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#### OUR VIEWPOINT

**- Regional networks: A step forward in the struggle against plantations**

Large-scale rubber, oil palm, eucalyptus and pine tree plantations are being promoted by governments in Cambodia, China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.

However, affected villagers are openly protesting against them. At a meeting held last month in Cambodia we learned that local communities are strongly opposing these plans because they see that these plantations are encroaching on their lands and impacting on their livelihoods. During field visits in Cambodia and Laos, we were able to witness that their forests have been cut down, their upland rice fields destroyed and their grazing lands occupied to make way to monoculture tree plantations.

As well as in other Southern countries facing similar projects, NGOs in the Mekong region have an important role to play in supporting local communities' right to make their own decisions over the use of their lands and resources. However, some NGOs appear to believe that opposition to plantations is not possible and that the only option is to try to improve them.

That assumption is simply not true. As an example in this respect, it is worth mentioning that a concrete plantation project - Pheapimex- has been recently stopped by local communities in Cambodia itself. In many other cases, the expansion of plantations has been either halted or greatly scaled down –such as in Thailand and recently in Ecuador- as a result of organized opposition.

Struggles at the local level have been strengthened by a number of activities carried out over many years by people and organizations throughout the world that have supported local communities, generated awareness, disseminated information and analysis, carried out research, lobbied governments and international institutions and organized campaigns against large scale tree monocultures.

Although opposition at the local level is the necessary starting point, it is clear that the combined power of governments and corporations –assisted by a large number of “expert” and “aid” agencies- require strong opposition movements and that this implies the need to create broad networks at the national, regional and international level.

Such networks already exist in many Southern countries and a more recent development has been the creation of formal and informal regional networks to oppose plantations in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In the case of Latin America, the Network Against Monoculture Tree Plantation was created at the World Social Forum in January 2003 and today is actively campaigning in almost all the countries of the region.

As respects to Asia, two meetings have been held –first in Thailand in 2003 and last month in Cambodia- between representatives from organizations working in the Mekong region, which have resulted in agreements for working together to oppose the spread of plantations (see article below “Cambodia: Mekong Regional Conference on Tree Plantations”).

In Africa, anti plantation campaigners in South Africa are now working in close contact with organizations in Swaziland and Mozambique and establishing contacts with organizations in other African countries where plantations either exist or are being promoted. (see articles on South Africa and Mozambique below).

People participating in those networks are convinced that plantations can be effectively stopped and –in spite of the difficulties- are actively working for achieving that objective. The creation of regional networks constitutes a major step forward in this struggle and their success will ultimately depend on their capacity to create a broad peoples' movement against plantations. If that is achieved, plantations will no doubt be stopped.

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## COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

### - **Gambia: Where the rural population is at the centre of forest management**

The Gambia is a small (10,000 sq.km.) and economically poor country, facing a number of social and environmental problems. Among the latter, deforestation is probably the one that poses the greatest threat to both people and the environment. Until the early 1900s, the Gambia was covered by dense forests. In 1981 about 430.000 ha or 45% of total land area were classified as forest. In 1988 the figure had dropped to about 340.000 ha or 30% of land area. Additionally, the degradation of the forest condition is so severe that most closed forests have disappeared leaving only a tree and shrub savanna of poor quality.

It is therefore interesting to see how the Gambia –with very limited financial resources- is now addressing the problem within a people-centred approach. In this respect, the Forestry Department has developed the “Gambian Forest Management Concept” (GFMC), which guides all its activities.

A few quotes from the GFMC document serve to illustrate a major shift from mainstream forestry approaches:

- “The forest administration and individual forest officer have to see beyond the trees and become more concerned with people and the multiple-use potential of forest lands. The traditional approach of foresters needs to be widened in favour of involving the rural population in management and rational use of their forests”
- “Land-use decisions cannot be made from only the foresters point of view, but have to take into consideration population development, need for agricultural land, etc.”
- “The objective of forest management must be oriented more towards cattle grazing rather than to focus on mere protection or on the production of timber and other forest produce”.
- “The function of forestry staff has been changed from policemen to management partners”.

The GFMC puts the rural population at the centre of managing forests. Consequently, it follows participatory approaches so that local people are fully involved in planning, decision-making, organization and administration. The introduction of Community Forestry was in fact born out of the realization by the

Department of Forestry of the futility of its efforts at protecting forests without the committed and willing involvement of the local community.

The introduction and application of community forestry has proven to be a process of confidence building and to take a long time in creating a sense of forest ownership among the villagers due to a profound mistrust about governmental actions and policies based on past experience.

One of the primary conditions a community has to fulfil before a Community Forest Management Agreement is entered into between it and the Department of Forestry is the creation of a Forest Committee at the village level. This Committee is responsible for all work organization at village level.

Basically, community forestry implementation distinguishes three phases: a preparatory phase during which the forest management by local communities is prepared; a preliminary phase during which the communities demonstrate their capacity in forest protection and management; and a consolidation phase during which the communities gain further managerial and technical forestry skills aiming at self-management.

Once the process is completed, a Community Forest Management Agreement (CFMA) is established between the community and the Department of Forestry, which grants permanent ownership rights over a clearly demarcated forest to the community or communities. With the CFMA the communities are entitled to keep the benefits derived from their forests. The only condition attached to the CFMA is to manage the forest resource according to a simple management plan.

The Gambian experience appeared to be so interesting, that the WRM secretariat decided that it would be useful to visit the country. We therefore got in contact with the Director of the Department of Forestry –Mr Jato S. Sillah- who kindly organized a number of visits to community forests as well as interviews with relevant forestry department staff. What we saw and heard basically coincided with the stated forestry policy.

We visited several community forests and talked with members of community forest committees who explained us the numerous benefits they were receiving from different forest uses. We had a meeting with the National Beekeepers Association where they explained how this activity helps in the prevention of forest fires and in increasing rural people's incomes (see <http://www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin/107/Gambia.html>). We saw foresters without uniform interacting in equal terms with community members. We saw posters of community forests that said "grazing allowed". Forestry staff explained the bureaucratic simplicity for achieving community forest status. From the Director of the Department of Forestry to the field staff everyone seemed truly convinced about the Gambian Concept and committed to its implementation.

It is of course true that a short visit to a few areas in a country can in no way be proof of anything. However, this experience appears to be a major step in the right direction and to have a potential for replication in other countries facing similar problems. More research is probably needed to assess the reality on the ground, but

the conceptual framework not only makes sense from a forest conservation perspective but also from a social and economic one.

Article based on information from: Gambian Forest Management Concept (GFMC).  
Version 2. Draft, May 2001

<http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Gambia/GambiaGFMC.pdf> Community Forest Ownership: Key to Sustainable Forest Resource Management. The Gambian Experience <http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Gambia/GambianExperience.html> and trip to Gambia by Ricardo Carrere in June 2006

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### **- Kenya: The Mau Forest Complex threatened**

Loss of forest cover in Kenya has contributed to diminishing livelihoods of many Kenyans caused by reduced land productivity, famine and drought. The current drought experienced in the country in 2005/2006 is a case in point. Large-scale livestock deaths were reported, and in many places, incidences of resource use conflict were witnessed, leading to loss of human lives.

Though most of Kenya's forests have been decimated by degradation among other factors, the Mau Complex forests cover, and in particular that of the Maasai Mau Forest has been the most affected, and has receded drastically over time.

The Mau Complex, the largest forest of Kenya, covers some 400,000 ha. It lies between 2,000 m and 2,600 m above the sea level, on the Western slope of the Mau Escarpment, and is situated approximately 250 km from Nairobi and border Kericho to the West, Nakuru to the North and Narok to the South. It comprises South West Mau, East Mau, Transmara, Mau Narok, Maasai Mau, Western Mau and Southern Mau. These seven forest blocks merge to form the larger Mau forest Complex. Out of all these blocks, only Maasai Mau is not gazetted.

As a montane forest, the Mau Complex is one of the five main "water towers" of Kenya, with Mt. Kenya, the Aberdare Range, Mt. Elgon, and the Cherengani Hills forming the upper catchments of all (but one) main rivers west of the Rift Valley. It feeds major lakes, three of which are crossboundary.

