ATTACKS ON FOREST-DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES IN INDONESIA AND RESISTANCE STORIES

Photo: Sahabat Hutan Harapan

A Compilation of WRM Bulletin Articles

March 2021

WRM
WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The World Rainforest Movement (WRM) is an international initiative in support of the struggles of forest-dependent communities in the three continents with tropical forests: Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Forest-dependent communities struggle to defend their land and forests against destructive mining, oil palm plantations, energy and infrastructure projects, as well as against conservation and climate policies that evict them from their land or restrict the use of their forest. WRM aims to support these struggles and its electronic bulletin is one main tool for doing that.

WRM has learned that the best way to conserve forests is to ensure communities' control over the forests they depend upon. National and international policies as well as funding mechanisms related to forests, however, continue to blame forest-dependent communities for deforestation. They argue that forest protection should happen without people and that this is needed to solve the climate chaos and to build a so-called "green" or "low-carbon" economy. WRM's Bulletin also aims to alert grassroots organisations about such policies and mechanisms as well as to visibilize the impacts and resistances of forest-dependent communities.

This publication compiles articles published in WRM's bulletin and is divided in three parts.

The first part includes full articles that are available in Indonesian language and is divided in three sections: Attacks on Forest-Dependant Communities; The "Green Economy" Justifying New Attacks; and Stories of Resistance.

The section on Attacks on Forest-Dependant Communities exposes the many faces of corporate control across the islands. It starts with an article from 2013 which is still highly relevant as it analyses how some of the biggest land-based business emerged from the Suharto's era, including timber plantations. Another article highlights the corporate theft over communities' agrodiversity. Three other articles focus on one of the most silenced impacts of oil palm plantations: violence against women, in particular the women workers in this industry. Other articles address the increasing control over land, water and forests for expanding industrial tree plantations and mining, key sectors for Indonesia's economic model.

The section on The "Green Economy" Justifying New Attacks focuses on how the Indonesian government has been investing in damaging schemes under the banner of "green" or "low carbon" economy, with harmful impacts on communities and forest conservation. Such schemes are a useful alibi for the government to continue promoting forest destruction and attacks on forest-dependent communities while facilitating companies to expand business as usual. The issues highlighted are: Ecosystem Restoration Concessions; the relevance of REDD in Indonesia; and its supposed "Carbon Neutral" targets. These are all part of another heavy attack on Indonesia's land, forests and waterscapes due to the increasing demand for forest conservation areas on the one hand, and the increased extraction of minerals and metals to

feed the so-called "green" economy on the other hand. This section also includes an open letter to the Board of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to urge its members to reject the request from the government of Indonesia for so-called "Results-Based Payments" for deforestation supposedly reduced years ago. This would reward a government that continues to heavily promote deforestation.

The section on Stories of Resistance starts with the story of the Delang indigenous community on Central Kalimantan, which opposes destructive investments while maintaining their own farming methods, including controlled fire, in spite of a ban on fire. Another article describes why people in Sumatra resist a road construction for the transport of coal that threatens the future of the Harapan forest, which contradictorily for years has been an Ecosystem Conservation Concession. The last and most recent article gives space to grassroots activists at the forefront of the resistance in Papua, North Maluku, Southeast Sulawesi, East Kalimantan and West Sumatra after the Omnibus law got approved. Despite people's alarm, these stories show how communities keep resisting the destruction of their forests and land.

The second part of this publication includes links to four bulletin issues that are also available in Indonesian language, with articles from different countries, including Indonesia. These bulletin issues are focused on (1) the region of South East Asia; (2) oil palm plantations and violence against women; (3) a reflection around "Fire" and Forests; and (4) Grassroots voices on resistance strategies. The third and last part of this publication shows links to other relevant articles and information related to Indonesia that are only available in English.

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The WRM Secretariat team

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If you would like to send us comments or suggestions, please write to wrm@wrm.org.uy

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ATTACKS ON FOREST-DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES

"Paper Dragons": Timber Plantation Corporations and Creditors in Indonesia

Posted on Jun 30, 2013, included in Bulletin 191

Although this is an article from 2013, it is still highly relevant. In Indonesia's business terms, the word 'dragon' is a symbol of success and grandeur of a family's business. The term used to be highly popular during the President Soeharto's regime, which helped some land-based vertically-integrated business giants to emerge, including timber plantations, commonly called Hutan Tanaman Industri (HTI) in Indonesian. Read the article online here.

The emergence of "Paper Dragons"

In Indonesia's business terms, the word 'dragon' is a symbol of success and grandeur of a family's business kingdom or a business group. The term used to be highly popular during the late President Soeharto's regime, which helped some natural resource-related vertically-integrated business giants to emerge, among others the Sinar Mas Group, the Radja Garuda Mas Group, the Barito Pacific Group, the Kalimanis Group, the Astra Group, the Salim Group, the Lippo Group to name a few. Almost all of these groups run a land-based business, including timber plantations, commonly called Hutan Tanaman Industri (HTI) in Indonesian.

When HTI or Timber Plantation as a forest management model was introduced in the 1980s, it was said to represent a business model that would rehabilitate forests degraded by logging concessions (HPH). Facts, however, show that timber plantation permits were granted on ex-HPH areas that still contained enormous volumes of timber – which were available for logging under the new scheme. Over the years, the average planting realization has never exceeded 50% of that which should have taken place based on the planting permits issued.

Of all the "dragons", only a few are engaged in the timber plantation business, namely the Sinar Mas Group, the Radja Garuda Mas Group, Kiani Kertas, Barito Pacific and the Kalimanis Group. Other groups are not as big. The Sinar Mas Group and the Radja Garuda Mas Group establish a special division to run the business. The Sinar Mas Group is known to have Sinar Mas Forestry (SMF) to run its estate business and Asia Pulp and Paper (APP) to manage the mills. The Radja Garuda Mas Group is famous for its APRIL and RAPP. The Barito Pacific Group is also well-known for its timber plantation concessions, PT IFA, and PT Tanjung Enim Lestari (PT TEL), which are a collaboration with Marubeni Corporation and Nippon Paper Company in the paper business in South Sumatra Province.

Besides getting support from Soeharto's regime, particularly through ease of licensing, a Reforestation Fund and allocation of concessions on 'timber forests', the dragons' business in the timber plantation sector was backed by tens of European funders such as Nordea (Denmark/ Sweden), Bankgesellschaft Berlin, Bayerissche Landesbank, IKB Deutsche Industriebank, Norddeutsche Landesbank (all from Germany), Credit Suisse (Switzerland), ING, Fortis, Rabobank, ABN Amro (all from the Netherlands) and Barclays (United Kingdom). Support was also provided by Export Credit Agencies (ECA) such as Hermes Germany. The World Bank, through one of its agencies MIGA (Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency), in the early 2000s also showed interest in the pulp-paper business. They intended to provide business insurance support to United Fibre System (UFS), which planned to establish a giant pulp-paper mill in South Kalimantan Province. The project, however, has not been realized to date due to strong opposition from civil society organizations.

The apparent defeat of the "Paper Dragons"

The "dragons" might, with all the privileges they had, did not necessarily mean they always survived in the business. In 1997, when Indonesia was overwhelmed by the global economic crises, the "dragons" were also greatly suffering. The Radja Garuda Mas Group was going through hard times with its US$1.4 billion debt as well as Asia Pulp & Paper (APP) with its US$1.2 billion debt. But they were too big to fail in the plywood industry.

Most of the "dragons" had set up a bank under their control. The Sinar Mas Group set up Bank International Indonesia (BII), the Radja Garuda Mas Group controlled the Uni Bank and the Kalimanis Group owned Bank Umum Nasional (BUN). All of these banks went bankrupt and exacerbated the country's economic contraction. To address this, the government of Indonesia created a banking facility called Bank Indonesia Liquidity Support (BLBI) disbursing 144.54 trillions Indonesian Rupiah (IDR).

The facility, however, could do nothing to save the Dragons' banks, and it even led to huge non-performing loans as these giant corporations channeled the aid to their own companies. About IDR28 trillions of non-performing loans came from these forestry giants.

However, the situation did not last long. After about 3 years, the Dragons rose again, with greater economic power. The Jakarta Stock Exchange (BEJ) showed that prior to the economic crises these economic giants controlled about 38% of the national economic assets, but after the crises their hold was even greater, amounting to 52%. The economic crises, which occurred simultaneously with the political transition, turned out not to be strong enough to overturn these Paper Dragons' economic power. Not only was their economic asset increasing, the Forestry Ministry was also convinced that the timber plantation sector was the strong and prospective forestry business. . This, in turn, stimulated the government to issue policy support for the expansion of the timber plantation industry after the economic crises.

The Might of Old "Paper Dragons" and the Emergence of New "Dragons"

The 1997-1998 economic crises, which also impacted the forestry sector, built the confidence of the forestry bureaucrats that the timber plantation (HTI) sector was solid, strong and prospective. Since the early 2000s the Forestry Ministry has been determined to accelerate growth of the sector by promoting improved plant quality, extended concessions, and by

inviting investments in upstream-to-downstream forestry industry and increasing the capacity of mills. Ex-logging concessions (HPH) have been turned into timber plantation concessions (HTI) through auctions or transfer of management. New mills are to be set up and the capacity of old mills is to be increased as the timber plantation sector grows.

The Sinar Mas Group (SMG), through its forestry division Sinar Mas Forestry (SMF), has expanded massively. In Jambi Province, SMF has expanded the concession of its local company PT Wira Karya Sakti (PT WKS) by 60,000 hectares. In addition, it affiliates with PT Rimba Hutani Mas (PT RHM) and PT Tebo Multi Agro (PT TMA), giving SMF control over the total 360,000-hectare concession in Jambi Province.

In addition to Jambi, SMF has also expanded its concessions in West and East Kalimantan provinces. In West Kalimantan they have taken over the timber plantation of PT Finnantara Intiga, and of PT Surya Hutani Jaya, PT ITCI and Balikpapan Forest Industry (PT BFI) in East Kalimantan. In South Sumatra Province, they have also been expanding massively, currently controlling a total of 5 concessions, namely PT Bumi Mekar Hijau (PT BMH), PT Sebangun Bumi Andalas (SBA Wood), PT Bumi Andalas Permai (PT BAP), PT Bumi Persada Permai PT BPP) and PT Rimba Hutani Mas (PT RHM). With such a movement, SMF has gradually become a timber plantation "dragon" controlling concessions covering more than 1 million hectares.

The Sinar Mas Group, through its pulp and paper division APP (Asia Pulp and Paper), caused a stir in mid-2012 when it proclaimed it would set up a pulp-paper mill in the district of OKI, South Sumatra Province. Under the name of PT OKI Pulp and Paper Mills, the mill is set to produce 2 million tonnes of pulp annually. The initial investment stands at US$3 billion. According to Badan Koordinasi Penanaman Modal Indonesia, Indonesia's Investment Coordinating Board, all the company's capital comes from foreign sources, i.e. 99% from PT Muba Green Indonesia (Singapore) and 1% from Green Unity Holding Pte, Ltd (Singapore).

The Radja Garuda Mas Group (RGM Group) has never been idle; not only have they expanded their concessions, they have also developed a partnership with some local companies to secure supply of raw materials. PT Sumatera Sylva Lestari (PT SSL) is one of the local companies partnering with them.

