gather essential documents, voice our concerns, and defend the rights of landowners who have been harmed for more than a decade under these unjust partnership practices.

Resistance Movement

What remains for us peasants is the valuable lesson drawn from this bitter experience, and the determination to continue our struggle. For the Buol Plasma Peasants Forum (FPPB), the central and most challenging fight is to reclaim the land of peasants who have been trapped in the partnership scheme. We assert that this land must be returned to its rightful owners, not exchanged or traded as a means to resolve conflicts. We believe that through collective struggle, this goal can be achieved, step by step.

In addition, we are also fighting to improve the partnership system so that the profits from palm oil production are distributed fairly and transparently to peasant landowners. We demand compensation for the losses suffered during the partnership period, including 17 years without profit sharing, as well as compensation for the secondary crops and rice in our farms that were cleared and replaced with oil palms without our prior consent.

Over the past few years, we have undertaken various efforts through organizing, advocacy, and campaigning. We have achieved some important strides, including in 2024 when the Business Competition Supervisory Commission (KPPU) of the Republic of Indonesia ruled that PT Hardaya Inti Plantations (HIP) had violated the partnership principles in dealing with peasant cooperatives. This ruling reinforced evidence of the injustice we have long spoken out about. In addition, the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) issued an official recommendation stating that human rights violations were committed against peasants who were

fighting for their land rights. These findings confirm that our struggle is not based on false accusations, but on a documented reality that state institutions have recognized.

However, our struggle has never been free from pressure and harsh reactions from the company (3)(4). PT HIP has repeatedly used excessive violence to undermine the farmers' demands. Landowners have demanded fair and transparent negotiations, but the company has never met these demands. Meanwhile, military and police officers have been continuously deployed to quell peaceful protests by farmers on smallholder plantations. During protests and strikes throughout 2024 and 2025, a total of 27 peasant families, including women and children, faced criminalization. Currently, three peasants are facing legal proceedings before the court and the police, which has become a focus of FPPB's support and accompaniment.

Women face the brunt of the negative impacts of oil palm monoculture expansion in Buol. Many women are forced to bear the double burden of caring for their families and managing the land alone, because their husbands have been imprisoned due to criminalization, or have migrated to other areas in search of work. This situation further heightens the vulnerability of women and children in our community.

Taking all these impacts into account, we firmly reject the 'Sulawesi Palm Oil Belt' plan. We are convinced that large-scale expansion of oil palm monocultures will only worsen the social, economic, and environmental crises that have persisted for decades. This project may benefit a select few, but it clearly does not benefit the peasants, landowners, and the people of Buol.

Returning to Ancestral Roots

The threats to our lives are real – from economic pressure to criminalization – but none of this has deterred our struggle to survive. On the contrary, amidst these pressures, we strive to return to our cultural roots and ancestral agricultural traditions which have been undermined by the destructive expansion of large-scale oil palm plantations surrounding our village.

Our main focus is on organizing peasants, tenant farmers, and plantation workers, with an emphasis on strengthening women's roles in village development and promoting sustainable food farming practices without pesticides. We carry out these practices through the *Mopalus* traditional method, a labor exchange system among farmers that has long been the foundation of solidarity in our community.

Pesticide-free farming is not just an agricultural technique; it is a form of resistance against oil palm expansion and corporate land monopolies that have disrupted irrigation systems, threatened our clean water sources, and seized our land through partnership schemes. In this way, we strive to rebuild food sovereignty and provide healthy food sources rooted in local culture and environmental sustainability.

In addition, we are committed to preserving remaining forests as buffers for clean water sources for our villages. Forests are our last stronghold against the worsening droughts and floods of recent years, which have been driven by large-scale deforestation from oil palm plantations and mining activities.

The Message

Our message to all communities, wherever you are, is this: if a company wants to enter your area and claims it intends to partner with you, do not accept it. Do not repeat what we are experiencing now. We must be self-reliant, manage our own land, and avoid dependence on outside partners. What we peasants need is support from the government and the state. First, we need land to manage so that we can sustain our lives. Second, we need the government to provide capital so that we can cultivate the land.

Regarding the struggle, we must stand together; we cannot retreat from defending our rights. We must keep moving forward. Here in our region, despite the threats, we continue to move forward and fight until our land is returned. There is hope. That is our message to all friends.

Finally, we invite support from all parties, especially from abroad, since many countries are also producers and consumers of palm oil products. We hope that all relevant parties will help address the nucleus-plasma partnership issues in Buol Regency, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, and ensure that the rights of peasant landowners are respected and fulfilled by HIP.

Text by members of the Buol Plasma Peasants Forum (FPPB)

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Colombia: Communities unite against a monster named Smurfit Westrock

This is the story of how we, a group of indigenous peoples and peasants in Colombia, have come together under the name Cajibío Interethnic and Intercultural Territory of Life (TEVIIC, by its Spanish acronym), to face one of the world's largest multinational paper and cardboard manufacturers: Smurfit Westrock. Our goal is to achieve Agrarian Reform through autonomy and concrete actions.

*“The land is not for sale, it is to be loved and defended.
And when it has been taken away,
it is recovered so that it can flourish once again.”
– leader from the Misak People*

This article is an opportunity to tell a story, especially to communities and social movements in the Global South who are defending their land, territory, nature and food sovereignty. It is the story of how peasant and indigenous communities in the department of Cauca, Colombia, have organized to face one of the world's largest multinational paper and cardboard manufacturers: Smurfit Westrock. Smurfit Westrock acquired Smurfit Kappa Cartón de Colombia.