The Southern forests of the Mau Complex are rich in biological diversity in terms of fauna and flora. They host ungulates such as the Bongo and the yellow-backed Duiker; carnivores, including the Golden Cat and the Leopard, and the forest elephant. The forest of the Maasai Mau, in particular, comprises large stands of cedar and podocarpus forests with scattered natural glades.

A large majority of Kenya's population lives in Lake Victoria basin. This region is crossed by major rivers flowing from the Mau Complex. The water from Mau forests serves more than 4 millions people inhabiting more than 578 locations in Kenya and several locations in Northern Tanzania. In addition the Mau Complex provides continuous river flow and favourable micro-climate conditions - which are essential to

crop production -, as well as many products including medicinal plants, firewood and grazing.

The forest is the home of the Ogiek Community, who from time immemorial to date predominantly inhabit Mau forest in Rift Valley province and until the 1950's had been subsisting on sustainable hunting of wild game and gathering of wild fruits. As a result of laws, policies and the rapid spread of Western religion and education, the Ogieks have lost their cultures, traditions and territories. They now find themselves practising small scale agriculture and livestock keeping. The Mau forest is also vital for the pastoral Maasai, who graze their animals there during the dry seasons.

More than 46,000 hectares have been excised to convert the forest to other alternative land uses like settlement and private agriculture during the last decade. The impact of the ensuing massive deforestation caused by factors including large-scale encroachment, charcoal production, logging of indigenous trees, is already impacting tremendously on water resources, drying boreholes, drying rivers.

The Maasai Mau forest, with 46,278 hectares, is a major natural asset in terms of water catchment, micro-climate regulation, biological diversity. Between 1986 – 2003 it has suffered a loss of 20,330 hectares. In a Status Report 2005, the aerial survey shows that approximately 11,095 hectares in the western part of the Maasai Mau Forest (Narok South Constituency) was destroyed or heavily impacted by settlements. At the time of the survey, the forest was being actively cleared, with numerous plumes of smoke billowing out of the remaining forest canopy.

Forest excision for settlement is a complex problem. Often, forests are split off allegedly to resettle families that were forced to move from neighbouring forests. Most of the time, resettlement is carried out without local communities' participation with the result that they are distributed on small parcels while powerful people – well-connected grabbers, loggers and charcoal burners –take most of the land (see WRM Bulletin N° 55).

Article based on information from: "Mau Complex Under Siege. Continuous destruction of Kenya's largest forest", UNEP, Kenya Wildlife Service, KFWG, June 2005; "Maasai Mau Forest Status Report 2005", UNEP, Kenya Wildlife Service, KFWG, and Ewaso Ngiro South Development Authority; "Article 2 of the African Charter and the Ogiek: challenges and way forward", Kanyinke Sena, sent by the author, e-mail: [kanyinke@yahoo.com](mailto:kanyinke@yahoo.com);

"Mau Forest Complex On The Spotlight", Ogiek Welfare Council, forum for friends of Peoples close to Nature, <http://build.blodeuwedd.org/?q=node/288>

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### **- Uganda: Sugar company plans to destroy Mabira forest**

A Ugandan sugar company plans to expand its sugar estate destroying 7,000 hectares or nearly a third of Mabira forest, one of the few remaining intact forests around the shores of Lake Victoria, home to unique species of monkeys and birds.

The plan has proved hugely controversial for threatening hundreds of unique species confined to dwindling patches of rainforest and may affect the rainfall in a region already suffering from drought linked to climate change.

President Yoweri Museveni ordered an assessment in August of the feasibility of giving away a quarter of the protected Mabira forest reserve to the privately owned Sugar Corporation of Uganda (Scoul), one of Uganda's biggest sugar companies, for clearing to widen its neighbouring sugar plantation. Museveni was quoted in the local press as saying industry must take priority. "Forests are easier to plant than constructing industries," the state-run New Vision reported him as saying. "If you have factories, you can get funds to conserve the environment." (!)

The move outraged parliamentarians, Mabira residents and officials at the National Forest Authority (NFA), who say the environmental cost of trashing one of Uganda's last remaining patches of natural forest would be incalculable. But the government says extra jobs would outweigh losses caused by the removal of the forest.

"You can't cut the forest. We'd lose our lives," said 50-year-old John Kasule, who lives outside the reserve. "The forest brings rain, we collect firewood from there, we use it for houses and rope. There are 40 types of medicine we would lose," he said, pointing to a dense green tangle of trees and thick vines stretching into the distance.

The forest absorbs pollution in an industrial area, sinking millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide, and helps maintain central Uganda's wet climate -- removing it would bring drier weather, hurting crop yields, a NFA report said. "Mabira is a watershed for two rivers contributing to the Nile, an ecological stabiliser between two major industrial towns and it protects Lake Victoria," said NFA spokesman Gaster Kiyingi.

"Instead of being negative ... we need to plant more trees," Environment Minister Maria Mutagamba said. But others disagree. "How many years have foresters been doing research in how to regenerate rainforest? We don't know where to start," said Jacovelli. "A tropical forest with hundreds of species is impossible to replant. Once it's gone, it's gone."

Article based on: "EU Scheme Cuts Uganda Sugar Funding in Forest Row", November 16, 2006, and "Plan To Axe Ugandan Forest For Sugar Sparks Anger", November 29, 2006, by Tim Cocks, Reuters News Service, sent by Andrew Boswell, e-mail: [a\\_boswell\\_2004@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:a_boswell_2004@yahoo.co.uk)

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### **- India: Peasants resist take-over of land by the 'left' Government in West Bengal**

The Indian province of West Bengal holds the unique record of being ruled by the longest-serving 'democratically-elected-left-government' in the country, and, for that matter, anywhere else in the world, as the left never fail to point out.

This 'left' state is on rampage, and terror was unleashed on peasants, agricultural workers and small traders in Singur, an agricultural area located in the fertile basin of the River Ganga.

West Bengal contains some of the most productive agricultural areas in Indian sub-continent, especially the sprawling green plains washed by the river Ganga and hundreds of its tributaries. The green comes from extensive rice cultivations that traditionally dominated the Bengal landscape for better parts of last 2000 years. A long period in which invading armies came and went, the British built their empire and faded away, the Indian nationalism was born and degenerated into an excuse for exploitation -- he left had in fact branded India's political freedom as 'false'. In 1948 the Indian Communist Party gave a call for armed revolution that was to start from Bengal. The abortive revolution, and many of the struggles that preceded and succeeded it centred round the green of Ganga basin. The word 'Dhan' (Bengali term for rice) became a word synonymous with struggle, around which people rallied and fought, with sickles, bows and arrows, and resisted feudal landlords and rich peasants, and started the journey towards a new social order. In just 30 years since the country's independence, the Communist party survived repeated splits -- and severe state repression -- to emerge as the dominant political force in Bengal.

Land struggles led by left and more radical left engulfed Bengal in the 1960s and 70s, and ultimately helped the better organised among them to come to power. The rural poor, consisting of small and marginal peasants, agricultural workers and sharecroppers, formed the strongest support base of the newly-elected Left Front Government. After coming to power, the Government tried to serve this constituency and initiated land reform measures like redistribution of surplus lands and a much-needed process of recording Bargadaars (tenants-at-will, and sharecroppers, those who tilled others' lands on basis of verbal contractual agreements). These reforms impacted positively on the economy of the region, and agricultural production throughout the state increased manifold as large quantities of new land were freed and came under tillage.

The green fields of Bengal dominated the economy and politics of the province, and let the left enjoy an uninterrupted reign that had now been continuing for 30 years. It was an eventful 30 years in which the political iconography and rhetoric of the left underwent significant changes worldwide, and revolutions and militant land struggles ceased to be in vogue in much of the erstwhile socialist societies. The state of USSR withered away —in reverse, the People's Republic of China built a capitalist economy within a 'reformed' socialist state, and in many other countries the communists tuned into social democrats and other 'moderate' sheds of left. These tumultuous events failed to change the Bengal left, however. The 'communists' in power still swear by Stalin, love Fidel, give Hugo Chavez a hero's welcome, and celebrate left electoral victories in Latin America. Looking at the red banners and hammer-and-sickle flags that are usually prominently displayed everywhere, it seems nothing has changed.