In addition to these two giant "dragons" in the timber plantation sector, there are other "dragons" in the sector, both the resurrected ones and newcomers. A subsidiary of the Korindo Group, PT Korintiga Hutani, controls more than 95,000 hectares of timber plantation concessions in 2 districts in Central Kalimantan Province. In Jambi Province, the Barito Pacific Group has re-activated its timber plantation company under a new name, i.e.PT LAJ. The AMS group, which has no experience in the forestry business, has put some investment in the timber plantation sector under the name of PT AAS (Agronusa Alam Sejahtera). PT AAS does not produce pulp and paper, but raw materials for furniture for export purposes.

In the eastern part of Indonesia, timber plantations are massively expanded by the Medco Group, an energy-based company. Through the national program called Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE), it is cooperating with a South Korean corporation to develop an industry based on the alternative energy raw material called "pellets", which is made of compressed timber shavings (from timber plantations). is the pellets are used to replace fossil

fuel (see WRM Bulletin 186 for the impacts of using biomass for energy production).

Up to this point, it can be seen that expansion of the timber plantation sector with all its downstream industry has been massiv, supported by Indonesia's policies, the global market and international corporations. The timber plantation sector is integrated not only with the pulp and paper industry but with non fossil energy and carbon industry as well. The situation will open more room for companies to get engaged in the timber plantation sector to support the global consumption trend, at the expense of demolition of local villages.

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Large-scale investments and climate conservation initiatives destroy forests and people's territories

Posted on April 4, 2017, included in Bulletin 229

Asia's rapid industrialisation is coming at an extremely high price for communities, their environments and economies. Across the region, "development" is characterized by large-scale investment, at the heart of which are the control and exploitation of land, forests, water, nature, minerals and labour. Read the article online here.

Asia's rapid economic growth and industrialisation are coming at an extremely high price for local communities, their environments and economies. Across the region, 'development' is characterized by large-scale investment, at the heart of which are the control and exploitation of land, forests, water, nature, minerals and labour. Asian governments are seeking private investment in almost every sector of the economy from energy, oil, minerals, agriculture and food processing to education, health, tourism, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, transportation and urban infrastructure. The sources of investment vary, are generally enabled through bilateral, multilateral and regional aid and economic agreements, and often backed by capital that is global in nature and difficult to trace. (1)

Land, forests and water are being captured for a range of purposes: industrial agriculture, tree plantations, hydropower, extractive industry, tourism, physical infrastructure, real estate/ property development, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), economic corridors and quite simply, for financial profit through the construction of new markets. Within months, bio-diverse landscapes and eco-systems are transformed into rubber, oil palm or cassava plantations, gated townships or dam reservoirs, amidst which, stretches of forest or wetlands may be earmarked as protected areas and used to generate 'green' revenue streams. Local populations rarely benefit from these changing landscapes and new markets. For the most part, they lose their livelihoods, homes, cultures, identities and access to natural food cupboards; they are forcibly evicted, relocated, and pushed into precarious, low paid waged labor. (1)

Land concentration is higher now than it has ever been, where many of the landowners are politically connected elites, as in the Philippines, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Pakistan, India and Indonesia. In the past 10 to 15 years, governments across Asia have been proceeding with a raft of legislative changes to remove the few protections that small-scale farmers and fisherfolk, indigenous peoples and forest dwellers have traditionally enjoyed, leaving them vulnerable to the takeover of their lands by state and corporate enterprises for large-scale industrial farming, extractive industries, infrastructure development, and 'economic corridors'. (2) The changes differ from country to country, but they are all designed to make it easier for companies to acquire large areas of land that are used by local communities and extract timber, minerals, water and other natural wealth with few regulatory checks.

Many policy makers argue that land acquisition by the state is necessary to ensure development and economic growth. Indonesia and India are issuing laws allowing land acquisition for large mega-projects using the justification of national development and public interest. In Thailand, the Forestry Master Plan (FMP) is the latest in a long line of attempts to expand monoculture tree plantations in the country. Issued in June 2014 by Thailand's Internal Security Operations Command and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the FMP permits concessions to private companies for tree plantations in forest areas, putting communities living and farming in these forests at risk of forced relocation. (3) The Cambodian Government converts state public land to state private land and deems community forests "degraded forests" at whim to grant long term economic concessions to corporations in these lands.

The expansion of monoculture tree plantations will be exacerbated by new funds to trigger private investments in so-called 'zero-deforestation' agriculture. The latest such announcement was made at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in January 2017. Funds of up to USD 400 million were pledged by the Norwegian Government and global corporations such as Carrefour, Marks & Spencer, Mars, Metro, Nestlé, Tesco and Unilever. The promised funds are claimed to trigger further large scale, private sector investments into commercial land use in ways that also protect and restore forests and peatland. (4)

However, drawing from the experience of similar programmes that have been implemented in countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Myanmar and Cambodia, these funds will likely encourage out-grower schemes that trap small-scale farmers into using their land for expansion of commodity crop plantations. Such out-grower schemes tend to put all the risk on small-scale farmers while providing corporations with de-facto control over peasants' lands. They also enable the global food industry to hide expansion of corporate control over farmlands behind the guise of 'social responsibility'. Often, governments create special bank credit lines for farmers in these out-grower schemes, facilitating borrowing for the purchase of seeds, fertilisers, etc., thus subsidising these corporate initiatives in reaction to criticism over the lack of action to reduce the impacts of industrial farming on climate change. Evidence collected from the ground so far shows that these private investment schemes have done little to stop deforestation or reduce the use of the largest source of global greenhouse gas emissions from crop production, i.e., the use of nitrogen fertilisers. In many projects found in central Vietnam for example, farmers are even prescribed and supplied with nitrogen fertilisers by the Norwegian company Yara, one of the key corporations behind the WEF's New Vision for Agriculture and a leading company in the Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture. (5)

In the meantime, traditional agriculture practiced by peasants and small-scale farmers continues

to face a lot of challenges. For example in the Lao PDR, swidden agriculture is seen by policy makers as a major cause of deforestation. For example, in the 1990s, the Lao Government started the Land and Forest Allocation Programme (LFAP) that prohibits shifting cultivation and prescribes how different types of lands should be managed. Studies show that contrary to expectations, the LFAP increased land and food insecurity, poverty and distress migration, and did not check deforestation since local communities were not the cause of deforestation. (6) More recently, the government has issued provincial 'Biodiversity Conservation Corridor' regulations that establish a legal foundation for managing so-called 'biodiversity corridors' with USD12.8 million from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). This ADB programme aims to pilot 'sustainable forest management' and prepare countries to access Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) financing. Land use planning has been carried out in 67 villages, covering 350,000 hectares of forest where swidden agriculture by local communities has been prohibited. (7)

Free trade and investment agreements play important roles in shaping laws and policies that facilitate the capture of land and water for large-scale investment, deforestation and eco-system degradation. They do so both indirectly, by encouraging specialised, vertically integrated production of export commodities that lead to the expansion of mining and large-scale monocrop plantations, and directly by obliging governments to remove barriers to foreign investment. (8) For example, in January 2016, the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) launched the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), intended to create a region-wide single market and production base, competitive with and fully integrated into the global economy. (9) In order to facilitate the AEC, ASEAN member governments have signed a number of agreements that ease the access of large-scale investors to land, natural resources, raw materials and labour, and provide legal protection for their rights to operate and make profits. No such protection is available to local populations who lose their lands, forests, water sources and livelihoods to infrastructure and other investment projects parading as development.

In the Mekong region, the ADB-led Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program (GMS) aims to transform the rich human and natural endowments of the Mekong region into a free trade and investment area through ambitious multi-sector investments in transportation (road, railways, air and waterways), energy, urban expansion, telecommunications, tourism, trade facilitation and agriculture. Central to the GMS strategic framework is the development of economic corridors, which are pockets of high infrastructure investment. Some economic corridors are accompanied by 'biodiversity conservation corridors,' as in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. These 'biodiversity conservation corridors cover two million hectares of forest and non-forest lands and serve as the 'green' component of infrastructure investment. The GMS' agricultural strategy emphasizes integrating the region's subsistence farmers into regional/ global supply-chains controlled by agribusiness corporations and re-directing agricultural production from self-sufficiency towards feeding regional and global markets.

Regardless of the rhetoric of poverty reduction and sustainable development, the development model promoted and supported by governments, donors and International Financial Institutions is increasingly extractivist, and breeds inequality and injustice. This model appropriates elements of nature, human potential and raw materials for profit making by corporations, and destroys eco-systems, communities and possibilities for dignified lives. Violence against people and nature is part and parcel of this model. It is little wonder that across Asia, local populations are resisting such development. They face tremendous political

and security risks to defend their lands, waters, forests and eco-systems against predatory capital that fuels extractivism.

Shalmali Guttal, Director at Focus on the Global South
Kartini Samon, GRAIN

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Indonesia: Proposed laws threaten to reinstate corporate control over agrodiversity

Posted on 4 April 2017. Included in Bulletin 229

In 2012, key Articles prohibiting farmers from continuing the age-old practice of selection and breeding of plants were annulled from a 1992 Law on Plant Cultivation Systems in Indonesia. Now, new proposed laws on Conservation and Biodiversity and on Oil Palm are threatening to reinstate the kind of corporate control over agriculture plant diversity that was considered unconstitutional in 2012. Read the article online here.

In 2012, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia annulled key Articles of a 1992 Law on Plant Cultivation Systems. These Articles prohibit farmers from continuing the age-old practice of selection and breeding of plants – the very practice that has created the immense agrobiodiversity that exists today. (1) Now, proposed laws on Conservation and Biodiversity and on Oil Palm are threatening to reinstate the kind of corporate control over agriculture plant diversity that the judges of the Constitutional Court had considered unconstitutional in their 2012 ruling. Taken together, the two proposed laws go even further: They will limit community access to, use and breeding of plants that are protected by law or for which companies have registered a patent.

Between 1980 and 2000, the Government of Indonesia aggressively pushed through the kind of 'modernization' of agriculture that is symbolized by the use of chemical fertilizer, hybrid seeds, pesticides, tractors and other heavy machinery. As part of this 'modernization', the government issued Law No. 12 of 1992, on Plant Cultivation Systems. The law was passed without prior consultation with peasant farmers' associations or farming communities even

though it significantly affected their way of life. The law prohibits farmers from breeding of plants used as agriculture crops or medicinal plants for which corporations have registered a patent. Yet, the selection of seeds and plant breeding by peasants has been an integral part of peasant farming systems as well as a cornerstone of civilization.

By the end of 2011, many farmers who continued the practice of breeding of food plants were convicted after being sued by corporations claiming to own patent rights to these plants. (2) The Constitutional Court Decision No. 99 of 2012 annulled those Articles of the 1992 law that granted the monopoly to plants and seeds used in agriculture to corporations. Peasants were allowed again without risk of persecution to select and breed the plants they use as they had always done.

In 2016, two proposed laws were introduced in Indonesia, one on Conservation and Biodiversity and a second one on Oil Palm. The Conservation and Biodiversity Bill reintroduces a corporate monopoly in plant breeding similar to the corporate rights that had been enshrined in the Articles on Law No. 12 of 1992 – the Articles that were annulled by the Constitutional Court in 2012. Moreover, the proposed Conservation and Biodiversity law would prohibit community access to, use or breeding of plant varieties of species that are either listed on a Conservation Annex or for which e.g. a pharmaceutical or oil palm company has registered a patent. Under adat (customary law), communities are allowed to use certain protected plant species that are used traditionally, e.g. as traditional medicines, if they have registered such species as genetic "resources" for traditional use with the government authorities.