We write from the municipality of Cajibío, a region affected by multiple and profound problems. The concentration of land ownership has reached a Gini coefficient of 0.87 (1), placing us among the most inequitable areas of the country (2). Added to this situation is the historical presence of armed groups, both legal and illegal. These groups are fighting for territorial control to perpetuate extractive models that are in opposition to life itself. Cajibío is also characterized by State abandonment, with a lack of access to rights such as education, health and infrastructure, as well as the presence and expansion of illicit crops, which are exacerbating the social and environmental crisis.

Our alliance of indigenous, peasant, and Afro-descendant communities is the result of a process of coordination among peasant communities organized through the Agrarian National Coordinator (CNA, by its Spanish acronym), the Misak indigenous peoples, and the Nasa indigenous peoples. We have come together under the name Cajibío Interethnic and Intercultural Territory of Life (TEVIIC, by its Spanish acronym), in order to achieve Agrarian Reform through autonomy and concrete actions. In our context, wherein there is an overcrowding of productive activities, we have faced conflicts over access to land (3). Some of these have left people injured and caused profound divisions and tensions within communities. This has shown us that lack of land is not a problem between neighbors, but a structural problem resulting from an economic model that concentrates property and destroys nature.

According to the context analysis we have developed at TEVIIC, Cauca is following an agro-export model that prioritizes monocultures of coffee, sugarcane and trees earmarked for international markets. This has displaced the production of staple foods and has increased dependence on

imports (4), which in turn has eroded food sovereignty and led to increased vulnerability in the face of global crises around food prices and availability.

TEVIIC emerged in the midst of the 2021 national strike, which was one of the largest mobilizations in Colombia's recent history. TEVIIC identifies Smurfit Westrock as the main culprit for the lack of land in Cajibío. This multinational corporation, which has a presence in 40 countries and more than 120,000 hectares of tree monocultures in Latin America, owns 67,500 hectares in Colombia – almost 3,000 of which are in Cajibío (5).

Several documents describe the company's actions. For example, in the report, *Smurfit Kappa Colombia: impactos socio ecológicos y violaciones de derechos humanos*, the company is listed among the corporations with largest market concentration in the global packaging industry – allowing it to impose highly destructive production models in countries in the Global South (6). Pine and eucalyptus plantations affect ecosystems by altering the water cycle, reducing the availability of water, impoverishing the soil, and displacing native biodiversity. This is something our ancestors have long been aware of.

Other research shows that the massive land purchases Smurfit has made since the 1980s have coincided with the gradual expulsion of peasant families, the replacement of native forests with industrial plantations, and an increase in local agrarian conflicts. Monocultures have been shown to cause the following impacts: a drop in the water table, the disappearance of water sources, loss of biodiversity, and contamination of soils and rivers due to the intensive uses of agrochemicals (7). In her thesis, *Conflicto entre conservación y producción: Los monocultivos como amenaza para la integridad de los bosques altoandinos en Colombia*, (8) Soriano confirms that plantations significantly alter the structure and composition of high Andean ecosystems.

The advance of monoculture farming has undercut food sovereignty and displaced communities. Meanwhile, companies use climate rhetoric to justify these monocultures by claiming they are carbon sinks. This highlights the contradiction between corporate green rhetoric and the reality in affected territories.

We know that in many parts of the world, other communities are fighting similar battles against transnational capital; they seek to remain in their territories, build new and better ways of living in the world, and strengthen political, social and economic models that defend life and nature.

This coordination between peasant and indigenous peoples in Colombia is happening thanks to their land recovery process. After Smurfit's activity in the territory, which led to dispossession of communities, the land recovery process is merely restoring social justice. So far, this movement has recovered 300 hectares.

Basically, we have come together to block pine and eucalyptus monocultures through citizen mobilization actions. By doing so, we seek to claim the right to land – as enshrined in Article 64 of the Colombian Constitution – so that we can live, grow food, and care for nature. We have exhausted other avenues that have not yielded results, including seeking dialogue and making demands of the multinational company and the Colombian State. In this respect, our actions are, in fact, part of a historic tradition of agrarian struggle in Colombia. This struggle has made it clear

that without effective land redistribution, it is not possible to build territorial peace. Building a common agenda among peoples with different historical relationships with the land – such as peasants and indigenous peoples – is a political strategy that breaks decades of social fragmentation imposed by dispossession.

*“By recovering these 3,000 hectares,
we would be able to settle more than 1,000 peasant and indigenous families,
we would be resolving the issue of land for a large population in Cajibío”.*
– Peasant leader

Our territory has the highest number of socio-environmental conflicts recorded in the department. Many of these conflicts are associated with tree plantations and Smurfit Westrock's operation, where there have been well-documented impacts on water resources, soils and biodiversity, as well as systematic patterns of harassment towards community leaders.

Since we began the land recovery process four years ago, we have experienced countless attacks by repressive State forces, paramilitaries, and men linked to Smurfit Westrock. To cite just a few examples: there have been violent attacks at demonstrations; physical assaults on peasants engaged in land recovery efforts; intimidation of peasants by armed men from the Army and from Smurfit Westrock; and shooting attacks against social leaders from TEVIIC. Death threats have also been issued to get people to abandon the struggle and the recovered territory, which in some cases has led to the forced displacement of peasants. Not to mention the recurring drone flights over places where TEVIIC members meet, as well as the criminalization of activists by the media and the State. This repression has already left countless people injured, and is to blame for the murder of the young peasant, Huber Samir Camayo, in 2021 (9).

This pattern coincides with reports from human rights organizations, which warn about the criminalization and repression of those who defend land in Colombia (10) (11). These repressive actions, along with stigmatization campaigns and litigation, seek to fracture community cohesion and curb resistance, causing temporary displacement and crop losses.