But, beyond the red façade and the rhetoric, everything changed. The inexorable globalization juggernaut and the 'free' market moved in, shopping malls and wide roads replaced shanties, and the 'communists' metamorphosed into a hungry bunch



of land speculators, contractors and power-brokers. The Government became pragmatic and started courting capitalists in public, the political logic being that in the era of global capital, you can only build socialism by developing capitalism! Also, one should always emulate China and its giant strides towards development.

The latest instance of this socialism-through-capitalism is Singur, where the government has forcibly acquired about 1000 acres of prime agricultural land for the Tata group's proposed low-cost car factory. Police deployed by the 'Left' Government went berserk at villages of Singur, while 'smoothing' the land acquisition process. In an incident strongly reminiscent of the Kalinganagar massacre (13 tribals were killed in police firing, while resisting enclosing of their lands by the same Tata group) in neighbouring province of Orissa earlier this year, police turned violent when local farmers and agricultural workers resisted physical take-over and attempted enclosure (the land was being enclosed with barbed wire fences) of fertile farmlands. A large police contingent entered people's homes, and beat up everybody present. Women were physically abused, and even children and infirm old persons were not spared. Some granaries were torched and fields were set on fire. Many people were injured and more than 50 were arrested. The resistance and rampage went on throughout the day, most of which was telecast live by regional TV channels.

The Police cordoned off Singur and neighbouring areas since the incident on 2nd December and did not let anybody enter, including noted social activist Medha Patkar. The ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist) leaders including the Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya publicly defended police action, saying that the incident was just another ultra left show, and land acquisition and construction of the TATA factory would go on as usual.

Spontaneous protests against police brutality continue to rock Bengal, and in Singur, peasants and agricultural workers are still on fast. The scale and intensity of the popular protests have put the Government on the defensive, and they now accuse the opposition of slander and 'disinformation'. The area is not that fertile, Government-controlled media points out, and the state acquired only mono-crop lands or permanent fallows. The Government insists that the car factory and the socially responsible 'national' capitalists like TATAs would lead to people's development.

Why does a car-factory need so much agricultural land? How many families would the project directly displace? How much of the land acquired was mono-crop? What are the numbers of agricultural workers and unrecorded 'bargadaars' in the project area? The Government refuses to give precise answers.

Official facts, or the lack of it, show that the Government, in its commitment towards capital, market and globalisation decided to wish away the reality, and took up the 'challenge' to go ahead with the project. This 'challenge' means ignoring the very real existence of several thousand families dependant on this land: landless labourers; seasonal tribal migrant agricultural labourers; cycle-van operators and small transporters; traders who buy-carry-sell agro products to distant wholesale markets; artisans and craftsmen; and others involved in various occupations. Compensation can partially offset the cost of land of the land owners but who can compensate for the loss of livelihood?

Armed police and rapid action force on the prowl, important concerns and questions about Singur unanswered, the Bengal Government prepares for other projects that include handing over of several thousand acres of farmlands in Bhangar (near Calcutta) to the Salim Group from Indonesia, staunch supporters of the infamous Suharto Regime that killed thousands of Indonesian communists. Another chunk of land would be handed over to Jindals for setting up a steel plant in forest areas of South-West Bengal. In coastal areas of South-West Bengal, the Government is all set to go ahead with a US-aided 10,000 Megawatt Nuclear Power Plant that would displace more than 200,000 peasants, agricultural workers and fisherfolk. This last, if we have to believe the Bengal Government and the Bush administration, is a climate-crisis-solution project, and clean!

It is ironic that this all-out attack on Bengal's environment, economy and people is led by the left, who, outside Bengal, are among the most vocal opponents of development-induced displacement and the 'imperialist' conspiracy to put the country's natural resources on sale. On the other hand, perhaps this typifies the new, 'reformed' reality of our times, where capital and the market enclose all commons past and present, and appropriate familiar concepts of subversion and opposition.

However, new concepts emerge, and protests always get renewed, contrary to capital's end-of-history proclamations. In India, tribals in Kalinganagar did not allow anybody from local administration and TATAs into their area ever since the massacre. Some kilometres away, villagers resist land acquisition for a steel project by the trans-national POSCO group. Adivasis of Jharkhand said a firm no to development projects on their ancestral lands. In Bengal, peasants, workers and civil society groups protest against unjust and tyrannical models of development. The ruling left in Bengal would do better to heed these signs. Repression provides only very short-term and potentially disastrous answers.

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## COMMUNITIES AND TREE MONOCULTURES

### - Cambodia: Mekong Regional Conference on Tree Plantations

"During our time together, we heard directly from local community representatives from twelve provinces in Cambodia and also from other countries in the region about how their lives, livelihoods and environments are affected by large plantations in their respective areas."

The above is part of the final declaration –the "Statement of Unity"- resulting from the Mekong Regional Conference on Tree Plantations held in Kratie, Cambodia on November 21-22, 2006. The meeting, organized jointly by the NGO Forum on Cambodia, Oxfam Great Britain (Cambodia), Towards Ecological Recovery and

Regional Alliance (TERRA) and World Rainforest Movement, brought together people from the five countries of the Mekong region: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam and China, as well as representatives from other countries. The meeting enabled participants to share experiences and lessons learned on the issue of industrial tree plantations and their impacts on local peoples' livelihoods. Additionally, they also shared ideas and suggestions to resolve the problems arising from tree plantations.

The reason for organizing this meeting stems from the growing concern over government plans for the expansion of monoculture tree plantations in the Mekong region, including eucalyptus, pines, oil palm and rubber trees.

Sharing experiences, participants learned about the importance of forests, lands and other natural resources for the livelihoods and cultures of communities who depend on them for food, medicinal plants, income and spiritual security. They coincided that "plantations are not forests" and that "when forests are replaced by plantations, the livelihoods of numerous communities who live in and around these forests and protect and nurture them are lost." As a result, "plantations impoverish communities and their environments."

Contrary to government claims that plantations contribute to national economic development and poverty alleviation, the conference participants stressed that "plantations have increased poverty by displacing entire communities, destroying crucial livelihood resources and preventing the access of communities to natural resources."

Even worse, the shared experience showed that "in many cases, plantations have come into communities with a certain level of violence; in some cases the violence has been open and obvious as in killings and imprisonments; in other cases, communities are subjected to intimidation and threats in order to frighten people so that they do not take action." But even without open intimidation, participants stressed that "the very act of taking land away from villagers is an act of violence."

Within the context of current government plans for the promotion of large scale tree plantations, conference participants agreed that experience showed that "in all cases the only way to create change has been through peoples' struggles", emphasising that "struggle does not mean violence; it means the different ways that local people adopt to secure and defend their rights." They also stressed that "using the law is very important, but laws alone do not guarantee that peoples' rights are protected" and that "the most effective strategies for peoples' struggles come from the affected communities themselves, not from NGOs and other outside groups," adding that "by working together with other communities and finding common positions, people can strengthen their cause."

The most important result of the meeting was the shared commitment to continue working together against the expansion of monoculture tree plantations and a strengthened resolve for moving forward in the region's struggles. Participants recognised "the importance and value of regional exchanges such as this" and supported "the creation of further exchanges between people's organisations in the region to continue our learning and develop our strategies," committing themselves

to share the conference's "findings and principles with all our movements, networks and governments."

See the full text of the "Statement of Unity" at [http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Cambodia/Statement\\_Unity.html](http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Cambodia/Statement_Unity.html)

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### **- Peru: Promotion of plantations based on falsehoods**

Peru is one of the few South American countries where large scale monoculture tree plantations have not yet been introduced; however the government is seeking to promote their expansion. In fact the country already has a "2005-2024 National Reforestation Plan" [National Plan] and also a "Law for the promotion of private investment in afforestation and/or reforestation" [Forestation Law], the basic tools to make tree plantations justifiable and feasible. The concrete goal for 2024 is to have covered 860,000 ha with commercial plantations, basically in the Amazon, and 909,000 ha for "environmental protection" plantations, basically in the Sierra.