The restrictions in the proposed law are like two sides of the same coin – whichever way you turn it, the law will disadvantage communities' adat. If the communities use the plants without government permit, they will face the criminal consequences; if the communities request the permit, there is a big risk that their traditional intellectual rights regarding medicinal properties of the plants will be stolen by pharmaceutical corporations before communities' knowledge has been accepted as meeting the legal requirements of the proposed law. Corporations are hunting for this information about traditional medicinal use of plants which communities have to include in their application for the use permit. Communities might initially be awarded a use permit but the companies will then register a patent and traditional use and breeding of the plant would then be prohibited under the law because another (corporate) entity has already registered a patent for this plant. Either way, the proposed Conservation and Biodiversity law presents a huge threat to community use and breeding of plants the communities traditionally use, be it for food or medicines.

There is already a history of Indonesian peoples' knowledge about traditional herbal medicine having been grabbed by pharmaceutical companies. The information is then commercialized and patented by the industries without consent from the traditional users and knowledge holders. Traditional herbal medicines for various diseases have also been used for in-depth academic research. This research and the resulting commercialization, too, amount to intellectual property theft because the selection of specific herbs for specific medicines to treat specific diseases, the composition, and the practices used to prepare and apply these traditional medicines are the result of continuous research carried out by community member and passed on from generation to generation. This knowledge, however, is not credited and recognized as in-depth research because it doesn't conform to the contemporary academic approach.

The purpose of the proposed law on Oil Palm is to define oil palm as a naturally occurring species in Indonesia. This, however, would obscure the fact that oil palm – a species native to West and Central Africa, where traditional oil palm varieties are cultivated and used for a wide variety of products

and uses – has been introduced into Indonesia by the palm oil industry. (3) Once considered a naturally occurring species in Indonesia, the oil palm plantations companies can patent the plant, and combined with Article 15 of the proposed Conservation and Biodiversity law, enable them to restrict community use of oil palm to the use of fruit – which the company has an interest in buying. But community use of any other part of the plant could be prohibited – once oil palm has been declared a naturally occurring species in Indonesia to which the proposed Conservation and Biodiversity law would also apply. Declaring oil palm a naturally occurring species in Indonesia would thus amount to a second land grab for farmers growing oil palm on their land and for communities living around the corporate plantations because oil palm companies could limit community use of oil palm to only the fruit – the part of the plant the companies are interested in. Once these laws are passed, it will also be more difficult for farmers to reclaim their lands.

If the two proposed laws are considered together, it becomes clear that the intention of the government is not to resolve some urgent problem affecting local communities in Indonesia. Rather, the proposed laws serve to increase corporate control over agrobiodiversity and land of interest to corporations. These legal changes must be seen as part of a corporate strategy – well planned and organized – to expand corporate control, not only control over community land but also community use of 'biodiversity'. Proposing regulations such as the two proposed laws on Conservation and Biodiversity and on Oil Palm in Indonesia, must be seen as part of legitimizing the confiscation of people's life sources. Passing these laws would also provide legal protection, if not impunity to the corporate crime of stealing traditional knowledge about plant use that communities have refined and passed from generation to generation: The Constitutional Court of Indonesia already has decided that such corporate monopoly over plant breeding and use is unconstitutional. And yet, the government is advancing the corporate agenda by proposing laws that aim to reinstate this very corporate monopoly over agrobiodiversity, seeds and genetic diversity of plant varieties that the Constitutional Court of Indonesia already has declared unconstitutional.

The community or traditional wisdom expressed in adat and the immense diversity of plant varieties used by traditional communities and peasant farmers today is indication of the long adaptation process between nature, plant diversity and communities. This agrodiversity as well as the communities that produced it depend on free use and access to the land that is home to the plants used by communities. It is this very use and access to land and plants by communities that the laws on Conservation and Biodiversity and on Oil Palm are putting at risk.

Corporate crime cannot be understood only as criminal act of confiscating, stealing or taking away state assets. More than that, corporate control through intellectual property rights protection and laws that provide corporations with a monopoly over plants and seeds has confiscated communities' land as well as their knowledge over traditional use of these lands. Such crimes force processes of fundamental changes onto communities: from being the owner to being made the consumer, consumer of plants and seeds that have been turned into commodities covered by corporate patents. The proposed laws on Conservation and Biodiversity and on Oil Palm are part of this process of legalizing corporate theft of community knowledge and traditional use of 'biodiversity'.

Zenzi Suhadi
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(1) Decision No. 99/PP-X/2012 of the Constitutional Court annulled Articles 5, 6, 9, 12, and 60 of the 1992 Law No. 12 on Plant Cultivation Systems.
(2) See also: Indonesian farmers prosecuted for breeding their own seeds.
(3) For an impression on the diversity of uses of traditional oil palm varieties in West and Central Africa, see for example 'Africa: another side of palm oil. A long history and vast biodiversity' by GRAIN

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Indonesia: Exploitation of women and violation of their rights in oil palm plantations

Posted on March 7, 2018. Included in Bulletin 236

The massive expansion of oil palm plantations in Indonesia mainly rests on two key factors: low-wage labour and the ease of obtaining land. Oil palm plantation companies have turned women into landless food buyers and cheap labour for the plantation companies, which is carried out under extremely exploitative conditions. Read the article online here.

Oil palm plantations in Indonesia are driven by large capital, land availability, cheap labour and the international demand for palm oil. Since 2000, the area of oil palm plantations has been increasing in order to meet the demand of the international palm oil market. Indonesia has announced plans to increase Crude Palm Oil (CPO) production up to 40 million tons per year by 2020. (1) The Indonesian Plantation Fund Management Agency, a state-run agency that represents the plantation industry, launched Indonesia's Vision for 2045 with one target: to increase CPO production to 60 million tons per year. (2)

Indonesia currently has 16.1 million hectares of oil palm plantations, and plans to expand the area occupied by oil palm plantations to approximately 20 million hectares of land, spread across Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku and Papua. This massive expansion mainly rests on two key factors: low-wage labour and the ease of obtaining land.

According to Indonesia's Minister of Agriculture, palm oil is one of the largest foreign exchange contributors in Indonesia, with an export value of 250 trillion Indonesian rupiahs per year. (3) Palm oil is an export commodity for the country, as is evident from the value of products derived from palm oil that contributed 75 per cent to the export of the non-oil sector. Beyond that, the presence of oil palm plantations on such a massive scale absorbs a large number of labours – in total numbers. (4) In comparison with the labour provided by small-scale peasant farming – both in terms of numbers and quality of work -, the contribution of the oil palm industry to the labour market looks far less impressive, however.

There are two important things to highlight related to the presence of oil palm plantations. First, the marginalization of peasants, especially women. Oil palm plantations have turned peasant communities into landless communities and forced them to sell their labour to plantations. The seizure of land by oil palm corporations and the presence of oil palm plantations are very obviously affecting women's ability to produce food and access land. The expansion of oil palm plantations onto land previously available for peasant farming is transforming women from food producers into food buyers and cheap labour for the plantation companies. With

their way of life as food producers, their livelihoods and traditional peasant farming practises disrupted or eradicated by oil palm plantations, women are often left with little choice but to seek work as labourers on the plantations. Women who are hired as workers must adapt to the standard routine, work pattern and work mechanisms on the plantation.

"Since the company came, we were forced to sell our land to the company. The company accepted us as casual labourers on the condition that we sell our land to the company. The majority of women workers here are those who sold their land to the company. Now we are casual labours", said Ad, a woman working as casual labourer on the oil palm plantation of Sipef Group's subsidiary in South Sumatera Province.

Secondly, for many women, the working conditions on the plantations are very precarious. The labour relations for women on the plantations are characterized by informal arrangements, they often have very short-term work contracts, leaving them without long-term work security. Job engagement is unclear while undocumented work agreements and target-based wage systems prevail. The Indonesian NGO Sawit Watch Association estimated that the number of people working in oil palm plantations in Indonesia in 2016 exceeded 10 million. Of these, 70 per cent were employed as casual labourers, with the majority of casual workers being women. (5) Women work in 15 out of the 16 oil palm plantations work types, ranging from land clearing to harvest.

Labourers' wives: Forced to work without wages

Women workers in oil palm plantations are often overlooked, whereas their presence strongly influences the production process. Women are not regarded as company labourers, so they do not even get the rights they deserve.

Plantation companies largely set too high targets for workers harvesting fruit bunches, so harvesters can only achieve them with the help of family members, often the workers' wives. This family support has no formal engagement with the company. The women supporting their husbands are forced to work without being paid, since it is very difficult for their husbands to achieve the very high harvest targets imposed on them. If the targets are not reached, wage reduction penalties are enforced. Therefore, the "best" option is to have family members, typically a worker's wife, working with them. Wives mostly pick up the fallen fruit, clean the hurdle, smoothen the midrib and move fresh fruit bunches to the shelter. They work without adequate safety and health equipment.

Some plantation companies even establish policies requiring harvesters' family members to provide such free work. If a harvester arrives alone, the worker is considered absent or the foreman will bring in a helper whose wage must be paid by the harvester himself.

At Company LS in North Sumatra, harvesting labours that do not bring their wives to the workplace are considered absent. According to one harvester in this company, "Every labourer that comes to work will be told to bring the helper. If one does not bring the helper, then go home". The Company SLM on Central Kalimantan, has set a working target of 180 fruit bunches per day for harvesters. It is impossible for one person to achieve this target on a daily basis over a period of time. A record of 100 bunches is the target of the husband's work, while the rest is the wife's target. Harvest labourers in this plantation are required to bring their wives

to the site. If not, the plantation assistant or foreman will bring in someone who helps the harvesting worker. His wage has to be paid by the harvester himself.

Considering that one harvesting worker covers 2 to 3 hectares of the company plantations, one can imagine how many women work without wage in oil palm plantations in Indonesia. When women are not working to help their husbands, they work as casual labourers without an official working agreement. Casual labourers' wages are much lower than those of permanent workers, and often do not include social or health benefits. This model of working relations poses a problem in the context of workers' protection, not only in terms of wage, but also in terms of job security, health, and other basic rights.

Women labourers: Being permanent casual labours

One aspect to describe the informalization of the working relations in oil palm plantations in Indonesia is the casual labourers. There are three types of casual labour on palm oil plantations: First, permanent engagement, with an annual contract, where the system and workload of casual labourers are the same as for permanent labourers, but the number of working days per month is limited to below 20 days. Second, semi-permanent engagement, with a contract for specific work at an established rate. In this form of employment, job certainty depends on the presence or absence of "work" with working hours, wages, and targets determined by the plantation companies. Third, outsourcing both officially and unofficially. The majority of workers in this status are women.

Casual labourers in oil palm plantations, which have no job security, are massive. These are usually related to fertilization and chemical spraying work, which is mostly done by women. Women casual labourers receive lower wages, work without adequate safety and health protection, must provide their own work tools and do not get menstruation leave. They remain as casual labourers for years, because there is no possibility to switch to another job or to return to their place of origin, not least because the working conditions do not allow to save enough money for this.

Women labourers: Working with toxins without proper protection

Beyond the informalization of working relations, the protection of occupational safety and health of women labourers is minimal. In palm oil plantations, women always have more dangerous duties than men because they are employed for working with chemicals, such as fertilizers, and spraying the pesticides. Companies do not provide protective tools or safety trainings and women carry out these activities without access to regular medical check-ups.

"I have been working here for 12 years, my work is diverse, sometimes [I am] told to fertilize, jack palm, now I am detecting mould. [At the] time of cultivation, my work target is three hectares; I ever spent 25 sacks [of fertilizers] a day. I moved to the mould detection section because my lung was perforated by poison. I do not know why, maybe from the poison of the fertilizer. Indeed, while working with it, I was given a mask, clothes, gloves, but I kept on being exposed to fertilizers day after day. The company never checks our health", said Nur (38), a women labourer on an oil palm plantation in Central Kalimantan.