We understand that this struggle is not easy, and that we are facing a multinational corporation that has had political, economic and even legislative power in Colombia for decades. For this very reason, Smurfit has developed ways to legalize its exploitation, and has even maintained an image of being an environmental protector and driver of the local economy – all whilst intimidating, persecuting and stigmatizing those of us who are now demanding that Smurfit leave the territory and make amends to our communities for the harm it has caused.

Faced with an adversary with so many tentacles, this year we launched the Alliance for Life, Nature and the Territories, which coordinates various organizational processes at the local, national, and international levels. These processes not only support and strengthen the struggle in Cajibío against Smurfit Westrock, but also allow us to recognize other struggles globally and coordinate with them. We are aware that imagining and creating transformation in favor of life is only possible by uniting different processes around the world that are resisting the extractive model and building kinder ways to inhabit the planet, from different realities.

We know that the world is organized in a system that concentrates political and economic power in the Global North, while exploiting resources and peoples in the South. Therefore, we recognize existing and developing struggles in different countries in order to make them our own, and to understand how they are opposing transnational capital and the proliferation of relationships of exploitation and domination. We do this to get inspired, and to have a broader and deeper geopolitical understanding.

We also want these international networks and alliances to be reflected in meetings, in the development of international political advocacy strategies that allow us to open spaces for dialogue, in film forums, in presentations at academic spaces, and with social movements. We also want to see citizen mechanisms for questioning and pressuring different governments; this is so that we can demand that Smurfit respect human rights and make amends to our populations for the environmental and sociocultural damage it has caused. We also want to see Smurfit leave the territory, so that our TEVIIC communities are able to carry out the Interethnic and Intercultural Life Plan.

In this Plan, we propose to allocate the recovered land for agroecological production, reforestation with native species, protection of water sources, recovery of native seeds to strengthen food sovereignty, and the construction of our own local and anti-patriarchal justice mechanisms. We echo the African Food Sovereignty Alliance's call (AFSA) to understand food sovereignty and energy sovereignty as inseparable (12), and we explicitly oppose the entry of mining projects and new industrial monocultures.

Finally, we are making a fraternal call for material solidarity. Every military operation destroys crops, temporary housing, and seedbeds. We need support to rebuild and to continue resisting. Therefore, any donation will help us in the difficult, risky and historic task of continuing to resist. This struggle is for Cajibío, but also for all peoples who defend water, land and life.

*Because we, the people, are the ones to implement agrarian reform;
let us all go and take down the fences,
to reclaim the land, so we can reclaim everything.*

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The resistance against tree plantations: a woman's fight

Whether they are in Brazil, amidst eucalyptus plantations, or in Thailand, surrounded by oil palm plantations, women suffer specific impacts from these monocultures. Women are on the frontlines of the resistance to these projects, which exploit and devastate the land in pursuit of profit. This is what two peasant activists fighting to defend the land – one from Brazil and one from Thailand – tell us.

The Women are impacted by monoculture tree plantations more than anyone else, and they are also key players in the resistance struggles against this predatory model. The testimonies of two women – Choosri Uragit, from Thailand, and Roze Lemos, from Brazil – corroborate this. Even though they come from different contexts and continents, and are dealing with different kinds of plantations, these two women – and their territories – face similar pressures. They also propose similar paths of resistance.

Choosri and Roze, like many other women, are on the frontlines of movements to occupy and recover lands that companies have illegally appropriated. These women's movements seek to ensure that the recovered lands are used to support their communities' livelihoods and collective wellbeing. Both women are part of movements of landless peasants fighting for agrarian reform in their countries. On lands where there was once a single, irregular property with a devastating monoculture, now dozens of farming families are living and producing a wide variety of food.

To challenge the advance of oil palm plantations in Thailand, or eucalyptus plantations in Brazil, means confronting the production of commodities that serve powerful corporate and economic interests. And when you are a woman, this struggle takes on even more significance, since it is also a struggle against patriarchy. As the following testimonies make clear, the fight is against a model of big capital that imposes monocultures on territories and drives women and men from the countryside. This model commodifies seeds, whilst destroying native seeds that have been passed down from generation to generation. This model's monocultures destroy subsistence agriculture, which is an activity mainly carried out by women. This model imposes megaprojects onto territories that have been conceived abroad and which, in many cases, bring with them an increase in the male population. This, in turn, increases cases of sexual abuse, threatening the bodies and lives of women in communities. It is a model of land use that pollutes waters with agrochemicals, affecting women's reproductive systems and the health of the community. And when it does include women, this model generally only does so through precarious and poorly-compensated jobs.

As Roze says, the fight "against monocultures that concentrate power and income in large companies and male landowners," is the same fight against "historical inequalities that mainly affect women". Below, we share their testimonies.

Thailand - peasants communally use land that has been illegally occupied by oil palm plantations

Thailand is the world's third largest producer of oil palm. Most of the country's industrial oil palm plantations are concentrated in the southern region. It was in this region that the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT) was founded in 2008. Since then, this organization of peasants and landless workers has been fighting for the right to agrarian reform in order to build a just society; for communal rights to manage land and natural resources; for the right of peasants and landless workers to have access to new community settlements (1).

Most of these peasants lost their lands to large oil palm or rubber companies. A significant number of the peasants, now landless, went on to provide cheap manual labor for companies in the same sectors. The movement began to take root when the peasants started occupying public lands that companies were illegally exploiting, mostly for oil palm plantations. This was because in the 1970s, as a strategy to combat communism, the Thai government granted 30-year concessions to private companies to exploit vast areas of public land. However, after that period ended, many companies continued to exploit the lands illegally. These were the areas that landless peasants of the region occupied. At that time, they suffered harsh repression, which demobilized the movement for almost eight years. Some of these activists reorganized and founded the SPFT. This movement remains strong, despite constant death threats and intimidation from local oil palm plantation companies. Between 2010 and 2015, for example, four activists involved in the movement to recover land were shot dead.