On reading these two documents it becomes very evident that the Peruvian government has simply copied the model already implemented in many other countries of the region and uses the same unfounded arguments to achieve the necessary citizen support, in particular in the regions where plantations are to be installed: generation of employment, reduction of poverty, development, positive environmental impacts. The promotion mechanisms are a carbon copy of those used in other countries (tax exemption, soft loans, State research, etc.) and the only innovative aspect (access to land by the private sector) appears to be the most dangerous of them all.

On setting out its aims, the Forestation Law starts off by stating that "The promotion of private investment in afforestation and reforestation is established in the framework of a strategy for the reduction of rural poverty" and also mentions – among other so-called benefits – the "generation of wealth and permanent jobs." The National Plan provides more details regarding jobs, affirming that the plantations generate one direct job per 4 hectares, thus creating 425.000 direct work stations. The Fund for the Promotion of Forestry Development (Fondo de Promoción del Desarrollo Forestal - FONDEBOSQUE) goes even further and in its information brochure states that the plantations "generate at least one direct job per 2 hectares." According to this figure, the total number of jobs generated by the plan would amount to 850,000.

Unfortunately all this is absolutely unfounded. The data handled in Uruguay, one of the countries mentioned as a "successful" example in the National Plan, is worth noting. According to a study by the Statistical Office of the Agriculture, Cattle and Fishery Ministry, afforestation generates 7 permanent jobs every 1000 hectares (other sources reduce this figure to 4.5 jobs per 1000 ha). This means that in the best case, afforestation will scantily generate one direct job per 143 hectares; a figure

that is very far off from the absurd affirmations of the National Plan and FONDEBOSQUE. The same situation is repeated in other “successful” countries, such as Chile and Brazil, where tree plantations have shown to be the worst option possible regarding job generation. Tree plantations do not reduce poverty, but only increases it.

Regarding the environment, the National Plan maintains that tree plantations of any type (whether exotic or native, monoculture or agro-forestry, for production or protection) fulfil the same functions as forests. Their impacts will not in any way be negative, but only positive. In this respect, the Plan affirms that benefits include “regulation of the water regime in the watersheds,” “control of soil erosion,” “enhancement of soil and protection of crops,” “conditioning of the habitat for flora and fauna,” among other benefits.

Sadly, all this is also false for the simple reason that monoculture tree plantations are not forests and therefore are unable to fulfil the same functions as forests. In all the countries of the region where large scale plantations exist, their serious impacts on water have been observed, also that they favour erosion processes, they lead to soil degradation and have negative impacts on neighbouring crops and seriously affect native flora and fauna. The plantations’ negative impacts basically arise from their large scale. In the case of Peru, it is precisely large scale plantations that are being planned. Hence, the alleged environmental benefits will never materialize and, on the contrary, serious negative impacts will be felt on water, soil, flora and fauna. Plantations do not benefit the environment, they degrade it.

On the basis of these – and other falsehoods – the first article of the Promotion Law declares “that the promotion of private investment in afforestation and/or reforestation activities is of national interest,” implying that the State will provide support to the plantation companies, including tax exemptions, tax incentives, foreign debt swapping and it will be the State itself that will establish the plantations for “environmental protection,” mainly on lands belonging to Andean peasant communities. That is to say, it will be the Peruvian people who will pay (directly and indirectly) for the installation of both private and State plantations.

What is even more serious is that the plantations will become an instrument for the privatization of State land. In fact, the National Plan states that “the State will place at the disposal of the private sector, through various mechanisms for acquisition, access to private property of public lands to be given over to the establishment of industrial forestry plantations.” In turn, the Forestation Law, in its second article claims that “The State, through the Agency for the Promotion of Private Investment (Agencia de Promoción de la Inversión Privada - PROINVERSION) may allocate the sale of lands it possesses having a capacity for greater forestation use, for afforestation and/or reforestation purposes, through public auction...”

In short, these plans go against the interests of the most needy and only promote economically powerful sectors that will have access to land and to the benefits foreseen in this new legislation. It is therefore essential that Peruvian civil society organizations inform themselves and take a hand in the matter before it is too late. There is still time to halt this process.

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## **-Brazil: International day of action for demarcation of the lands of the Tupinikim and Guarani indians**

Today [December 12], hundreds of indigenous people from the seven Tupinikim and Guarani communities in the state of Espirito Santo, Brazil, occupied the harbor Portocel, from where the cellulose of the company Aracruz Celulose is being exported to Europe, the USA and Asia. They are protesting together with several solidarity groups in Brazil and abroad to ask the Brazilian government once and for all to fulfill its constitutional duty and demarcate the traditional lands of the Tupinikim and Guarani indigenous peoples: 11.009 hectares invaded by Aracruz Cellulose S/A, a major paper company.

In February 2006, Minister of Justice Márcio Thomaz Bastos promised during a public meeting in the State Parliament of Espirito Santo - in the presence of indigenous peoples, parliamentarians, and other authorities - to issue the Act of Demarcation before August 2006 and to ratify the area before the end of the year. On September 12 2006, a report in favor of demarcation was submitted by the National Indian Foundation to the Minister of Justice. Since then, it has been in his hands, awaiting a decision - legally, the decision should be made by today, December 12, 2006. The Commission of Tupinikim and Guarani Chiefs and Leaders argues that the agreed-upon deadlines have not been fulfilled by the government, and have called for a day of solidarity.

The delay has allowed Aracruz Cellulose to adopt public actions against the indigenous communities, among them a strongly defamatory campaign, encouraging prejudice and racial hatred.

Today, solidarity groups in Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and the United States are coordinating demonstrations, especially at Brazilian Embassies and Consulates, in solidarity with the protests led by the Tupinikim and Guarani.

Please take a moment to write a brief letter to the Minister of Justice, asking him to recognize the rights of the Tupinikim and Guarani by demarcating their ancestral homeland: <<mailto:gabinetemj@mj.gov.br>>[gabinetemj@mj.gov.br](mailto:gabinetemj@mj.gov.br).

[Sample letter here](#)

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## **- First Steps of the Southern African Plantation Action Network (SAPAN)**

In response to timber industry efforts to expand the area of land under industrial timber plantations by 600,000 hectares, a Plantations Campaign was started by a small group of NGOs in South Africa in 1995.

Alien trees, including mainly Wattle (Australian Acacia species), Pine and Eucalyptus now cover more than 3 million hectares in the well watered and agriculturally more productive eastern part of the country. However, as much as 1,5 million hectares of that is made up of abandoned or neglected plantations, or of areas that have become heavily infested with invading plantation tree seedlings. These infested lands represent a major liability to the national economy, consuming scarce water resources and impacting negatively on rural communities and natural biodiversity, but have been largely ignored both by government and the industry that caused them.

The Timberwatch Coalition was established as a local network in 1997, but over the following years it grew into a national NGO coalition of 10 environmental organisations that recognise the need to address the harm caused by the substantial negative social and environmental effects of large-scale timber plantations. Through ongoing involvement in policy processes and by building a supporter network in the timber plantation growing areas, Timberwatch has succeeded in heightening public awareness of the previously hidden or ignored costs associated with plantations. This has led to the introduction of a more transparent and inclusive process to consider applications for licences for new plantations, and has helped to limit their expansion in South Africa.

This local success must however be viewed in the broader context of the southern African region, in which a number of countries have already been affected by plantations. In Swaziland, although a relatively small country in terms of land area, nearly 10% is covered in colonial-era style timber plantations that have effectively forced Swazi people off their traditional land, and undermined community farmers' opportunities for access to grazing land and water.

There are also established plantations in Angola, the DRC, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Mozambique, but in recent developments, it has been suggested by the World Bank and various timber industry players that Mozambique has the potential for an additional seven million hectares. The government there has already approved new plantation projects in Niassa and Manica Provinces, although there appears to have been very little consultation with environmental NGOs and local communities. Nor does it appear that there has been any formal investigation into the harmful impacts of timber plantations on traditional social and cultural values and self-sustaining local economies.