The spraying of chemicals is done manually. The worker carries a cap (a spraying device)

weighing 20 kilograms and is responsible for spraying a specified area. The average sprayer is required to spend 6 to 10 caps each day. Companies do not provide sufficient personal protective equipment.

Gramoxone, Glyphosate, Rhodiamine and Roundup are some of the chemicals used in the spraying process. Companies do not provide information on the potential impacts and dangers of the chemicals used, nor do they provide training on how to reduce the risk of exposure when spraying the chemicals and how to reduce health hazards. As a result, women working as sprayers are vulnerable to work accidents. They frequently experience occupational diseases such as respiratory problems, burning of their hands, dizziness, blurred eyes and even blindness. (6)

The Indonesian government needs to organize the labour system placing the workers as living subjects. The government as regulator of the industry needs to develop appropriate working principles and evaluation to ensure that the palm oil industry fulfils the labour rights, especially for women. Palm oil plantation companies have to understand the human rights implications they impose on workers and must obey the national and international labour laws. Moreover, consumers and importing countries should also ensure their rejection of palm oil produced in exploitative working conditions.

Zidane, Sawit Wacth, http://sawitwatch.or.id/

(1) http://www.kemenperin.go.id/artikel/1480/Indonesia-Fokus-Produksi-CPO-40-Juta-Ton
(2) http://www.mediaindonesia.com/news/read/57550/produksi-cpo-nasional-sasar-target-60-juta-ton-per-tahun/2016-07-22
(3) http://www.tribunnews.com/bisnis/2016/11/24/ekspor-kelapa-sawit-sumbang-devisa-rp-250-trilun
(4) http://industri.bisnis.com/read/20141015/99/265233/kadin-indonesia-industri-sawit-serap-21-juta-tenaga-kerja
(5) Sawit Watch, 2016
(6) In 2015, Perkumpulan Sawit Watch conducted research on the working conditions of women labourers in two oil palm plantations in Central Kalimantan. Sawit Watch found two women workers with a respiratory disease and three others exposed to Gramoxone and Glyphosate fluid, which affected two with dim eyes and the other one was blind.

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Indonesia: Oil palm plantations and their trace of violence against women

Posted on March 7, 2018. Included in Buletin 236

Women suffer many forms of violence when working and/or living around oil palm plantations. The violence and harassment is carried out by the companies' employers, security forces and police and military, which subsequently reinforce patriarchy and their roles and relations within society in general. Read the article online here.

AIn the name of economic growth, the Government of Indonesia is aggressively promoting palm oil as a commodity for competing on global markets. This promotion, however, covers up the fact that oil palm plantations are not only causing deforestation and environmental degradation, but also legal and human rights violations as well as inequality in land tenure regimes. All this leads to abuses, discrimination, poverty, land grabbing, loss of social and cultural systems, social conflicts and much more.

Why are oil palm plantations especially impacting women?

Women confront many injustices attached to their gender role, position and relations to others within the family, community, state and society in general. These injustices intensify with the aggressive neoliberal market and capital flows based on dirty production, greediness and ignorance of a truly socio-environmental sustainability. In this context, industrial oil palm plantations in Indonesia are causing conflicts at the community level while ignoring women's experiences as well as their essential role in social reproduction. Ultimately, women are exposed to the lowest, poorest, marginalized and neglected conditions.

The issue of women violence and abuse is hardly ever discussed within the palm oil industry or by other relevant actors. In fact, the reality of violence and abuse against women in and around oil palm plantations is largely omitted from the corporate and government story told about industrial oil palm plantations. In most events addressing extractivist industries, such as the oil palm, pulp or logging industries, women's stories are absent. Often, government policies are focused on expanding production and demand, increasing corporate benefits among others. These policies have no interest in adverting the impacts this industry brings with it. On the contrary, the expansion of these monocultures only worsens the situation of women and communities in general, with pollution of rivers and water sources being only one of many impacts. Women labourers are fully aware of this; yet, they have no other economic choice to keep their family alive.

Research conducted by the National Commission on Violence Against Women together with Indonesian civil society organizations such as WALHI, RMI, Bina Desa, Dayakologi Institute and Debt Watch, found various layers of violence experienced by women in the natural resource sector. (1) By using a feminist political ecological analysis, the research highlights how violence against women is a reality wherever industrial oil palm plantations in Indonesia were set up.

Structurally abusing women

With the arrival of large-scale oil palm plantations, women lose access and control over land, which eventually pushes them to become labourers on the plantations. In many cases, women

working on these plantations have little to no legal protection. They mostly have to spray fertilizers and pesticides, which is harmful to women's health.

In a study on oil palm plantations in West Kalimantan, many women expressed they had no idea that their land or family land was now in the company's hands. Women's lack of information is also reinforced by the general situation in Indonesia, in which men generally own the land.

In consequence, the company considers that it is only important to involve men in the so-called socialization meetings. Besides the many intimidation strategies used by the companies, the sweet promises of benefits if families enrol in 'plasma' schemes (smallholder or outgrower schemes that are very common in Indonesia and have trapped many families in debt), becoming company workers on their own land, have led many families to eventually lose their land. There is no Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) carried out with the communities, especially with women who will experience excessive and specific impacts when oil palm plantations, that are greedy for land and water, enter their villages. In many places, the burden of searching for water is on women; hence, when there is a water crisis due to drought or pollution, the workload of women gets bigger.

For women living in and around plantation areas, being a "brondol" is a way of survival to meet their families' basic needs. The "brondol," are women picking up oil palm fruits left on the ground. From morning to evening, they walk a long way to reach the oil palm plantations, bearing a high risk of being caught by the companies' security officers. Despite companies seizing large amounts of land, water, forests and other communal resources, they consider the search for left-over oil palm fruit as theft.

There are also many women who work as labourers in oil palm plantations. Companies consider women as the more accurate, careful and diligent workers and thus employ many female labourers as seed planters and for applying fertilizers. In particularly the application of fertilizers is actually a very toxic activity and very harmful to women's health. Male workers are forced to bring family members to help them achieve the company targets. One thing is for sure; the wives and children are not included as recipients of a salary. The labour practices of these large oil palm plantations are widely cited as modern-day slavery. (2)

The high criminalization of those opposing the plantations has led to many arrests of activists, and even murders. Women who lost their husbands, fathers or sons are forced to earn money for maintaining the family while still taking care of the domestic chores. This double burden is extremely difficult for women starting their overall work before sunrise and ending it long after sunset.

But women suffer other types of violence that are committed by security forces, police and military, which subsequently reinforce gender roles, positions and relations attached to them.

Targeting their "womanhood"

When women struggle to maintain their living space and deny the presence of oil palm plantations, they experience further criminalization and violence.

It is important to note that there is a higher vulnerability for women in fighting for their rights. One of the violations is the one targeting their "womanhood" which aims to silence their fight. The "womanhood" in this case is defined as the relation of social, cultural and religious constructions to women's functions and roles, which are mostly still strongly influenced by the patriarchal culture.

Conflicts occurs not only because of the differences in perceptions between local communities and oil palm industry actors, both corporate and governmental, but also because women's knowledge and experience in managing their living resources, particularly as carers and managers of household production systems and social production, has been ignored. It is then fair to say that neglecting an entity having the inherited knowledge and experience as part of social order means neglecting the existence of such entity; and that is definitely a violation of basic rights.

Khalisah Khalid, Head of Campaign and Network Department
WALHI – Friends of the Earth Indonesia

(1) Meretas Jejak Kekerasan terhadap perempuan dalam pengelolaan sumber daya alam, sebuah tawaran dialog (Komnas Perempuan 2008)
(2) See SawitWatch (in Bahasa).

Article from the WRM Bulletin 197, December 2013, http://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/modern-day-slavery-in-oil-palm-plantations-the-outstanding-cases-of-malaysia-and-indonesia/

Accenture for Humanity United: Exploitative Labor Practices in the Global Palm Oil Industry http://humanityunited.org/pdfs/Modern_Slavery_in_the_Palm_Oil_Industry.pdf

Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism: Forced Labor and Child Labor on Palm Oil Plantations http://www.schusterinstituteinvestigations.org/#!slavery-palm-oil-plantations-indonesia/cqcc

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Indonesia: Violence against Women Workers in Oil Palm Plantations

Posted on September 30, 2019. Included in Buletin 245

Exploitative working conditions in the oil palm plantations' industry in Indonesia are persistent and the main victims are mostly women. Although this situation is often overlooked, the production process of the world's largest producer of palm oil is strongly dependant on this exploitation. *Read the article online here.*

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

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

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

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

Indonesian NGO Sawit watch found out in early 2019 that five women workers with one to three months of pregnancy experienced a miscarriage in one oil palm plantation in center Kalimantan, mostly caused by their heavy workload. "Pregnant workers are kept in jobs such as weeding, fertilizing, spraying and collecting loose palm fruits. Those are hard work. The husband of one of the pregnant women worker asked the company management if they could give his wife a rest period or minor jobs, but the management did not approved it", said one worker. The plantation's labor union also demanded that pregnant women should not work or be given minor desk jobs, but the company management responded that everything is already arranged at the Kuala Lumpur Central Office in Malaysia.

Menstruation leave is also complicated even though, according to Indonesian labor regulations, all sectors and companies should give this right to their women employees. But there is no guarantee for women to get this right. "A company doctor said to a woman worker who wanted to process her leave: Are you serious that you want to take a menstruation leave? Don't you have shame?", voiced a woman worker.
Women workers with their status as casual or contract workers have usually no proper reproductive health. They are employed to harvest fruit bunches. The target depends on the working plot, known as Ancak. If the Ancak is in a swamp, the target is 1,25 hectares but if It is inland, the target is 1,5 hectares. Usually, companies do not provide specific protection

equipment to work in a swamp Ancak, known as Ancak Rawa. According to a casual worker, an Ancak Rawa will bring water up to an adult's waist, and they are not provided with special clothes. "We just work, from morning to evening. Half of our body, from the ankles to waist, remains under marsh water. There are no special clothes provided by the company. If we request to have it, they will ban us, we will not be hired anymore", said a woman worker.

Women's Health at the Service of Oil Palm Companies

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

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

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

Casual Working Status: Company Reasons for Irresponsibility

"We work from Monday to Thursday with a wage of Rp. 106.000 per day [around US 7.50 dollars]. Our maximum number of working days is of only 16 days per month. We clean weeding, collect loose palm fruits, collect empty palm bunches", said one daily casual worker in North Kalimantan.

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

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

According to the women, since they joined PT AKL, they never received any working or

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

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

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

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

Zidane
Sawit watch, Indonesia, http://sawitwatch.or.id/

(1) Sawit watch investigation
(2) Guy Standing, "The Precariat", 2011
The New Dangerous Class states that Precariat refers to the absence of guaranteed permanent employment, the absence of protection from arbitrary dismissal, the absence of guaranteed protection from work accidents or illness caused by work, unavailability of safety and health information, lack of opportunity to gain more skills and knowledge through internships, trainings for the sake of increasing competencies, minimum wages and absence of social security. Precariat have also no guarantee over the rights as citizens, including allying to an association.
Some forms of precarious works involve all the forms of undesirable work, including low-paid wage work without any allowances (health, pension fund, bonuses, etc.), involuntary overtime work, working in hazardous conditions as well as in informal sector.
(3) See WRM Bulletin article, March 2018, Indonesia: Exploitation of women and violation of their rights in oil palm plantations, Zidane, Sawit watch

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Foto: Swait Watch

THE "GREEN ECONOMY" JUSTIFYING NEW ATTACKS

Driving "Carbon Neutral": Shell's Restoration and Conservation Project in Indonesia

Posted on March 6, 2020. Included in Buletin 248

In the past decades, a business approach to reverse deforestation gained force. Back in 2004, conservation NGOs and the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry pioneered with a model called Ecosystem Restoration Concessions. This article takes a closer look at this model in the context of new and old threats to forests, and the global push for "forest restoration". Read the article online here.