Women in the SPFT play an active role in the struggle for land because, among other reasons, food sovereignty is closely linked to their access to land. Women are the ones who ensure community food production on collective lands. And Choosri Uragit is part of this movement.

Choosri Uragit - Women are at the heart of our resistance.

My name is Choosri Uragit, from Thailand, and I am a member of the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT). I was a landless farmer from a community in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province in Southern Thailand. Before that, I worked in a factory, but I returned home at the age of 40 to revive traditional agricultural practices.

Our people have long depended on small-scale farming for our livelihoods, as we grow rice, vegetables, and fruits for both home consumption and local markets. In the past, farmland was often shared or lent at no cost among villagers. However, as agricultural production improved and land values increased, conflicts over land also grew. This forced many people to rent land or migrate for work. I wanted to avoid such conflicts, so I joined SPFT to fight for our own land – and specifically, to reclaim an area that had been an oil palm plantation.



Choosri Uragit, from the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT) (Photo: archives)

The Struggle

Our struggle began when we sought to reclaim land from companies whose concessions had expired. Large-scale plantations, especially oil palm and rubber, have taken over vast areas that were once public or agricultural lands. These plantations have brought multiple impacts, such as the loss of access to farmland. This, in turn, has forced many families into debt or insecure work. The plantations have also caused environmental degradation, including soil depletion, loss of biodiversity, and water pollution from chemical use. Additionally, corporate influence and intimidation has led to social division, making it harder for communities to unite. Since the creation of the SPFT 17 years ago, communities have occupied the land, but it still has not been formally recognized or redistributed to them. Plantations continue to dominate the landscape and shape local power structures.

Challenges for women in the land occupation struggle

Women in SPFT communities face heightened vulnerability due to the contested nature of the land we occupy. Security risks are constant: women who leave the community may face harassment or intimidation, so we often travel in groups and keep logs of our movements for safety. Economic insecurity is another burden: without formal land rights, women's income sources remain fragile, and families depend on precarious wage labor. Health risks also persist, since many contested lands are surrounded by former plantations where chemical use has contaminated soil and water. And the burden of care is heavy: women shoulder a double workload—maintaining households while also taking part in farming.

Women face both external and internal challenges. Among the external threats are harassment, intimidation, and even military intervention, such as in 2014, when soldiers surrounded our community and detained families for so-called 'attitude adjustment'. There are also legal and policy barriers, such as land laws that now allow agricultural reform areas to be used for industrial purposes – for example, for energy projects. These barriers limit communities to participating in rental agreements rather than having ownership over the land. Social pressures also persist;

prevailing cultural norms often discourage women from speaking out or taking leadership roles, despite our significant contributions. Another challenge is economic insecurity.

Women's role in the land struggle

Women are at the heart of our resistance. Our roles include community defense, which we provide by organizing safety measures and promoting collective decision-making to protect the community from external threats; food sovereignty promotion, which we accomplish through organic farming, home gardens, and seed saving to ensure the community's food supply without relying on agribusiness supply chains; and solidarity support, which we provide by sharing food and resources with other communities in the network, especially during crises such as COVID-19.

Women are building alternatives for self-reliance

Women are leading initiatives to create self-reliant, sustainable alternatives. Agroecology and organic farming are central to this, as these practices enable us to produce chemical-free vegetables, fruits, and rice for households and local schools. This strengthens our food security. Another of our initiatives is community forest restoration to restore biodiversity; we are replanting native trees and creating shared spaces for food gathering, medicinal plants, and biodiversity conservation. Women are also contributing to building the local economy, for example through small-scale food processing, local markets, and cooperative models that maintain value within the community. Women are sharing knowledge, by training other communities in seed saving, organic farming, and community defense strategies. These alternatives are not only a form of resistance to dispossession and dependence on corporations, they also strengthen the communities' independence and resilience.

Brazil - where there were eucalyptus trees before, now there is food

Brazil is one of the giants of pulp production, being the second largest producer in the world behind the United States. A significant part of this production is located in the state of Bahia, where the company Veracel is located. This company operates on 203,700 hectares of land, and since its founding in 2005, has produced at least 21 million tons of pulp. Today, the company is a joint venture between the Swedish-Finnish company Stora Enso and the industry giant Suzano Papel e Celulose (2). The latter claims to be the largest pulp manufacturer in the world.

One of the areas that Veracel illegally used to plant eucalyptus trees was a farm spanning approximately 1,300 hectares. Given that this was a public area, it could not actually be appropriated by a private company. And it was precisely this area that Roze and her colleagues from the Land Struggle Movement (MLT, by its Portuguese acronym) occupied in 2008, founding the Baixa Verde settlement (3). Since then, 91 families living there have been fighting to get state recognition of Baixa Verde as an agrarian reform area, since they transformed this illegal "green desert" into a territory with a social purpose. Where there used to only be eucalyptus trees, now people are producing food through family agriculture.

Over the course of these 17 years, many things have occurred: evictions, attacks on the community, death threats, and legal proceedings. While Veracel – which illegally appropriated the land – continues to go unpunished and enjoys all kinds of protection from the authorities, the Baixa Verde settlement is still awaiting official state recognition. But its inhabitants make clear that, despite the absence of legal recognition, they will continue moving forward with their efforts. Roze and the other women from the settlement have been instrumental in this process, as they are aware of the pressures that these kinds of projects bring, especially for women.