It appears there will be increasing demand for plantation timber for pulp, and biomass for biofuel production is expected to grow quickly as fossil fuel use in industrialised countries is restricted through international pressure to reduce emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. From available information, it appears that plans to convert to biofuel use by European nations largely anticipate the importation of biodiesel and bioethanol from Africa and other regions in the 'developing' world. What this means is that most countries in the SADC (Southern African Development Community) are likely to be targetted as cheap opportunities for the establishment of destructive large-scale monoculture crops including tree plantations.

In response to this threat, Timberwatch plans to help establish a broad network of

interested individuals and environmental organisations across the SADC region. The idea was analyzed during the Annual Meeting held in Durban on November 18. The group knows that experience sharing is a necessary ingredient for the idea to grow and become a reality. Thus, one of the members of the Latin American Network against Monoculture Tree Plantations was invited to attend the meeting in order to share the successful process that led to the establishment of the network in Latin America.

As a following step, Timberwatch participated in the meeting organized in Mozambique by Geosphere -- one of the member organizations of Timberwatch -- where delegates of local organizations discussed the negative impacts of large scale monoculture tree plantations (see article on Mozambique in this issue).

It is expected that the Southern African network will increase awareness of the main issues surrounding the establishment or expansion of industrial timber plantations and to help to establish local activist groups within the affected countries. With support and encouragement from the international NGO community, this network will play an important part in preventing scarce African resources from further exploitation by the agents of wasteful Northern consumerism.

By Wally Menne, Timberwatch, e-mail: [plantnet@iafrica.com](mailto:plantnet@iafrica.com)

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### **- Cambodia: Indigenous people resist the spread of industrial tree plantations**

"All villagers understand the need to protect the forest. We can't live without it." The speaker is a villager from Dak Dam Commune in Mondulkiri province in the north-east of Cambodia. "Now our life is more difficult," he said.

About 20 of us (from Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines and the UK) sat with villagers in the shade of a large tree near the village school. We were on our way to the "Mekong Regional Conference on Tree Plantations" which would take place in Kratie over the next two days. We had travelled to Dak Dam to hear how the indigenous Phnong community is struggling to keep its land against Wuzhishan, a Chinese-Cambodian company with close links to the Cambodian government. In August 2004, the Cambodian government awarded permission in principle to Wuzhishan to establish a 199,999 hectare concession with 10,000 hectares approved immediately for trial and commercial planting.

"The company increased its area of land to 20,000 hectares," a villager told us. Another told us the company had taken 30,000 hectares. Neither Wuzhishan nor the government has given villagers a map of the plantation operations. "People asked why the company could take the land," a villager said. "We struggle against the company because we need the land for farming. We have complained for two years to this company."

Villagers grow no paddy rice, but cultivate upland rice on rotational swidden fields.



The company had planted on some of villagers' swidden fields. This year, there had been a drought in the area and some rice was destroyed.

"The company cut down all the trees on our land, including the spirit trees," one of the villagers said. "Our people are suffering as a result. The company also destroyed the land we use for burying our ancestors. The company came to cut the big trees. We never cut these trees. On the top of the hill we grew fruit trees. The company cut all the trees and now we have no fruit. We used to sell the fruit in the market to buy food."

The impact on culture since the company arrived in their land was a recurring theme during the meeting. "The trees and land were respected by our culture. As indigenous people we believe it is important to live together in a certain way. There has been a change in the community's culture since the arrival of the company," a villager explained.

"Children and girls have been exploited by the company workers," added another. "Young girls have fallen in love with workers and then the company moves to another area. We are afraid of the workers. They drink wine and beer and do bad things."

"The government has forbidden burning the grasslands," a villager said, "but we need to burn to make the grasslands better for grazing." The company hired workers to monitor the villagers who attempted to burn the company's trees or land.

A villager told us how the company uses chemicals to clear the grass in the areas it plants. "The chemicals ran into the rivers and streams. This is our drinking water. The chemicals killed fish in the streams."

Villagers protested to local authorities about the company's operations. The result was heavy-handed repression. Villagers were prevented from leaving the province, to go to Phnom Penh to attend workshops, for example. When hundreds of villagers walked into Sen Monorom to ask the District Governor to address their problems, they were met with water cannons. The authorities told them to return to their villages and promised that they would resolve the situation in a couple of days. "But nothing has happened," pointed out a villager. "The authorities said that this is development of our country. But this is not development."

Earlier this year, villagers arranged a meeting to discuss the problems with Wuzhishan, but no one from the company turned up. "One of our villagers tried to meet with the company in Phnom Penh, but this came to nothing. The company never responds to our complaints."

Sawaad, a farmer from northeast Thailand and one of the participants in the Mekong plantations conference, spoke to the villagers. "Fifteen years ago in Thailand, we faced the same problems," he said. "We did not have enough experience when Phoenix Pulp and Paper started planting eucalyptus trees. Eucalyptus causes problems with water, the environment and livelihoods. Land rights is a big issue. Before we knew that there was a problem, it was already there. At first people wrote letters. It was the same as here. We sent lots of letters but no one replied. Then we started to form groups and expanded to hundreds of people."

Sawaad smiled as he explained how farmers in Thailand organised to resist the spread of plantations on their land. "People have to find their own ways to put pressure on the government. In Thailand, we set up the Northeast Small Farmers Network and the Assembly of the Poor. We held rallies to protest and to negotiate with the government. In the past 15 years I don't know exactly how many protests there have been, but it's probably between 300 and 500. In 1997, the Assembly of the Poor held a protest for 99 days outside Government House in Bangkok. Sometimes the protests involved hundreds of people, sometimes tens of thousands. We need to rely on ourselves, on our movements. We can't rely on anyone else."

One of the Phnong villagers asked how the government reacted to the protests. "The government did everything it could to stop us," Sawaad replied. "I have been in jail eight times. But we were able to work as a network, not just small groups of people. So if the government attacked one person, or jailed one person, the network just carried on working."

We drove away from the village through the rolling hills. We could see the company's pine trees planted in small, cleared circles dotted over the landscape. As it started to rain, I remembered the words of one of the villagers: "We will keep complaining to the government until the government gives us our land back."

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### **- Laos: Vietnamese companies set up rubber plantations in the south**

In July 2004, a business delegation from the Vietnam General Rubber Corporation visited Laos. At the time only a small area was planted with rubber in the south of Laos. "We can provide 50,000-100,000 hectares of land for Vietnam to grow rubber," Thongloun Sisolit, the Lao Deputy Prime Minister, told the delegation.

A few months later, the Lao government licensed a US\$30 million project by the Dac Lac Rubber Company, a Vietnamese state-owned company. The Dac Lac Rubber Company is named after a province in the central highlands of Vietnam where the company has 14,000 hectares of rubber plantations. The company aims to plant 10,000 hectares with rubber trees in Champasak, Saravane, Sekong and Attapeu provinces, on a 50-year land lease. By October 2006, the company had planted 3,200 hectares with rubber trees.

The *Vietnam Economic Times* reported Thongloun Sisolit as describing the company's project as "a model to help his people gear up for commercial production".

But Dac Lac Rubber Company has replaced forests and villagers' land with rubber plantations. The company paid compensation where it cleared cash crops, but provided no compensation where it cleared farmers' upland rice fields. Before the

company established its rubber plantations, much of the land was a mixture of rice fields, fallows and forest. The company simply declared it "degraded forest" and cleared the land.

In March 2005, another Vietnamese company started operations in Champasak province. The Viet Nam-Laos Rubber Joint Stock Company plans to plant 10,000 hectares of rubber trees with a total investment of US\$30 million. The company pays a rent of US\$9 per hectare per year to the Lao government. The company is part of the Vietnam General Rubber Corporation.

In December 2006, the Quang Minh Rubber Production Joint Stock Company signed a contract with the Lao Planning and Investment Committee, for a US\$15 million project to plant 4,900 hectares of rubber plantations in Sekong and Attapeu provinces.