According to companies such as oil multinational Shell and airline company KLM, it is perfectly possible to drive or flight "carbon neutral"; simply offset the carbon emissions by planting trees or investing in existing forest areas elsewhere. What is often silenced though is that those trees should remain standing in order for any compensation to happen, at least during the trees' lifetime. And that is by no means always the case.

Since April 2019, Shell offers its customers the option of driving "carbon neutral". Anyone choosing to pay an extra cent per litre of gasoline or diesel or fills up the slightly more expensive fuel brand V-power, is paying to offset his or her carbon emissions. Shell uses the extra money to plant trees and to invest in existing forest reserves. According to Shell's website, more than 20,000 car rides' emissions have already been compensated in this way. That would amount to around 55 million litres of gasoline. To compensate for that, according to Shell, 376,000 trees need to be planted or protected and should remain standing forever.

How does Shell do this?

Among others, the oil company buys carbon (CO2) credits from The Katingan Peatland Restoration and Conservation Project (also known as the Katingan Mentaya project) in Central Kalimantan, a province in the Indonesian part of the island of Borneo. Although the biggest forests-related compensation scheme of the last 15 years is called REDD+, in Indonesia they use terms like Ecosystem Restoration Projects or Restoration and Conservation Projects. These nonetheless operate under the same logic and purpose of REDD+: allow fossil fuels extraction and burning to continue.

The Katingan Mentaya project is the world's largest forest compensation project, according to its website. It was created in 2007 by the Indonesian company PT Rimba Makmur Utama in collaboration with the British project developer Permian Global, and two NGOs: Puter Indonesia Foundation and Wetlands International. The director of the company is a former JP Morgan banker in New York, Dharsono Hartono, whom after discovering that conservation and profiting go well together, decided to return to his home country. The Ministry of Forestry approved the Ecosystem Restoration Concession in October 2013 with about 100,000 hectares; around half of the area the company had applied for. Three years later, the Department for

Environment and Forestry approved a second concession covering almost 50,000 hectares.

The reserve covers a total area of 157,722 hectares of tropical forest and peat soils. Developers argue that without the project, the area would be converted into industrial acacia plantations for paper production. Carbon credits have been sold since 2017 for five to ten dollars per tonne and therefore the reserve can earn up to 75 million dollars per year by "avoiding" CO2 to go up in the air.

"Avoiding", however, does not mean that the total amount of CO2 in the atmosphere gets lower. Carbon credits are sold as a licence to emit a similar amount of greenhouse gases elsewhere in the world. There is no climate gain but, on paper, no loss either. Hence the term "carbon neutral".

The theory goes that if you can ensure that the same amount of CO2 emitted during a car ride can be removed from the air somewhere else, the pollution is compensated. But this only counts if it can be proven that the planted trees that are removing the CO2 would never have been planted without the offset project. If not, the compensation is not "additional". Now, if the compensation is based on the protection of existing forests and peat soils, such as with the Katingan Mentaya reserve, the story gets even more complicated. How do project developers know for sure that the forest that they are protecting was going to be cut down?

The answer is that they cannot know for sure. Project developers rely on risk profiles and future models. They estimate the future likelihoods of deforestation by looking at other similar areas. This is called the baseline. Based on this, they calculate the amount of CO2 "stored" within the project area, which is then converted into saleable carbon credits. Each credit represents a tonne of "avoided CO2 emissions". But, of course, the more deforestation they predict in their baselines, the greater the CO2 gain they can claim and the more credits they can sell.

Five years ago, the French research agency Chaire Economie du Climat concluded that 26 per cent of the 410 analysed REDD+ projects overlapped with an existing protected area or national park. REDD+ simply served as a logo to attract new financing.

On top of this, another major criticism against REDD+ is that protected forests are vulnerable and can disappear due to fire, logging or illness. Compensation projects must guarantee that these forests will remain standing for a lifetime.

Despite this, the oil and aviation industries are embracing REDD+ projects, mainly under the so-called "voluntary market". This market assists not only consumers who want to feel better for their fuel use, holiday flight or online purchases, but also, increasingly, large companies who want to pretend to be doing something for their large-scale pollution and thus please their clients and investors.

In addition to Shell, automobile company Volkswagen and BNP Paribas bank also purchase carbon credits from the same reserve in Kalimantan. Worldwide, from Cambodia to Peru and from Zimbabwe to Guatemala, there are now hundreds of such projects.

Carbon Turning to Smoke

2019 was an extreme year of forest fires in Indonesia, which are closely linked to the expansion of oil palm plantations. The fires that raged between July and October transformed large parts of Sumatra and Kalimantan in areas covered with poisonous smog. Schools and hospitals closed, the local population walked around wearing masks, tens of thousands of people were evacuated and ten died.

The fires also reached the Katingan Mentaya reserve, which borders with an industrial oil palm plantation from the company PT Persada Era Agro Kencana. Fire easily spreads due to the fragile dry soil under these plantations. This oil palm plantation concession was given in 2013, despite a moratorium on forest-clearing agreed between Indonesia and Norway in 2011. The palm oil industry is a major cause of tropical deforestation, which generates a lot of carbon emissions and drains the peat soils. This is one of the reasons why Indonesia is the fourth largest greenhouse gas emitter. An estimated 2000 hectares of the Katingan reserve went up in smoke.

In November 2019, two Indonesian journalists – Gabriel Wahyu Titiyoga and Aqwam Fiazmi Hanifan – travelled to the reserve and saw that "the burnt area is huge." Titiyoga said "I walked about two miles and still can't see the end of the fire scar." The journalists also encountered dozens of agricultural plots within the project area that on paper should not have been there. A wooden board reads, "This area is controlled by the Dayak". Dayak villagers say that they have never been properly informed about the limits of the reserve. The individual plots are marked with wooden signs with the names of villagers. To cultivate their vegetables and rice, the indigenous Dayaks also use fire, but in a very different way, they use it in a controlled way. But the conflict over land and forest use in the area of the project goes back many years.

In 2014, the governor of Central Kalimantan promised every Dayak family five hectares of agricultural land. But they still had to sort out where this land would be located. During the provincial elections of 2017, a local politician promised them the same. The Dayaks use the documents with this information to claim the promised land. But legally they do not have a leg to stand on.

There are about 40,000 people living in 34 villages around the project area. Five hundred villagers have been trained as firefighters under the project. To "avoid a fight", the project offered communities 100 million rupiah (about US$10,000) a year for training and educational projects, aimed at getting them to work the land without using fire or chemicals. Four villages refused, saying the money was not enough.

But how can drivers in the global North still drive "carbon neutral" when part of the compensation reserve was burnt? According to the US-certifier company Verra, which issues the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) label and oversees the carbon trading of this project, even if the entire forest reserve was burnt down, Shell customers could still drive "climate neutral". Each compensation reserve holds back a percentage of credits in an "emergency pot" for credits that are lost elsewhere. "It's like risk insurance," says Naomi Swickard, head of market development at Verra. That means that the amount of CO2 lost from the compensation project in Indonesia would in turn be compensated through an insurance system with credits from a forest elsewhere in the world.

In consequence, the Katingan Mentaya reserve, which in theory holds the equivalent carbon

that cars are meanwhile emitting in the global North, confronts threats of forest fires, large oil palm plantations and governmental agencies issuing overlapping permits. But nonetheless, carbon credits are being sold and highly polluting companies are assuring consumers that their emissions are compensated. The trees just need to remain standing forever somehow.

Forest compensation projects largely blame forest peoples and peasant agriculture for deforestation while not addressing the underlying political and economic causes of deforestation nor do they change the ongoing pressure on forests and land.

The Indonesian government aims to reduce its CO2 emissions by 29 per cent by 2030, based on its own efforts – while claiming it could achieve 41 per cent with international assistance. The 2019 fires are predicted to reduce that target to around 20 per cent. "We still have lots of work until 2030. The President has ordered that there must be no forest fires next year [2020]", said Ruandha Agung Sugardiman, Director of the Climate Change Control of the Ministry of Environment. And in the case that the government needs additional carbon reserves for its national reduction targets, stocks from companies in the carbon market may be withdrawn or stopped to prevent them from being sold. This condition, according to Ruandha, is part of the companies' contracts.

Since 2007, the year in which REDD+ started, the concentration of CO2 in the atmosphere has only increased. Governments and companies present their REDD+-type projects as a first step in their "actions" for climate mitigation and the world applauds. But, in practice, industries are getting a license to continue extracting oil, expanding plantations or deforesting, and consumers continue to drive and fly without concern. (Forest) compensation projects are not a solution for climate change since emissions need to be drastically reduced at source and not be compensated.

This article is a summary from the following journalistic articles:
Daphné Dupont-Nivet (only available in Dutch):
– De Groene Amsterdammer, Het klimaatbos gaat in rok op, December 2019
– Trouw, Het CO2-compensatiebos van Shell: brandstichting en ruzie met de lokale bevolking, December 2019
– Investico, Branden en boeren bedreigen Shell-Klimaatbos in Indonesië, December 2019
– Gabriel Wahyu Titiyoga's article, The Carbon Center's Staggered Walk, published in the Tempo Magazine (in English)
– REDD-Monitor's article, Indonesia's Katingan REDD Project sells carbon credits to Shell. But that doesn't mean that the forest is protected. It is threatened by land conflicts, fires and palm oil plantations, December 2019 (in English)
– Video reportage by Indonesian media, Narasi Newsroom (in Bahasa).

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Indonesia: What is an Ecosystem Restoration Concession?

Posted on May 14, 2020. Included in Buletin 249

In the past decades, a business approach to reverse deforestation gained force. Back in 2004, conservation NGOs and the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry pioneered with a model called Ecosystem Restoration Concessions. This article takes a closer look at this model in the context of new and old threats to forests, and the global push for "forest restoration". Read the article online here.

Most of the forests in Indonesia are State-owned. In the past decades, so-called "production forests," which account to more than 50% of the State-owned forests, have been given out to private companies, mainly logging and plantation industries. This has resulted in massive forest destruction for timber, palm oil and pulp and paper production. (1)

The category of Ecosystem Restoration Concessions (ERCs) was officially launched in 2004 in order to reverse the deforestation trend in "production forests". ERCs were created by, on the one hand, conservation groups including the British Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), BirdLife International and its Indonesian affiliate Burung Indonesia and, on the other hand, the former Ministry of Forestry (2). The main idea was to create a market-oriented governmental tool capable to reverse deforestation in those "production forests," that in spite of the forest destruction still are considered to have high potential for conservation.

In order to receive a restoration license from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, one has to create a company and present a business plan. The license is granted to the company for a period of 60 years and is renewable for another 35 years. The first company to receive an ERC was PT REKI in 2007, for the Harapan Rainforest Project in Sumatra. PT REKI is the license holder, while the three aforementioned conservation groups created a non-profit foundation that became the major shareholder of PT REKI.