Roze Lemos - 'Women Roots of the Earth' is keeping their ancestry alive

My name is Roze Lemos. I am an activist, mother, and grandmother. My community is called the Baixa Verde settlement. We are rural farmers from the Land Struggle Movement in Bahía (MLT). I am a defender of rights, an agroecological agent, and an agricultural production technician. My training also comes from the land struggle movement. I coordinate a group of rural women farmers called Women Roots of the Earth.



Roze Lemos, from the Land Struggle Movement (MLT), Brazil (Photo: Jheyds Kann)

The impacts of eucalyptus monocultures on the community

Veracel is the main hoarder of public land in our territory, and the State's omission in this situation – or rather, its collusion – is appalling. The result is the proliferation of eucalyptus plantations in public areas, which greatly impacts communities in the region. Eucalyptus plantations affect our community in several ways: socially, environmentally, and economically.

Economically, we have seen a reduction in food production, because the land is full of eucalyptus trees and there is less space for family subsistence farming. Eucalyptus trees demand a lot of water, which reduces the availability of water in springs, streams and aquifers. This affects our family farming and the community's water supply. Additionally, eucalyptus trees cause soil depletion; we have poor soil that has been totally degraded.

The reduction in biodiversity is also significant. As eucalyptus trees replace native forest areas, local flora and fauna are considerably reduced. The use of agrochemicals and chemical fertilizers contaminates our soil, rivers and springs, which deteriorates the water quality of our river and the health of our community.

We feel the social impacts due to the displacement of families, who are often forced to migrate to other locations. Companies like the multinational company Veracel (which operates in our territory) buy land so they can establish plantations, evict people, and make it hard for farmers and poor people to remain in the territories. This leads to a loss of cultural identity, among other things. As a result, our community has lost traditions related to agricultural diversification and the land.

And since the local economy is focused on the commercialization of eucalyptus, small-scale farmers reap few direct benefits. Few jobs are created, because the plantations are mechanized and require almost no labor – unlike diversified family farming, which involves more people in its production process. And this is not even to mention land conflicts; the spread of eucalyptus plantations causes disputes between communities and companies, as happened in our community.

In other words, eucalyptus plantations may generate economic benefits for big companies, but for rural communities like ours, they mean the loss of water, land, biodiversity and opportunities for a dignified life.

Impacts of plantations on women's lives

In our community, eucalyptus plantations cause multiple impacts, and when we look specifically at women, the impacts become even more evident. We are the ones at the forefront of caring for and feeding our families and contributing to community life.

For example, as more plantations occupy lands that could be used to grow food, this causes a decline in family farming – which directly affects women. As women farmers, we are often responsible for vegetable production, productive gardens and commercialization at local markets. These activities also allow us to be economically independent. Therefore, monocultures undermine women's autonomy, by reducing opportunities to generate income from the diversified production of foods and handicrafts and the gathering of forest products.

There are also environmental impacts, such as water scarcity. This affects women from a social standpoint, because it increases our workload, requiring us to exert more effort to provide food, water and adequate care for our families.

Eucalyptus plantations also cause cultural erosion: they weaken community ties and the rural way of life, which women are the primary guardians and transmitters of. The loss of biodiversity also reduces access to medicinal herbs and native plants, which impacts women's traditional knowledge of cultural practices and how to care for our families' health.

With regard to health, the use of agrochemicals and other inputs in farming can cause health problems for women and children, especially in domestic activities related to water and food.

In summary, eucalyptus plantations not only affect the environment and the economy, but they also affect women disproportionately. Plantations directly impact our routines, our autonomy, our health, and our knowledge. For all these reasons, we must grow the resistance and organize.

Women's role in the resistance

When we arrived and occupied the territory where we now live, we began to plant seeds among the eucalyptus stumps. We later perfected the technique, but this is how our resistance started. Many of us rural, peasant women have been leaders in the resistance to the expansion of eucalyptus plantations; we have been defending our territories, native seeds, agroecology and sustainable ways of life. By organizing, we are also strengthening the fight for gender rights, since monocultures concentrate power and income in the hands of big companies and male landowners. In other words, we are guaranteeing that all people have equal rights, opportunities and treatment – recognizing the historic inequalities that mainly affect women.

Alternatives that women are creating

Faced with so many problems caused by the presence of Veracel and its eucalyptus plantations, women from the Baixa Verde settlement came up with an alternative. We organized a resistance group called Women Roots of the Earth. We work with tubers and roots because the cultivation of cassava and other tubers was brought over by indigenous peoples and quilombolas. (4) We are keeping this ancestral tradition alive today in our community, by cultivating these products in an agroecological and healthy way.

Today we are building our first teaching kitchen in the community as an alternative that will help increase families' income and improve nutrition. This will enable us to teach agroecology and healthy eating to other men, women and young people from the territory who want to join the women's struggle and resistance. We use what we produce within the community, such as vegetables, potatoes and squash – in other words, everything that can be turned into food. Through this work, we are innovating, building and becoming stronger as a community. This is, therefore, an alternative to the problems we face from eucalyptus plantations.

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(3) Teia dos Povos, 2025. La lucha incesante del asentamiento Baixa Verde – MLT contra el monocultivo de eucalipto (en portugués)

(4) Quilombola communities are black communities made up of an ethnic-racial group, with their own cultural identity and a particular historical trajectory that comes from their resistance to slavery and oppression.

Liberia: after the victory, the struggle - the tireless resistance of the Joghban Clan against EPO oil palm plantations

Two Joghban leaders who have been active in the fight against Equatorial Palm Oil's (EPO) invasion of their ancestral lands talk about their victorious resistance process. Their resistance culminated in 2018 with official state recognition of part of their territory. However, they stress that this long-term struggle is ongoing. "We are going to resist; we will always resist, because land matters to us and to our future generations", says Isaac Banwon, one of the leaders.