Last month, World Rainforest Movement was in Laos and visited one of the Viet Nam-Laos Rubber Joint Stock Company's plantation areas near Mak Ngeo village in Champasak province. A sign in the plantation forbids cattle grazing. One side of the dirt track had been fairly recently planted. The red soil and rows of metre-high rubber trees stretched away into the distance. Beyond the plantation we could see the remains of the forest that had been cleared to make way for the rubber trees. On the other side of the track the rubber trees were older and more than two metres high. Four Lao villagers were clearing grass and small shrubs from around the trees. The villagers told us that they had lost their land to the company. Working together they could clear about 150 metres a day, sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on how bad the weeds were. The company paid them 50,000 kip (about US\$5.25) for each 150 metres distance that they cleared, so they each received a little over US\$1 a day.

About 200 Vietnamese workers are employed here. While we were there two Vietnamese workers arrived on a motorbike. One of them spoke Lao and started instructing the workers. He'd been in Laos for about a year.

A little further up the road, we saw a rubber tree nursery. Cuttings from rubber trees are planted in compost in small plastic bags. Once the cuttings sprout leaves and roots they can be planted out. The cuttings came from Vietnam.

A few years ago, a Malaysian oil palm company set up a trial plantation nearby. Today the plantation is neglected and overgrown. Near the oil palm plantation is a newly cleared rubber plantation, surrounded by a fence and a ditch to keep out cattle.

In May 2006, at a workshop on "Rubber Development in Laos" held in Vientiane, Sounthone Ketphanh, Deputy Director of the Lao Forest Research Centre, explained that market demand for rubber in China had encouraged investments from Chinese and Vietnamese companies in rubber plantations in Laos. The Chinese investments are in the north of the country and the Vietnamese in the south.

According to a report in the *Vientiane Times*, Sounthone described the benefits of rubber plantations: "Unlike other cash crops, rubber offers long-term benefits to

farmers for a period of 30-40 years. Farmers not only benefit from tapping latex but also from intercropping in the first few years after planting and from selling the timber when tapping comes to an end."

Participants at the meeting noted that the price of rubber on the world market follows "boom and bust" cycles, which could spell disaster for companies and farmers growing rubber trees on their land. Since May 2006, the price of rubber has plunged, although analysts are predicting that it will recover.

Southone acknowledged another problem. "On the downside," he told the workshop in Vientiane, "the rapid growth of rubber plantations causes large-scale loss of forest resources and watershed destruction, which is particularly important in Laos where rural food security is directly related to forest health."

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### **- Uruguay: Though not yet in operation, Metsa Botnia's pulp mill already smells rotten**

It is almost certain that the Finnish public know little or nothing about Uruguayan history and on how this history relates to the current Metsa Botnia pulp mill project in this country. It is therefore important to explain that a military dictatorship ruled Uruguay from 1973 to 1984. During that period the military violated every possible human right and torture was common practice during those years. Thousands of Uruguayans –men and women- were tortured and imprisoned; scores of people were killed and "disappeared" and thousands had to live in exile during that period. A similar military dictatorship ruthlessly governed Argentina during those same years.

For Uruguayans and Argentinians the military are still a symbol of widespread human rights violations. In Uruguay, many of the officers that in those years were in charge of torture, killings and disappearances are today's colonels and generals. The Finnish public needs to know that a few days ago, the forces they command have been ordered to protect the building site of Metsa Botnia's pulp mill and that this is severely affecting the image of Finland itself.

This situation has not happened by chance. The need for police –first- and military protection –later- is the result of this Finnish company's tactics, that have alienated neighbouring communities, particularly in Argentina. Instead of trying to build bridges of understanding, the company has consistently refused to accept the need to convince and has instead tried to impose itself. It refused to halt the building work when requested to do so by the Uruguayan President himself to facilitate negotiations with neighbouring Argentina. It has had a number of confrontations with workers and trade unions, which have been exacerbated with its decision to bring in hundreds of workers from Eastern Europe and other foreign countries. The company's exaggerations regarding the level of pollution and smell from a pulp mill doubling the size of those it operates in Finland have resulted in a total loss in

credibility about the company's seriousness.

The result is that Metsa Botnia is now also responsible for the militarization of the region and for having created a dangerous situation of confrontation with the powerful sister Republic of Argentina. Instead of bringing development to the country, it has brought in internal divisions and external problems. The open support it is receiving from the Finnish government blurs the distinction between the company and the country and whatever the former does will impact on the latter.

The Finnish people should demand explanations from their government, because the image of the country itself is at stake. A country that until recently had a positive perception is now being increasingly questioned in both Uruguay and Argentina. The fact that the Uruguayan government needs to back a Finnish investment with military personnel says clearly that both the company and Finland are in big trouble. When military presence becomes necessary it means that much has gone wrong. Much more could go wrong if by any chance the soldiers receive order to shoot at people. Something smells rotten in the state of Metsa Botnia and it's not –yet- the smell of pulp production.

Press communiqué of the Uruguayan Guayubira Group, December 12, 2006, e-mail: [info@guayubira.org.uy](mailto:info@guayubira.org.uy), <http://www.guayubira.org.uy>

*(Update: On Monday 18<sup>th</sup>, the government announced that, following the request of Botnia, it ordered the withdrawal of the military troops deployed to survey the construction site of the company's pulp mill in Fray Bentos. Botnia, responsible for the militarization, now argues that "the tense, worrying and insecure conditions diminished substantially". It remains rather unclear to which conditions is the company referring, since the bordering Argentinian communities still maintain the blockade of the bi-national bridges, as well as the difficulties for a proper dialogue between the governments of both sides of the river persist. Why has Botnia changed its mind? Maybe the militarization's denounce has damaged the international image that the company wants to give? On the other hand, the decision brought relief to the Ministry of Defence which admitted that "such a display of force means a significant effort for the Uruguayan Army". However, it warned that the troops might be deployed again in case it is necessary.)*

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## FOCUS ON: CARBON DEALS

### **- Mozambique: A warning against the promotion of monoculture tree plantations**

In 1997 the Kyoto Protocol was formalized within the United Nations Convention on Climate Change to limit carbon emissions causing global warming. Although since then the situation has become more acute due to the accelerated impacts of climate change, during the Conferences talk mainly addresses the "opportunities" of this catastrophe, understood as business.

During the latest Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, last November, one of the “opportunities” that was most emphasized referred to the possibility for impoverished countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America obtaining profits through “CDM projects” (what they call the Clean Development Mechanism and we call the Carbon Dealers’ Market). Among the projects are those known as Forestation and Reforestation for Carbon Sinks (see WRM bulletin No. 37), and the establishment of crops for biofuels (see WRM bulletin No. 112). In neither of these cases are the emissions causing global warming reduced – they are just profit-making dodges that do not solve the real causes of climate change.

Many governments of impoverished countries trapped in debt and dependency, view these “opportunities” favourably. Such is the case of Mozambique, which on 20 November was host in Maputo to a United Nations delegation on its way back from the Nairobi conference. Following this visit the Mozambique authorities enthusiastically announced the benefits for the country of accepting such projects.

That same day the South African organization, GeaSphere, which has a long track record of struggles against monoculture tree plantations, organized an event with the participation of delegates of local organizations to discuss the negative impacts of large scale monoculture tree plantations. The Coordinator of this organization, Philip Owen, a representative of the SCAPEI organization, Nhlanhla Msweli and a WRM representative, Ana Filippini, provided details during this event of the negative social, economic and environmental impacts already identified in many communities caused by the establishment of large scale monoculture plantations.

The participants, aware of the intention of the Mozambique government to promulgate a law promoting plantations, resolved to establish a coordination group with the GeaSphere representative in Mozambique, Vera Ribeiro, and to send out a warning to the population of Mozambique not to accept proposals for promoting monoculture plantations.

For this objective to be successful regional coordination with other organizations is essential. The experiences of South Africa and Swaziland can provide a fundamental input to creating awareness about the negative impacts of monoculture tree plantations.

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### **- India: Carbon forestry in the pipeline**

Carbon forestry projects made a late start in the CDM market because they are so controversial. The necessary legal framework, laid out in the Marrakesh accords of 2001, was agreed only in late 2005 at the Montreal climate negotiations. So there is little concrete to point to yet.