The regulation for the management of ERCs establishes that the license holder should promote restoration activities to "re-establish a biological balance". Once that balance is reached, logging can be allowed again. In the meantime, the ERC allows income generating activities, including selling of credits for ecosystem services such as carbon, conservation of biodiversity or water resources, as well as ecotourism and production and sales of non-timber forest products. Cultivating medicinal and ornamental plants, bee keeping and animal raising are also options the license holder can explore. The regulation defines that the ERCs should ensure an equitable benefit-sharing with local communities. By 2016, a total of 15 licenses had been given out for 573,455 hectares of land in Sumatra and Kalimantan. (3)

Over the years, big conservation NGOs active in Indonesia around these schemes, such as WWF, TNC and Birdlife, succeeded to mobilize considerable funding for this idea has been coming from European donor agencies and institutions. The German development bank, KfW, for example, has invested until 2016 at least 15.6 million euros in three ERCs. (4)

Has the private "restoration" model worked?

Since the ERC model was created in 2004, deforestation has only further increased in Indonesia, both in terms of primary forest loss as well as in terms of total tree cover loss. (5) Why has the ERC model not been able to reverse the trend of continuous destruction?

First of all, the overall area covered by ERCs is insignificant if compared with the total area

of "production forest" in Indonesia, an estimated 69 million hectares by 2015. It means that the 15 licences of ERCs conceded totalling 573,455 hectares cover only a tiny 0.8% of the total area of "production forests". Even if the government's target of another 1.7 million hectares for ERCs would have been accomplished, that would still only cover about 3.2% of the total "production forests" area. (6)

But a fundamental question remains. Have the existing ERCs been successful in reversing forest destruction within their concession areas? The available documentation points to the opposite direction. For example, the Harapan Rainforest Project has been the scene of illegal logging, a direct cause of forest degradation and deforestation, whereas large-scale conversion into oil palm plantations has also taken place. Besides, intense and unresolved land disputes have unfolded with communities disputing access to and control over parts of the concession area. (7)

In 2018, forest fires destroyed 16,000 km2 of the Bukit Tigapuluh National Park in western Sumatra. It is in the same region where, since 2015, the PT Alam Bukit Tigapuluh (ABT) company, set up by the NGO WWF in partnership with the Frankfurter Zoological Society (FZS) from Germany, runs an ERC. The forest destruction caused by the fires would have motivated the peculiar decision of the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry in 2019 to end its forest conservation partnership with WWF, three years before it would expire. According to a spokesperson from the government, "WWF Indonesia has a concession and it was burned and they couldn't manage it". The ABT concession company, on its turn, said the fires were likely caused by people illegally encroaching the area and clearing it by burning. (8)

In 2019, forest fires affected the ERC of the Katingan Peatland Restoration and Conservation Project in Central Kalimantan, created in 2013 by the conservation NGOs Wetlands International, Puter Indonesia Foundation and the UK project developer Permian Global. The ERC is managed by the company PT Rimba Makmur Utama. The ERC lost at least 2,000 hectares of forests due to the fires and thus also lost carbon credits that are being bought by the transnational oil company Shell, which ultimately were transformed into hot air. Shell buys pollution credits from this project arguing they "compensate" their carbon emissions. Also in this ERC project area, conflicts over land and land use have been reported, in this case with Dayak indigenous communities. (9)

Who benefits from these "restoration" concessions?

ERCs follow a logic similar to the World Bank's promoted ´Public-Private´ Partnerships (PPPs). ERCs, just as PPPs, are long-term deals where public money is used to support a private company that supposedly could provide better results than the State, in this case, for ecosystem restoration activities. The conservation NGOs behind ERCs have complained about the "limited options for income generation" and the "high costs" and demanded for more public support and incentives. (10) Only the selling of carbon "credits" stands out as a profitable option, which explains why 10 out of the 15 existing ERCs in 2016 sold carbon "credits", and why ERCs are being called the "Indonesian REDD", since the government, different from other tropical forest countries, closed its REDD+ agency in 2015.

Meanwhile, the aforementioned examples show that forest destruction continues taking place inside ERCs, and therefore the real impact of ERCs on reverting forest destruction becomes

at the very least, questionable. Unquestionable though are the millions of dollars of mainly European development aid agencies that have been running into the bank accounts of the big conservation NGOs, which create and own so-called conservation companies. No public records can be found, nor on how the millions of dollars so far were spent or on how much the funds benefited the shareholders of the ERC companies. These are some of the unanswered questions that lie around a process where so-called conservation NGOs transform themselves into a profit-driven conservation industry.

The wider context: bigger pressure on forests and communities

16 years after its launch, the ERC concession model is still functioning. What's more, "forest restoration" has become the slogan of the day in international spaces where forest policies are discussed. Forest restoration is an essential part of the newest trend of Nature Based Solutions (NBS), much highlighted during the last UN climate conference in Madrid in 2019, and which is being considered now as the "new REDD+".

ERCs fit perfectly well into the new concept of NBS, given the carbon credit business that most of the ERCs already practice. Peter Ellis from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) – one of the main conservation NGOs involved in ERCs in Indonesia – suggested that carbon emission reductions could also be achieved by improving "reduced impact logging". (11) This fits into the ultimate objective of ERCs: to restart logging activities once the "restoration" will be completed. But experiences, for example from communities in Brazil in the Amazon state Acre, considered by the big conservation NGOs and the World Bank as a "success story of green economy" in the tropical forest, show how the so-called sustainable logging has contributed to only more forest degradation, deforestation and logging. (12)

In the case of the Harapan Rainforest Project, a road project aiming at connecting a number of large coal mines in South Sumatra to the Bayung Lencir river in Jambi province is planned to cross the ERC. Although the Ministry of Forests stopped the project at its first attempt to build the road in 2013, the project was submitted again to the Ministry in 2017. (13) With local governmental support, the chances of approval increased, but no final decision has been taken yet. (14)

Another additional pressure on Indonesian forests is the new push for transition to a so-called "low-carbon" economy based on "green" or "clean energy", strongly pushed for by the European Union as part of its Green European Deal. "Green" or "clean energy" and "low-carbon" sounds nice, but in practice it means a "high" level of more forest destruction for mining, especially cobalt and nickel, essential minerals for the exponential increase in demand expected for electric transport. Indonesia has huge deposits of such minerals in Kalimantan, Molucas and on Papua. "Clean energy" also includes the destructive push for agrofuels such as sugar cane plantations, as well as for hydropower dams and also geothermal energy, heavily promoted by the Indonesian government itself as part of its own "low-carbon" economy policy. (15) New legislation has been approved in 2014, with the assistance of the World Bank, that considers geothermal mining not a mining activity, and as such not a harmful activity, in spite of its damaging impacts and of the fact that most of the extraction sites are inside forest areas.

Final remarks

Both the more recent push for "green energy" as well as the rise of ecosystem restoration concessions since 2004, have a strong European footprint. While in 2004 European official development aid agencies supported ERCs as an opportunity for European polluters to "compensate" their emissions while European governments could show being concerned about the need for "conservation", nowadays, the European Union sees Indonesia as an important provider of strategic minerals for its "green energy" transition. The forest and social destruction caused by the rush on minerals for Europe's "green energy" transition will increasingly become evident, and this, on top of the "regular" destruction that European investments continue causing, make ERCs to remain a useful tool for "compensating" pollution while showing a supposed concern about "conservation".

All of this not only means an increased pressure on Indonesian forests as a result of "forest restoration", "compensation", "green economy" and the well-known destruction of the extractive and plantation industry. These different top-down projects and their expansion plans will increasingly dispute the same spaces, as shown by the case of the coal transport road crossing the ERC of the Harapan Rainforest Project. ERC projects and other restoration and conservation initiatives in Indonesia tend to expand their areas, taking advantage of the brightly new Nature Based Solutions projects and the new funding options that appear (16). At the end of the day, those agents with the power to conduct this process of dividing and re-distributing the lands will seek to maintain an image of social responsibility, so some communities, if not evicted, might be allowed to remain, nevertheless they might then also encounter oil extraction, restoration concessions, geothermal energy and other business projects in their territories. And what´s worse: with a perfectly legal license to be there.

Insisting in business approaches to so-called conservation and forest restoration such as ERCs and other similar "restoration" initiatives in Indonesia means continue blaming communities for forest destruction, creating more restrictions on their use of forest and also promoting more co-optation, division and conflicts among and with communities. That is what the Indonesian experience with ERCs shows, and which is very similar to experiences with REDD+ elsewhere. (17) An extremely challenging picture for communities on the ground. Joint reflection and careful alliance building from the ground to build a stronger resistance to counter this top-down and destructive process appears an urgent task, of utmost importance.

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(2) In 2014, the Indonesian Ministry of Environment merged with the Ministry of Forests, creating the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.
(3) Ecosystem Restoration Concessions. A second lease of life for Indonesia's embattled forests? 2016
(4) Buerguin, R, Ecosystem Restoration Concession in Indonesia: Conflicts and Discourses, April 2016, Research Gate
(5) Mongabay, Deforestation statistics for Indonesia
(6) Buerguin, R, Ecosystem Restoration Concessions and German Development Cooperation, 2017, Advances in Environmental Research
(7) REDD-Monitor, Questions for the Harapan Rainforest Project: Land conflicts, deforestation, funding, and the proposed construction of a coal transportation road, May 2019
(8) Mongabay, Indonesian Environment Ministry ends WWF partnership amid public spat, January 2020
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March 2020
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(11) WRM 247 Bulletin, New name for an old distraction: Nature-based solutions is the new REDD, January 2020
(12) WRM 197 Bulletin, Brazil: Voices of local communities in Acre denounce violations in Community-based Sustainable Forest Management, 2013 and WRM 183 Bulletin, Brazil: continued destruction of forests and biodiversity in the state of Acre, considered a model of the "green economy" in the Brazilian Amazon, 2012
(13) REDD-Monitor, Questions for the Harapan Rainforest Project: Land conflicts, deforestation, funding, and the proposed construction of a coal transportation road, May 2019
(14) Mongabay, A forest beset by oil palms, logging, now contends with a coal-trucking road, May 2019
(15) WRM 244 Bulletin, Indonesia. The gloomy truth behind geothermal energy: a misleading narrative of "clean energy", July 2019
(16) In reference to the in 2019 announced approval of US 1 billion dollars from Norway for actions to reduce deforestation and forest degradation in Indonesia. See: Mongabay, Indonesia to get first payment from Norway under 1 billion dollars REDD scheme, February 2019
(17) WRM, REDD: A collection of conflicts, contradictions and lies, 2014

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Indonesia: REDD+, European Development Funding and the 'Low-Carbon Economy'

Posted on November 17, 2020. Included in Buletin 252

How does REDD+ fit into the development agenda in Indonesia? What are the actors involved in promoting REDD+ and with which interests? This article reflects on these issues and alerts on how REDD+ is being instrumental for the push towards what is called a 'clean', 'green', 'low-carbon' development. Read the article online here.

REDD+-type projects seem to be of less concern nowadays for grassroots activists in Indonesia compared to 10 years ago. This might be because trading carbon credits from REDD+ projects – one of the main critiques – has not materialized, at least not yet. REDD+ nowadays is mostly 'results-based' (1); and is some result not better than none at all? For activists, REDD+ projects might also sound better than those related to the mining or palm oil industries.