Even though it is surrounded by oil palm and rubber monocultures, the nearly 20,000 hectares of tropical forest comprising part of the Joghban territory is a symbol of the Joghban clan's victory in Liberia against the multinational company, Equatorial Palm Oil (EPO). In 2018, this clan of approximately 7,000 people, spread across 50 villages, secured part of the forested territory they had been inhabiting for centuries, which EPO attempted to seize to plant oil palm. Despite this victory, though, EPO continues to exert strong pressure on Joghban lands.

Originally a British company, EPO is now a multinational corporation controlled by Malaysian palm oil giant Kuala Lumpur Kepong Bhd (KLK). In 2008, after the end of the civil war that devastated Liberia, EPO acquired LIBINC Oil Palm. Since then, it has claimed control of 169,000 hectares in Liberia, of which it claims to have concessions to exploit 89,000 hectares. However, part of these lands overlap with the traditional territory of the Joghban, in District No. 4, Grand Bassa County.

The conflict between EPO and the Joghban clan intensified between 2013 and 2014, when the company began operating inside the clan's community lands without their consent. This period was marked by violent repression and strong resistance, leading to the consolidation of the Joghban's historic victory in 2018. The approval of the Land Rights Act that same year granted communities ownership of their ancestral lands, the right to make demands of companies seeking to exploit their territories, and inclusion in consultation processes such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

However, foreign companies have been exerting pressure on the clan's traditional lands for a long time, and continue to do so today. In the 1960s, two major plantation companies arrived on their land: LAC of the Socfin Group, which holds a concession for rubber plantations covering more than 12,000 hectares near Joghban territory; and the former LIBINC Oil Palm, now EPO. Today, the Joghban are surrounded by both companies' monoculture plantations, and they suffer countless impacts from this on a daily basis. Meanwhile, EPO's greed for the clan's territory has not abated.

What follows is a conversation with Theresa B. Sawah and Isaac G. Banwon. These two Joghban leaders and members of the Africa Informal Alliance Against Industrial Plantation Expansion played an active role in resisting EPO's invasion of their ancestral territory. They tell us about their victorious resistance, emphasizing that the struggle continues. As Isaac said, "Our victory is not complete yet, because the company has not tired of coming after the land; we need to raise more awareness in order to secure the portion of land we still have."

The first wave of land-grabbing: The arrival of foreign tree monoculture companies in the 1960s

WRM – What was traditional life like before oil palm and rubber companies arrived in the region in the 1960s?

Isaac – From before the 1960s to the present day, our traditional livelihood has depended on the land and forest: we cut wild palms, perform traditional farming, hunt, and do cooperative work as a community. Oil palm is the main commodity that has traditionally been grown in the region, and it is our primary means of survival. For example, cutting wild oil palm enabled me to go to school; I paid for my primary education and university tuition with native palm.

WRM – How did the arrival of the oil palm monoculture company, LIBINC at that time, and the rubber company, LAC-Socfin, impact Joghban communities?

Isaac - According to Elders and other sources, the company first arrived in 1962 and began negotiations with the government for land. Later, the Joghban clan and its surrounding territory were chosen for LAC and LIBINC Oil Palm operations. The companies took the lands they occupied by force. The communities didn't know about the agreements the government had made with the company back in the 1960s.

Theresa - They wanted our land for expansion; their people wanted to grab our land. We have learned from our forefathers that they used airplanes to survey the land without our citizens knowing about their intentions. Our forefathers tell us that, early one morning, the government took their men and their machines, and began to cut the forest. They took almost half of our land. Today our families are living on all the little pieces of land that remained.

Isaac - From that time forward, our communities have faced terrible life conditions due to these companies' actions. Such actions have included grabbing land, and employing plantation security forces, the police and the army of the government to burn down communities. In this situation, much violence has occurred, including rape, teenage pregnancy, early marriage, destruction of cultural and traditional bushes, and more (1). Women have suffered sexual violence and early marriages. Meanwhile, there has been forced migration of people from other communities that caused the separation of children from their families, and other abuses.

The second wave of land-grabbing: The resumption of oil palm exploitation with EPO after the civil war, resistance, and the victory (2008–2018)

WRM – What was it like after the civil war in Liberia, when EPO bought LIBINC in 2008? How did the Joghban react to this?

Isaac – In 2008, after the civil war in Liberia, when EPO had purchased LIBINC, the company occupied additional acres of land in our territory without the community's consent. The major abuse at this time was land-grabbing; the company wanted our land to expand its oil palm plantation. We lost our forest, and people in the community were afraid they would be evicted at any time to make way for the company's expansion.

Theresa - They started cutting down the forest. They started throwing those trees almost to the river. Everyone saw what was happening and our elders and our citizens went to stop them. They said 'no' to this land-grabbing. There we began to put up resistance that indeed no one was going to cross over for the second time because we don't have much land left.

Isaac - By then, the company met resistance from us members of the community, as well as civil society organizations, like Sustainable Development Institute (SDI). Equatorial Palm Oil conducted a survey in 2014, with the goal of delineating the area of their alleged concession. That survey attempt met strong community resistance. Women also played an important role in the resistance struggle. As for the men, they were the lead advocates in protecting the land.

WRM – Could you tell us about your involvement in the community's resistance process against EPO's land-grabbing?

Theresa - I am a women's rights activist and Director of the Joghban United Women Empowerment and Development Organization in Liberia. The way women organized in these struggles was important, because the women helped the community to come together, to have one voice and understanding, and to work in one direction to bring our group together. Women were afraid at that time, but when EPO came in to grab our land, when they came with guards who were using guns and other things, and grabbing our men and beating them, we women came together. We gathered in the forest and decided to find food for those men who were on the battlefield. At that time, we prepared potatoes, yams, bananas, cassava and rice, so that after a violent encounter, our men would have something to eat. So this showed me that when women organize, it helps us to have one understanding and use one voice to struggle.