But carbon forestry is definitely on the cards for India. The World Bank, forestry and other private sector interests, academics and the government are all busy laying

plans and calculating wildly different figures for the carbon credits India could get from trees. In 2003, the Indian pulp and paper lobby issued a blueprint for 'Re-Greening India' as part of its longstanding campaign to be allowed to lease 'degraded' forest land on which to grow industrial plantations. The possibility of the plantations earning carbon credits was discussed in detail. A National Environment Policy Draft circulated by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) in 2004 meanwhile confirms a new, 'liberalised' environmental policy that promotes carbon trading and other environmental services trades. The move towards carbon forestry also chimes with a grandiose existing plan on the part of the MoEF to bring 30 million hectares of 'degraded' forest and other lands under industrial tree and cash crop plantation by 2020, through a new type of collaboration with the private sector, state governments and local communities.

Among the scores of CDM projects being contemplated for India are forestry projects in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh states. Here, an organisation called Community Forestry International (CFI) has been surveying opportunities for using trees to soak up carbon. CFI declares that it helps 'policy makers, development agencies, NGOs, and professional foresters create the legal instruments, human resource capacities, and negotiation processes and methods to support resident resource managers' in stabilising and regenerating forests. Its work in Madhya Pradesh has been supported by the US Agency for International Development and the US Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, and in Andhra Pradesh, by the Climate Change and Energy Division of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

CFI suggests that, in India, the CDM would be a viable income generating activity for rural indigenous communities. But there are strong reasons to doubt this. In India, as everywhere else, it's not abstract theory, but rather the institutional structure into which CDM would fit, that provides the key clues to its likely social and climate outcomes.

Take, for example, the CDM scheme investigated by CFI that would be sited in Adilabad, Andhra Pradesh state. CFI saw possibilities of sequestering carbon by reforestation and afforestation non-forest or 'degraded' forest lands whose carbon content has been depleted by a large and growing human and cattle population, uncontrolled grazing of cattle in forests and 'encroachment' on and conversion of forest lands for swidden cultivation.

The best option, CFI felt, would be to regenerate teak and mixed deciduous forests. Clonal eucalyptus plantations would, it thought, accumulate carbon faster, and would have other commercial uses such as timber and pulp, as well as incremental returns for any interested investor, but would cost more to establish and maintain, and would be sure to be condemned by Adivasi communities and activists as a new form of colonialism.

CFI decided that the best agencies for taking on forest regeneration would be women's self-help groups (SHGs). SHGs were set up by the state-level Inter-Tribal Development Agency during the 1990s as a mechanism for improving the finances of households through micro-credit schemes and capacity-building, as well as linking households with financial institutions and government authorities. CFI says that

they're much more dynamic, accountable and transparent than other local institutions, such as forest protection committees, which are viewed as inefficient, untransparent, untrustworthy, and troubled in their relationship with the Forest Department.

It may sound perfect. Except that it's hard to see how the virtues of the women's self-help groups could work for the carbon economy. For one thing, CFI states that only if the SHGs come together in a federation would carbon offset forestry projects be financially viable, given the high transaction costs involved in preparing and carrying them out. Yet it does not explain how such a federation could come about in rural communities, nor how SHGs could become involved in CDM projects and link themselves to the carbon market. Nor does it mention that SHGs currently work in relative isolation from the Panchayat Raj institutions (the ultimate village-level formal self-governing authority in rural India), the Forest Department and local forest protection committees.

It could be argued that there's nothing to worry about yet and maybe we can just learn as we go along. But the problem is that the mere fact that studies like CFI's are being carried out already gives legitimacy to the idea of carbon offsets in the South. Few outsiders will notice that the conclusions are suspect.

Excerpted and adapted from: "Carbon Trading: A Critical Conversation on Climate Change, Privatisation and Power", Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, Durban Group for Climate Justice, and The Corner House, available for download at <http://www.dhf.uu.se>

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### **- Uganda: FSC fails to uphold indigenous peoples' rights at Mount Elgon**

Since 1994, a Dutch organisation called the FACE Foundation has been working at Mount Elgon National Park. FACE works with the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA) which is responsible for the management of national parks in Uganda. The UWA-FACE project aims to plant trees on an area of 25,000 hectares just inside the border of the national park. So far UWA-FACE has planted 8,500 hectares. Under the contract with UWA, the FACE Foundation owns the carbon in the trees planted at Mount Elgon and the trees must not be cut down for at least 99 years. FACE aims to profit from selling the carbon stored in the trees as carbon credits. As Alex Muhwezi, IUCN's country director in Uganda, puts it, "FACE gets a license to continue polluting and we get to plant some trees."

In March 2002, SGS Qualifor certified the UWA-FACE tree planting project as well managed under the Forest Stewardship Council system. The certificate applies only to the UWA-FACE project and not to the management of the rest of the Mount Elgon National Park. In issuing the certificate, SGS managed to ignore almost completely an ongoing conflict between local communities and the park management.

In July 2006, World Rainforest Movement and Ugandan NGO Climate and



Development Initiatives visited communities living around Mount Elgon. What we found was shocking. Villagers told us that UWA's management of the park is brutal. In 1993 and 2002, villagers were violently evicted from the national park. Since the evictions, UWA's rangers have hit them, tortured them, humiliated them, threatened them and uprooted their crops.

In one village on the boundary of the park, a villager showed us an envelope containing bullet shells, fired by UWA rangers. "The bullets were shot by people trying to kill us," he said. "Some people have died. Others have been injured."

A key question is whether SGS can certify just the FACE Foundation tree planting project, or whether SGS must consider the management of the entire national park. SGS has never adequately addressed this question.

SGS's public summary of the certification, published in March 2002, states the UWA-FACE project was being integrated into UWA, and that "as it is not permitted to certify only part of a Forest Management Unit" the scope of the certificate will have to cover the whole of Mount Elgon National Park. SGS anticipated that "this extension to scope should take place in late 2002 or 2003 when the integration is complete."

In May 2005, SGS visited Mount Elgon to determine whether the FACE Foundation and UWA's tree planting project still complied with FSC's standards. In the "surveillance report" based on this visit, SGS's assessors wrote that "Clarification [is] needed on the exact scope of the certificate." In April 2006, SGS carried out another surveillance visit. This time, SGS's assessors made no further mention of the scope of the certification.

I asked SGS's Gerrit Marais about SGS's failure to assess the national park, more than four years after having written that the national park must be assessed. Marais replied that "SGS was contracted by FACE to certify the 'forest restoration' zone of the National Park as this is the only physical forest area over which the FACE/UWA partnership has effective control with UWA having independent control over the rest of the park. Unless this partnership can be sufficiently integrated ... the scope cannot be enlarged." SGS has in effect allowed its clients, the FACE Foundation, to decide how FSC's standards are to be applied. The reality is that the FACE Foundation's tree planting inside the boundary of the national park cannot be separated from the management of the national park. It is an integral part of the management of the national park.

But SGS's most egregious error is in relation to the indigenous people living in and around Mount Elgon. On 27 October 2005, in the Ugandan High Court in Mbale, Justice J.B. Katutsi ruled that "the Benet Community residing in Benet Sub County including those residing in Yatui Parish and Kabsekek Village of Kween County and in Kwoti Parish of Tingey County are historical and indigenous inhabitants of the said areas which were declared a Wildlife Protected Area or National Park." Justice Katutsi ruled that the area should be de-gazetted and that the Benet are "entitled to stay in the said areas and carry out agricultural activities including developing the same undisturbed."

SGS's surveillance reports fail to mention the Benet court ruling. SGS's April 2006

surveillance report mentions the Benet only once: "Outside the FMU [forest management unit], the Benet tribe has moved into Mt Elgon national park boundaries. The extent of this needs to be evaluated ... to assess the serious [sic] of the boundary dispute."

FSC's Principle 3 states that "The legal and customary rights of indigenous peoples to own, use and manage their lands, territories, and resources shall be recognized and respected." In its October 2005 ruling, the Mbale High Court upheld this principle. UWA, the FACE Foundation and SGS have yet to do so.