Development, destruction and REDD+

The fact that development agencies, funds and initiatives pursue development seems obvious. But for activists it might be less obvious what development stands for. Development inevitably is intertwined with destruction in at least two ways. Firstly, the destruction that accompanies extractive activities, which are justified as the 'price' of progress. These provide the materials needed to manufacture products for a modern urbanized developed lifestyle. Secondly, development's destruction is linked to the impact on, for example, collective and traditional practices and values, and on traditional systems of ancestral wisdom and knowledge. In essence, development means transforming people into consumers of the frequently inaccessible market products of the developed world.
These two forms of destruction explain why REDD+ also fits so well into the development logic –whether it is a carbon trade or a 'results-based' mechanism. REDD+ projects have invaded the life spaces of communities and destroyed diverse forms of living with the forest, as well as connected knowledge systems and rituals. By turning the carbon stored in trees into

exchangeable units, REDD+ projects restrict communities from accessing their life spaces in order to supposedly 'protect' said units. REDD+ projects try to transform modes of living into so-called 'sustainable livelihoods', promising that community members can become entrepreneurs and access new markets. REDD+ has thus been instrumental in the incursion of development into one of the last isolated regions in the world, the tropical forests. (2)

This is because REDD+ is not about tackling the underlying causes of deforestation, such as investment models, debt, macroeconomic policies, global commodity flows and trade relations within a neoliberal globalized economy. Rather, it is a good 'partner' of development. It allows forests to continue being destroyed whenever it is more profitable to extract minerals, metals, timber or establish oil palm plantations, compared to investing in carbon credits. (3) As a result, REDD+, including the development agencies as promoters of REDD+, have rather put their focus on forest-dependent communities as if they were the 'drivers of deforestation'.

The combination of development and conservation is not new in Indonesia. Already in the 1990s, development agencies enthusiastically supported "Integrated Conservation and Development Projects" (ICDPs) in Indonesia. A World Bank report even noted that the possibility to offer "economic development for the rural poor" was among the features making ICDPs "irresistible to (…) development agencies". (4)

After ICDPs proved to be one more failed attempt to conserve forests, development funding in Indonesia jumped enthusiastically onto REDD+ and became its main funding source. (5) REDD+ promised not only to ensure the conservation of forests but also to transform forest conservation into the conservation of carbon units. This possibility benefits corporations and economies in the developed world as these units of 'stored carbon' serve as offsets to perpetuate the extraction and use of fossil fuels, which are the bedrock of the developed world's financial wealth. It also showcases how development is fundamentally about the self-interest of the so-called developed world.

However, after almost 15 years, deforestation in all main tropical forest areas is on the rise. What then was the result from all the money related to 'results-based' REDD+ projects, for example in Indonesia? A recent general examination of 15 years of REDD+ considers it a typical example of "policy persistence", that is to say, "the continued economic and political support to a policy in the face of overwhelming evidence that it is failing to achieve its stated objectives." The study concludes that REDD+ has turned into a mechanism with a perspective of "development as usual" and "embedded within the development industry". (6) One result of REDD+ in Indonesia, it could be argued, is the creation of yet another bureaucracy inside the State structure.

Besides, the thousands of pages of the Indonesian REDD+ documentation mention little or nothing about the underlying causes of deforestation. While mentioning "poor spatial planning", "inadequate law enforcement", "land tenure" issues and "ineffective forest management", (7) other much more fundamental causes are simply ignored, including the structural collusion between the State and the private sector. For example, an investigative documentary (8), showed how President Widodo and his family, his Vice-President and other close collaborators are involved in the coal mining business. Moreover, 262 out of 575 parliamentarians in Indonesia (45%) are employee, owner, shareholder or CEO of some of the country's biggest extractive industries and trading companies. The major problem then is not that politicians are lobbied by or take bribes from big business, but that businesses have

effectively taken over the apparatus of government.

One symptom of this corporate take-over is the administration of the REDD+ funding within the Indonesia government. This is not the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, as one would expect, but instead, of a company, PT SMI, created within the Ministry of Finance. PT SMI was created by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Indonesian government in 2009 to be "a catalyst in supporting the acceleration of infrastructure development in Indonesia" (9). Particularly after 2017, SMI's main portfolio around 'green economy' policies became energy and low-carbon energy projects (10). These projects heavily impact forests and forest communities. For example, a new Law on Geothermal energy (11) allows SMI to develop about 60% of Indonesia's geothermal prospects inside so-called 'protected forests'.

Another symptom of the corporate takeover is the increasing militarization of forests, and the intimidation and repression of activists that oppose forest destruction in order to ensure the smooth progress of business over the life spaces of communities on land and sea. Meanwhile, the Indonesian government is making legal changes, some of which benefit the mining sector, while others, the new so-called Omnibus Law in particular, benefit the corporate sector in general. The Omnibus Law has led to major protests, given its weakening of workers rights and environmental regulations. (12)

Also missing in the analysis is the conservation approach, as another important root cause of deforestation. For example, when REDD+ conservation projects lead to eviction of people from their land –to supposedly protect 'carbon-rich' forests, – and who then have to find somewhere else to live. On top of this, areas for 'nature conservation' are usually State-owned, which means that the State can at any time lease such areas for industrial activities. Indonesia has a vast record of allowing mining in protected areas. (13) Besides, 'sustainable logging', another component of REDD+, also shows how REDD+ can be a driver of deforestation, as will be explained in the next section.

What the REDD+ development funding omits

Norway is Indonesia's main REDD+ funder. When Norway launched its REDD+ strategy in 2007, the Minister of Petroleum and Energy, Aslaug Haga, was present. (14) Norway's impressive US$1 billion pledge – of which recently US$ 55 million has been paid out – to the Indonesian government for 'results-based' REDD+ was made via the Oil Fund. This is a pension fund based on the profits of Equinor, Norway's state oil company, which has accumulated assets of more than US$1 trillion (15). It makes the US$1 billion promised to Indonesia a lot less impressive.

What Norway's REDD+ documentation omits is that Equinor continues to extract oil. The company opened its Indonesian office in Jakarta in 2007, the same year that REDD+ took off internationally at the UN climate talks in Bali. Equinor's focus in Indonesia is on offshore exploration. It has drilled seven wells, three of which have since entered into operation. Currently its activities are focused on the Aru Basin in West Papua which it plans to expand. (16) According to Equinor, 2019 was a year of "record high production", US$ 13.5 billion in profits, and the company has plans to explore new extraction fields in the coming years (17).

While Indonesia is front page news at times because of its terrible forest fires, no similar

commotion is created about the daily impacts of Equinor's massive oil and gas extraction, or the resulting emissions. Now the company intends to support REDD+ by fostering voluntary markets and trying to put together what they call a 'robust' carbon market – an easy way to avoid taking any responsibility for its own emissions. (18)

In August 2020, an Indonesian 'results-based' REDD+ development project of US$103.8 million was approved by the Green Climate Fund (GCF). As in the case of Norway, the GCF contribution is also 'results-based'. But the 'results' are derived from a game involving the "skilful manufacture of calculations that will result in an outcome that is favourable to the respective country". This is what more than 80 organisations communicated to GCF Board members, adding that such funding is shameful in times of increasing deforestation in Indonesia. (19) As well as resulting in more money for its own REDD+ bureaucracy, the Indonesian government claims that it will also invest the GCF money in "community livelihoods" and "sustainability".

The focus on "providing sustainable livelihoods" to forest-dependent communities, as GCF´s deputy director, Juan Chang, stated, not only expands neo-colonial interventions over forest territories, but also takes the focus away from the real culprits of deforestation. Chang also said that REDD+ should be "a transition toward resilient and low-emissions development" (20). But what has 'low-emissions development' to do with REDD+?

Low-carbon economy in Europe: More deforestation in Indonesia

From the beginning, a main concern of Germany, another major donor to REDD+ in Indonesia that focused on three districts in Kalimantan, has been "to promote an understanding of the role that forests play in a green economy" (21), said term being just another way of referring to a low carbon economy or low emissions development.

In its attempt "to promote" such an understanding of low emissions development, the German government claims with its REDD+ funding this is about "integrating local people into sustainable forest management" (SFM), and that "private forestry enterprises receive support for certification". Legal logging through SFM is an often overlooked but important component of the REDD+ concept, and is seen as one way to combine conservation with development. It is also a key component in the bright new concept that REDD+ has recently become part of: Nature-Based Solutions (NBS). At the last UN climate conference in Madrid in 2019, during a seminar on NBS, Peter Ellis from The Nature Conservancy claimed that logging could be part of such 'solutions', while the improvement of 'reduced impact logging' can be achieved without undercutting timber production. (22)

While the analysts of REDD+ programs admit that logging is an important driver of deforestation, they also claim that in order to keep forests standing, the point is not to stop logging but rather make it 'legal', 'sustainable' and 'community-based'. However, there is growing evidence of SFM's destructive impacts on forests and the involvement of organised crime in 'sustainable' and FSC certified legal logging schemes (23). Instead of boycotting tropical timber, FSC has created and tries to increase recent market demand for 'sustainable' timber.
By far the biggest demand for 'sustainable' tropical timber comes from Europe. The international technical tropical timber association (ATIBT) argues that "there is significant scope for increasing the market share of verified sustainable tropical timber", which translates into increased logging. Germany, the country that hosts the FSC international secretariat,

purchases 32.5% of 'sustainable' tropical timber (24). In 2008, Indonesia was the third biggest exporter of 'sustainable' timber to the EU. (25)

The European Union, for its part, intends to lead global efforts towards a low-carbon economy. During her 2020 "State of the European Union" address, and in reference to the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, EU President von der Leyen announced that the 2030 target for [carbon] emissions reduction would be increased from 40% to at least 55%. She also announced the creation of "1 million electric charging points" and that Europe would become "the first climate neutral continent". The transition to a 'green economy' is apparently an integral part of how the EU plans to foster economic recovery post-pandemic. (26)

Nevertheless, Europe's ambitions will require more minerals, metals and rare metals to produce the batteries, electric cars, charging points, wind turbines, solar panels, geo-thermal energy, and so on. While China has most of the known world reserves of rare metals, Indonesia is among those countries with the most valuable deposits; consequently, a run on minerals and metals in the latter country is expected in the coming years. Indonesia is also known to have the biggest geothermal energy potential in the world. These new markets, worth billions of dollars in 'green energy' resources, will lead to increasing and huge pressure on Indonesia´s forests, waterscapes, arable land and forest-dependant and peasant communities. (27)

The biggest REDD+ funder worldwide, Norway, is the country that proportionally has the most electric cars in the world: one out of two new cars purchased in Norway is electric. Thus while Equinor continues oil extraction elsewhere, in Norway all new cars sold by 2025 must have "zero emissions". (28)

Besides approving REDD+ money for Indonesia, the Green Climate Fund also approved a 10-year project in 2018 to the Indonesian government – through PT SMI -, to scale up geothermal energy. (29) The German government, alongside its UK counterpart, has given technical assistance to the Indonesian government to elaborate its "low-carbon development route" of which geothermal energy is a fundamental pillar. (30) Through the country's KfW development bank – one of the main REDD+ funders worldwide -, Germany has invested US$ 2.3 billion in geothermal energy in Indonesia (31). According to a KfW spokesperson, "potential business opportunities also exist for German companies". (32)

In Indonesia, geothermal mining has encroached on people´s life spaces and invaded protected areas. According to a villager facing a project of geothermal energy: "If our land, water sources, air and livelihoods are being destroyed by geothermal exploration and exploitation, how can this energy be called 'clean'? 'Clean' for whom?" (33)

Final remarks

Nowadays, especially European development agencies, initiatives and funds are pushing for an agenda towards what they call a 'clean', 'green', 'low-carbon' development, without giving up on where their financial wealth is built on: the extraction and burning of fossil fuels. REDD+ is an essential, not less dangerous, part of that agenda, especially in the way it is being used by the governments of Norway and Germany, in tandem with the Indonesian government, as a smokescreen to portray themselves as saviours of the climate, the forests and their people.