Isaac - I got involved in the struggle in 2013 and 2014. We traveled on foot from the community to the city to meet with the county superintendent. We organized a peaceful protest and petitioned the government in 2014. That year, then President of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf committed to helping the communities protect their lands from EPO's expansion. I was one of the delegates who met with the county Senator and petitioned him about our situation. I have organized a lot of meetings to resist the expansion of the company. It was this struggle that encouraged me to establish an NGO – the Institute of Sustainable Agriculture (ISA) – to defend the land through agriculture. I have been involved in this struggle ever since.

WRM – How did the company respond to the Joghban's resistance?

Isaac - From 2008 to 2014, the company put a lot of pressure on those who resisted; people were beaten, arrested by the police and company security, and later released. I saw my father be treated badly and dragged away in a security vehicle by plantation security and police during one of our peaceful protests in 2014. He and others have their own stories about the struggle.

WRM - Can you tell us about the victory your people achieved after the struggle?

Isaac - I still remember the approval of the Land Rights Act in 2018. The day was very beautiful and special. We celebrated our victory in the Joghban community; there was a great party and we even killed a cow.

Theresa - Now we can indeed protect this piece of land that belongs to us. It belongs to our forefathers. So from that point, we obtained registration and government approval for our land, and we can use these documents as legal proof and a tool to protect our territorial rights against future incursions by the company. No one will come and authorize land-grabbing in our lands. Whenever anyone comes, at any time, including any stranger from EPO, we can prove to them directly that this land belongs to us. My women will dare to attack that stranger, not to fight, but to ask them some terrible questions and tell them that they have no right to come buy or grab the land. This is our land for the Joghban women and citizens.

Isaac - What has united us in our struggle is having the control of our land today, tomorrow and forever. Even though we lost some communities and forest, our victory is that we still have some of our land. But our victory is not complete yet, because the company has not tired of coming after the land. We need to raise more awareness to secure the portion of land we still have.

After the victory, pressure on the land increases (2025)

WRM - Can you describe your community's surroundings today?

Isaac - The migration of people from previous communities that were devastated in the 1960s to new communities has brought overpopulation and increased poverty. Our community is surrounded by plantation companies, which has other negative impacts on us. Amongst other impacts, we have suffered water pollution from EPO's production, and from LAC-Socfin washing their chemical containers in the rivers that we drink and get fish from. We do not have freedom of movement due to policies that restrain us from carrying our native palm oil while passing through EPO's plantation.

WRM – Can you give examples of the types of difficulties EPO has imposed on the community?

Isaac - The main struggle with EPO is related to the restriction of movement of people in the community. In 2022, the company created a policy that nobody should pass through the plantation carrying native palm oil; if you are caught carrying native palm oil, you will be arrested and questioned. And there are over 50 communities behind the plantation. So there is no freedom of movement for people living in these communities who get their livelihood from harvesting native palms, or who have their own small farm. This is the daily reality in the plantation.

Before passing through the plantation carrying native palm oil, we need what they call a “pass” from the company. And it can be very difficult to get this “pass” from EPO security. Sometimes, it can take you more than three hours to get it. This can make people impatient and want to pass through the plantation without getting the “pass”. Some days ago, I was traveling through the plantation with five gallons of native palm oil and I was detained. So it is a situation that happens every day.

Last year, a woman couldn't give birth. She was supposed to have a C-section at the hospital. Her husband lived in the village, so they had to call him to bring money so that she could have the operation. At that time, the only way to get money to pay the hospital bill was to come and sell native palm oil. He was traveling with some gallons of oil from the village coming to the town. He

was stopped and had to wait the whole day for the “pass”. Before he was able to provide the money for the operation, she died in the process. The trauma still lives with the man because of the death of his wife. So there are a lot more things that happen when it comes to people's freedom of movement. Every day people complain, and we have sent the complaints about this to the central government, but there has been no redress.

WRM - How is EPO dealing with the expansion of their land, despite Joghban's victory and opposition to it?

Isaac- The company is not expanding now, but it is making an effort to expand. They are having many secret meetings with chiefs, elders and traditional leaders. This is a threat, because they have these meetings to convince people with money and other items, like rice. They also divide the communities using money and food, and by promising employment to some youth and elders. Their major target is the land, so we see these meetings as a threat to us.

WRM – Has there been any retaliation against the community to make them give up their land?

Isaac - The company is making life hard for community members so that they will give up the land. Additionally, the central government pays less attention to the communities around the so-called concession zone because the government wants to make sure the communities surrender the land to the company. All the surrounding villages are living in fear that at any moment the company will expand on our land; as such, community people are afraid to invest in cash crop agriculture.

WRM - There has been a lot of repression throughout this struggle. What gave the Joghban Clan the strength to fight?

Isaac - Our strength came from realizing that the land is our life, and, as such, it should not be taken away from us by any individual, plantation company, or government. We also came to understand that international organizations were there to provide support if communities were ready to resist the expansion of the company. The land is everything to us; we use it for medicine, food, housing, farming, and more. The land is our life and our natural heritage. We are going to resist, and always resist, because land matters to us and to our future generations.

Theresa - The forest is our life; it is everything for our people. The land is our life. So they will not take the land from us.

WRM – Do you have any message for other communities struggling like yours?

Isaac - To other communities that are in a similar fight, I would say that the first thing to do is to be united, to continue to resist lawfully, and to partner with other communities who have already succeeded in their struggles. And to the international community: your support is needed at all times if any community is to succeed in their struggle against plantation companies.