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### **- Colombia: Carbon sinks deals, territory and communities**

A few days ago, the 12th session of the Conference of the Parties on Climate Change – COP 12 – came to an end. The closing session confirmed the scant will of governments and parties in seeking real solutions to the climate crisis. However what did stand out was interest in promoting the use of strategies invented to solve the climate problem based on market mechanisms. Among these, the group of tree plantation projects as greenhouse gas sinks were the most notorious.

Among the Clean Development Mechanism (MDL) projects, monoculture tree plantations allegedly acting as sinks carbon are attracting the attention of contaminating agents in industrialized countries, among other reasons because they make it possible not to change the consumption pattern (causing the climate crisis), they can be carried out in impoverished countries at significantly lower costs than in their own countries and ultimately, they are another source of profits.

Obviously these kind of projects require vast tracts of land, land that today is still largely in the hands of the Indigenous, Negro and Peasant communities of the world, which in turn become an obstacle to plans for the expansion of monoculture plantations.

While at the COP there is talk of vulnerability and the fund for adaptation to climate change, perhaps they should start thinking about the extreme vulnerability of local communities involved in such projects which, as we will see further on, already have negative impacts on territories and communities.

The case of Colombia is not removed from this picture. This can be understood from the declarations by members of the official delegation, who stated that they were taking part in the COP encouraged by the possibility of accessing resources arising from CDM trade.

The Colombian Government's Climate Change Office is located within the Ministry of the Environment, Housing and Land Development – MAVDT. Forestry projects approved as CDM, that is to say, as carbon sinks, are registered with this office. So

far there are 8 projects – although they should in fact count as 12 as one of them, the National Forestry Project, covers 5 of the country's zones.

Implementation of these 12 projects involves the use of 222,885 ha, representing approximately a 150% increase of the country's plantation area. However, this figure is possibly much higher if we consider that one of these projects intends to use over 100,000 ha with no available precision on the area to be occupied. As could be expected, the main species to be used are exotic, such as pine, eucalyptus, teak, gmelina and acacia.

If we look into one of the projects under implementation since 2002 and known as Procuencia, it will be seen that in April 2006 it had 3,200 ha of established plantations, 60% corresponding to pine and eucalyptus. However, how is this project being carried out? Mention should be made of "contracts for accounts in participation," a definition indicating that the project involves the landowners so that they can provide the land where the plantations are to be established and are granted a loan aimed at commercial reforestation, with money coming from the Certificate for Forestry Incentives (CIF, standing for Certificado de Incentivo Forestal).

The above implies that the establishment of plantations is being financed from Colombian State resources, but at the same time, it will be done with resources from the sale of bonds for the reduction of emissions within the CDM framework. In this respect, this project is one of the most advanced, if not the most advanced project of its kind in the country's bond negotiations. Regarding this income, the owners are aware of how the resources from CIF aimed at covering part of the debt are finally distributed, but have no information on how the resources from carbon bonds are to be distributed, as these will go to the project and not directly to those implementing it.

Furthermore, among the actors involved in this sink are those identified in the international framework as agents with clear interest in the carbon business and trade and, just to mention a few, in addition to private consultants we have FAO, which has been called to fulfil administrative and technical assistance functions as a concession to the transparency of the project. There are also the major NGOs such as Conservation International (CI), responsible for the "additionality" component represented in the design of biological corridors. At the same time, this organization and the World Bank appear as the two main clients for the sale of bonds on the CDM market.

Regarding projects in the pipeline, we find one corresponding to the National Paramillo Natural Park where, to start off with, the implementation of productive forestry activities in a territory whose use -- tacitly restricted to research, environmental education and passive recreation -- is to be questioned. The objective submitted in this case is the establishment of tree plantations as a strategy to generate income for small landowners, guarantee the protection of the national park and strengthen conservation. It would seem absurd to consider this possible on assessing the impacts generated by tree plantations, their management and use and in general by this model.

Finally we have the projects designed for establishment in indigenous community

territories. One of them is located in the flat area of the Department of Cordoba, on the site of the Paramillo Park. The objective is to establish 1,500 ha of plantations allegedly to generate income for indigenous communities, probably of the Zenu people who inhabit this region.

Another project, the Renacimiento de la Orinoquía, intends to establish over 100,000 ha of oil palm, eucalyptus, rubber tree and acacia plantations, among other species, in the eastern plains, specifically in the department of Vichada with the alleged aim of generating economic alternatives for the local indigenous population. What attracts our attention in the first place is the use of territories belonging to indigenous communities involving the areas of Marandua, Carimagua, Cimarron and the Wacoyo protected area.

Another issue is the lack of specificity regarding the area to be used: a few months ago a proposal was submitted to the European Union for the creation of the largest carbon sink in the world, 3 million ha. This proposal was prepared under the responsibility of Carlos Gustavo Cano, a member of the board of directors of the Banco de la República, but who had previously been Minister of Agriculture, responsible for submitting the current forestry law to Congress. This law eliminated the need for any control in plantation establishment and management and facilitated private capital investment in the exploitation of Colombian forests.

The two last projects represent a series of hazards for the country's indigenous communities and territories. Primarily we find the scenario set by the forestry law which suppresses the obligation of obtaining licenses to establish plantations limiting requirements to registering the plantations. This implies that no check is made of whether the monoculture plantations encroach on collective territories, protected or conservation areas, a condition that would make these projects unviable. The same goes for the issue of plantation use and management.

Furthermore, the legitimate right of indigenous communities to "prior consultation" has been violated during the present period of government through the creation of a new regulation restricting consultation to those projects requiring "Environmental Licences" which, as we have seen, were eliminated in the case of forestry law plantations. In this way the communities do not have the possibility of deciding on activities devised by third parties to be installed on their territories, with the foreseeable impacts we have already described.

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### **- NGOs demand exclusion of GE trees from Kyoto Protocol's CDM at Climate Convention**

In 2003, a committee of the 9th Conference of the Parties (COP 9) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held in Milan, established that GE trees could be used within the so called Clean Development Mechanism

(CDM) in plantations created to allegedly offset the carbon emissions from factories in the industrialized North.

In response, an international network of groups came together to demand the UN to get GE trees out of Kyoto. They felt that the decision that enabled corporations to sell "carbon credits" had become even more troublesome with the inclusion of risky and uncertain GE trees plantations to be used as carbon dumps – it had only made a bad situation worse (see [WRM Bulletin N° 80](#)).

CAN (Climate Action Network), a global network of environmental NGOs from around the globe working to promote government and individual action to limit human induced climate change, had also demanded the exclusion of monoculture tree plantations from the CDM on the grounds that large commercial plantations threaten biological diversity, watershed protection, and local sustainable livelihoods. The group asked, as well, for the strict exclusion of genetically modified or invasive alien species from CDM afforestation and reforestation projects.

This year UNFCCC's COP12 met in Nairobi, Kenya, from 6 to 17 November. Once again the demand to prohibit the use of genetically engineered trees in plantations designed as carbon sinks was put forward.

"The release of GE trees in huge plantations to store carbon must be banned," stated Anne Petermann of Global Justice Ecology Project, who explained: "The escape of pollen or seeds from GE trees into native forests would cause severe and totally unpredictable ecological impacts that could impact the ability of forests to store carbon, worsening global warming". Andrew Boswell of the Large Scale Biofuels Action Group added: "In the light of the precautionary decision on GE Trees made by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in March 2006, we urge the countries of the South to stay resolutely cautious about adopting these technologies that are not in their control, nor likely to be in their best interests."

Sadly, the Convention served as a forum for big interests that care too little about the environment and people and too much about money (see News from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - COP 12, at <http://www.wrm.org.uy/actors/CCC/index.html#nairobi>).

Article based on: "CAN Recommendations: Modalities for Including Afforestation and Deforestation under Article 12", COP 9, December 2003; "False & Destructive "Solutions" to Global Warming: Groups Condemn Large-Scale Biofuels, Genetically Engineered Trees & Crops, Monoculture Tree Plantations", Press Release at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Nairobi, Kenya, 16 November 2006.

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