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STOP THE TFFF!

The Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF) will be launched at the 30th United Nations Climate Conference (COP30), which will take place from November 10th to 21st in Belém, Brazil. This initiative claims to be a "new hope" for tropical forests worldwide. However, this is far from the case.

Here, we are [sharing information and materials about what the TFFF is and why it must be rejected](#)

FROM THE WRM BULLETIN ARCHIVES

India: Plantations uproot women from their customary forests

The article we recommend shares the story of Uma Bai Netam, a woman from the Gond tribe in India. It helps us understand how women from traditional communities are particularly affected by commercial tree monocultures – which are allegedly used to offset the destruction of forest areas caused by extractive or infrastructure projects. Uma and other Indian women have won some partial victories, such as the legal right to the land where they have lived and worked for decades. But due to government policies aimed at establishing tree plantations, this win comes with the condition that they cede a significant part of that area. The article highlights the perverse contradictions of this policy, which is yet another example of green capitalism. And while women are most affected by this predatory model – since they are the main users of forests and the keepers and promoters of traditional knowledge – they are also the ones who sow the seeds of resistance to this policy. In their defense of nature and culture, they are challenging social, economic and institutional obstacles. They are mobilizing against a policy that has led to the usurpation of community lands, the deforestation of native forests, and the community's loss of access to forest areas. We invite you to learn more about this process. [Enjoy the read!](#)

And, it is worth remembering that this article is part of the bulletin, “Women, plantations and violence: building resistance.” In this bulletin you can find other articles on how industrial monocultures affect women's lives, and how women are resisting and defending their territories. Don't miss it!

RECOMMENDED

New report: Bezos' \$10 billion for the climate is a gift to Amazon

The new report from GRAIN shows how IT corporations like Meta, Microsoft and Amazon are turning to carbon markets to hide their ballooning greenhouse gas emissions, caused in large part by the industry's push for increasing use of energy-heavy AI and cloud computing. GRAIN's research looks at how in particular Amazon and the USD 10 billion Bezos Earth Fund set up by Amazon co-founder Jeff Bezos don't stop at just buying carbon credits. Both are involved in creating the infrastructure to produce carbon credits. Amazon has established its own carbon credit certification standard for tree planting projects, and carbon credit trading platform where its suppliers can buy Amazon-certified carbon credits. The Bezos Fund has set up the Land & Carbon Lab which is building up its capacity for satellite monitoring and verification through a major tree planting initiative in Africa that is also funded by the Bezos fund. "Already there's a boom in such projects across the global South", GRAIN points out, "and this is driving land grabs and violent conflicts. Yet, to get to the kind of scale that can make a significant dent in Amazon's emissions tally, the company would need way more of these projects, involving millions more hectares of land."

The report is available in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [French](#)

Tree monocultures and carbon credits in the South: Cleaning up companies' images, contaminating territories

Since the Paris Agreement, tree plantations have proliferated as purported carbon sinks and generators of carbon credits. This is a lucrative business that is also used to clean up the image of large companies. A recent article by Climate Tracker reveals some of the dirty ways companies use tree plantations to ironically promote themselves as clean. The cases come from Paraguay and Colombia. In the former, Apple uses monocultures that it presents as "forests," in which it uses agrochemicals that are banned or restricted in other countries. Its activities violate laws and put populations at risk, especially children. Meanwhile in Colombia, the companies responsible admit to using harmful chemicals, such as glyphosate, which can accumulate in fish – the main source of protein for the population. These companies' activities are also transforming the savanna into huge monocultures.

To learn more about the contradictions and impacts of these plantations, read the article in Spanish [here](#)

The Norwegian Pension Fund 'planting' more destruction

The Norwegian government through its state Pension Fund, has been a key investor in REDD-type projects, including monoculture tree plantations. Norway joined back in 2000 the World Bank's Prototype Carbon Fund (PCF) that helped the Plantar company in Brazil to expand its [eucalyptus plantations](#) to profit from selling carbon credits. In fact, the Norwegian government, while projecting itself as a leader in tropical forest conservation and planting trees, never stopped destroying the climate and forests in the first place by continuing its own oil extraction activities; by investing in extractive companies, such as Rio Tinto and South32, involved in the expansion of bauxite mining and deforestation in the Amazon; and by investing in extractive companies

promoting carbon monoculture tree plantations like nowadays TotalEnergies, a company involved in the [BACASI project](#) in the Republic of Congo.

See the article on the Norwegian Pension Fund in English [here](#)

3rd Nyéléni Global Forum in Sri Lanka – Calls for transformation resonate powerfully

The Nyéléni Global Forum is one of the largest and most diverse gatherings of grassroots movements in the world, bringing together organizations of peasants, indigenous peoples, traditional fisherfolk, rural workers, and feminist and environmental movements, among others. Its main goal is to strengthen the global movement for food sovereignty. The third edition of the Nyéléni Global Forum was held in Kandy, Sri Lanka, from September 6-13, 2025, and it brought together almost 700 delegates from more than 100 countries. The purpose of the forum was to build a unified grassroots-led political vision and action plan to address the interconnected global crises of our time. Food sovereignty continues to be the main focus of the forum, but other key issues served as a basis for the call to action – such as the need to coordinate and work towards 1) systemic transformation; 2) climate justice through real solutions, with people as protagonists instead of corporations and capital; 3) the decommodification of rights and common goods, like health, nature and food. All of this is in a context in which authoritarianism, war, media manipulation and violent repression are on the rise, and therefore the unity of peoples, internationalism and solidarity are urgent and necessary. The final declaration of the Forum will be released shortly, but daily coverage of the event can be found [here](#), available in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [French](#).

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