Moreover, the Indonesian government is currently using REDD+ as one of their main arguments to counter the critiques on the Omnibus Law. In reply to a letter of 36 international investors criticizing the Law, due to the expected increase in deforestation if it comes into effect, the Indonesian Minister of Environment, wrote that the fact that the GCF and Norway approved REDD+ 'results-based' payments "reflects its [Indonesia's] success in reducing deforestation and forest degradation, as assessed by an independent team appointed by the GCF and Norway". (34) 'Independent' for whom?

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Member of the international secretariat of the WRM

1- REDD has been the dominant international forest policy mechanism since 2005, and has also been a concept constantly re-defined since its introduction: from REDD to REDD+ (including Sustainable Forest Management, Reforestation and Conservation Areas), to jurisdictional REDD+, and at present "results-based" REDD+. In the case of "results-based" REDD+ the only difference with the carbon trade-based REDD+ is that the carbon credits are not being sold to a buyer that then offsets its pollution. Under "results-based" REDD projects, however, the same "carbon accountability" is undertaken in order to know how much carbon is supposedly stored in the forest, and on which the payments are based. "Results-based" REDD+ also continues blaming forest people´s agricultural activities for deforestation, imposing restrictions on their use of the forests. Shifting cultivation, gathering and other subsistence activities are usually prohibited, with restrictions regularly enforced by the support of armed guards. The corporate destruction of forests, for its part, continues unhindered (for more information, see What do Forests have to do with Climate Change, Carbon Markets and REDD+? A toolkit for community activists (WRM, 2017)
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The Green Climate Fund (GCF) must say No to more REDD+ funding requests.

Posted on August 18, 2020

The Board of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) must say No to more REDD+ funding requests. That is the message from more than 80 organisations to the GCF Board on 17 August 2020. The organisations call on the Board to reject in particular two requests from the governments of Indonesia and Colombia, for so-called "Results-Based Payments" for deforestation supposedly reduced years ago. With this the GCF Board would be rewarding governments that continue to heavily engage in and promote large-scale deforestation. Red the letter online here.

Open Letter to Members of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Board:

DThe GCF Board must refrain from approving more REDD+ funding requests. It should reject in particular two requests for so-called "Results-Based Payments" for reduced deforestation years ago: the Indonesian government supposedly reduced emissions from deforestation during the period 2014-2016, and the government of Colombia claims to have reduced emissions from deforestation during the period 2015-2016. It would be a shameful act if the GCF Board rewarded governments that continue to heavily engage in and promote large-scale deforestation. It is important to recall that supposed reduction of emissions from reduced deforestation result from comparison of actual deforestation rates with baselines, derived either from hypothetical future deforestation projections or inflated past emission averages during peak deforestation periods. The majority of REDD emission reductions claimed must thus be regarded as paper reductions that bear little resemblance to the actual emissions that were avoided.

At its 26th meeting from 18 to 21 August 2020, the Board of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) will decide once more on funding requests related to REDD+. This approach that has dominated

international forest climate policy in the past years has been a failure because REDD has been unable to tackle the problem it was supposed to solve: deforestation. Regardless of the mounting evidence that REDD is unfit for purpose, the GCF has become a major international REDD+ funder since 2019. It reserved US$ 500 million for national governments in the global South that claim to have reduced carbon emissions from deforestation between 2013 and 2018. Despite evidence of increases in deforestation in the respective countries, the GCF Board already approved funding requests from the governments of Brazil, Ecuador, Chile and Paraguay. The current trend of increasing deforestation in all of these countries shows that the governments of these countries have either failed to take measures to reduce deforestation or have taken measures that miss the real drivers of deforestation. It would be irresponsible for the GCF Board to approve more funding for countries with rising deforestation.

Approval of the funding requests would ignore both the increasing deforestation rates in Colombia and Indonesia as well as the crucial role the governments in both countries play in this process. They continue to hand out concessions and provide incentives to private (inter-)national extractive, agribusiness and other industries that destroy forests and they plan and implement the infrastructure these industries demand.

Moreover:

1. The GCF is paying governments for supposed results arising from reduced deforestation in the past. These emission reductions are likely to exist on paper only: the governments of Indonesia and Colombia chose the period for which they claim reductions. They also set the reference levels against which actual deforestation during the time they claim to have reduced deforestation is compared. This opens the door for skilful manufacture of calculations that will result in an outcome that is favourable to the respective country. For example, by using inflated reference levels, a country can calculate emission reductions from avoided deforestation even if deforestation rates are rising. What is shameful is that the GCF accepts such games and allows governments to ignore the overall far more complex dynamic of the deforestation process in time and space. In Colombia, for example, the deforestation rate started to increase in 2016, reaching a peak in 2017. What did the government do in its funding request to the GCF? It decided to simply exclude the year 2017 from its calculations, focusing its request to the GCF only on the period 2015-2016. And while the Colombian and Indonesian governments make their requests and argue they deserve money because they reduced past deforestation, present deforestation in both Colombia and Indonesia is on the rise. Arguably, if an emission entered the atmosphere in 2015 or 2020 makes little difference to the risk of climate chaos. This risk of a mere short delay in emissions as a result of REDD always has been and always will be a major difference between postponing emissions from deforestation by a few years and avoiding permanently a release of fossil carbon.

2. Tackling deforestation in a particular country should be done nation-wide to be minimally effective. This requires that governments are coherent in their policies to combat the real drivers of deforestation, which is not the case for Indonesia and Colombia. In Indonesia, for example, in order to speed up the economic recovery after Covid19, deregulation is on the top of the government´s agenda. It aims to speed up 89 priority projects – a US$ 100 billion investment – , with tremendous negative impacts on forests and forest-dependent populations. One example of the deregulation policy is the Minerba Law (Mineral and Coal Mining Law), approved in May 2020 by the Indonesian parliament. In a country with 8,588 mining permits (2018 figures) already handed out, the revised law allows the size of the mining area to be unlimited, with automatic

extension – without any auction or possibility to reduce the area. This change will benefit especially coal mining companies whose permits would otherwise expire soon. How can the GCF Board award US$ 100 million of REDD+ funding to a government that actively promotes deforestation on such a massive scale? Arguing that this is how REDD works – paying for past (supposed) results, while ignoring present increases – is a thinly disguised admission of political expediency over willingness to acknowledge that in such a case, the fault lies with the mechanism. The result in either case should be an end to the Green Climate Fund wasting more money on REDD.

3. One of the most problematic impacts of the REDD+ experience on the ground in the past 10-15 years is what it has done to forest-dependent communities. REDD+ projects and programmes have blamed the main caretakers of tropical forests for the problem of deforestation, restricting or even forbidding their traditional practices in the forest – while those responsible for large-scale deforestation continue their destruction virtually unhindered. Unfortunately, the GCF apparently opted to follow and even reinforce the false narrative of REDD+. Juan Chang, deputy director of the GCF declared in a recent interview that: "if we look at REDD+ as a transition in which you're providing sustainable livelihoods as opposed to unsustainable activities, then there is a point where you do not depend on the payments that REDD+ provides to sustain your livelihoods and keep the forest. That should be the end goal" In other words, Chang sees forest dwellers as those who are to blame for deforestation. He defends a vision where REDD+ should change these forest dwellers´ "unsustainable activities" into "sustainable" ones. If that "should be the end goal", what about the real drivers of deforestation? Executives of palm oil conglomerates, mining giants, cattle barons, oil corporations, financial speculators or the politicians who benefit from granting the concessions and providing the licenses needed for this large-scale deforestation – in other words, the key players in the large-scale deforestation game, are not driven by "payments …to sustain your livelihoods". They are driven by greed that will remain unaffected by a payment of 5 dollars a tonne of CO2 for allegedly reduced emissions.

In fact, all REDD+ projects funded by the GCF have a strong focus on forest dwellers. For example, the main program to be funded with the REDD funding approved to the government of Brazil in 2019 is called "Floresta+". It is about supporting small-scale farmers, indigenous peoples and traditional communities for protecting the Amazon forest. Besides the fact that these communities are already doing that, these communities have not seen any support from this programme yet. Meanwhile, deforestation has been increasing since 2014 and is out of control since 2019, when Jair Bolsonaro assumed the Presidency. The latest deforestation figures indicate a 34% increase in the period August-2019-July 2020, if compared with August 2018-July 2019. What´s worse: the government itself is actively promoting deforestation. It has undermined its own state agencies that should protect the forest; it promotes deregulation of environmental rules; and it has been conniving with the logging companies´ and big farmers´ crimes of invading protected areas, including the territories of indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities. Paying out the full US$ 96 million of a REDD "results" payment to the government of Brazil while deforestation is skyrocketing also puts the GCF's credibility at risk. Hiding behind the argument that this is how REDD is supposed to work is but a lame excuse. If that is really how REDD is supposed to work, it is time to scrap the idea and even more important for the GCF to stop funding such a poorly designed mechanism!

4. Another ignored and extremely concerning on-going trend is the increasing surveillance, intimidation, persecution and criminalization in both Colombia and Indonesia of those who expose their governments and the role they play in promoting deforestation and conniving with

social and environmental crimes. According to Global Witness, Colombia is the most dangerous country in the world for land and environmental defenders, with 64 people killed in 2019. In Indonesia, activists are increasingly suffering from surveillance, intimidation and arbitrary arrests by state security forces. The situation is particularly worrisome in West-Papua, rich in tropical forests with timber, minerals, metals and fertile lands for private and state actors to profit from. In this extremely militarized area, forest destruction has been out of control for years, including the period of 2014-2016 that was elected by the Indonesia government in its GCF funding request. Communities and their supporters suffer constantly from violence, arrests, destruction of property, internal displacement, intimidation and death threats, further aggravated in times of Covid19.

For all these reasons, we urge the GCF Board to refrain from approving further REDD+ funding requests, in particular the two requests on the agenda for its 26th meeting, submitted by the governments of Indonesia and Colombia.

17 August 2020

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Foto: Swait Watch

STORIES OF RESISTANCE

Indonesia: Forest burning and punished victims. The tragedy of the Delang indigenous community in Lamandau, Central Kalimantan

Posted on July 9, 2018. Included in Buletin 238

A ban on indigenous Delang traditional fire-fallow cultivation puts a threat to their food sovereignty and cultural fabric. Despite that most forest fires in Indonesia started within expanding oil palm plantation concession areas, companies are not being persecuted. The Delang however have decided to resist. Read the article online here.

On a journey from Palangkaraya to Nangabulik, the capital of Lamandau Regency in Central Kalimantan, you see a monotonous landscape: oil palm plantations. If you continue the journey to the border of West Kalimantan, you will come across a hilly area with rather dense forest. Delang indigenous peoples live there. Delang is also the name of the district in Lamandau Regency, Central Kalimantan, which is a buffer area for Lamandau Regency with protected forests and Bukit Sebayan (the Sebayan Hill). It is believed to be a sacred place, where the ancestors of Kaharingan, the ancient religion and peoples of the place, used to live.

Delang indigenous community has long been known for their opposition to various destructive investments in their forest and environment, such as oil palm plantations, mining and forest concessions. Most villages at Lamandau Regency and Central Kalimantan in general, however, have already lost their forests.

Since before the Republic of Indonesia existed, up until today, Delang people have been contributing to forest protection. However, unfortunately, they are being punished instead of rewarded for their valuable contribution. The government banned their traditional fire-fallow cultivation (also called 'slash and burn' or swidden cultivation) after vast forest fires rampaged several provinces of Indonesia in 2015.

The blanket banning of shifting cultivation was put in place without any alternative being provided. The ban also contradicts the fact that the ancient practice of swidden farming is protected by environmental protection and management Law. Article 62 of the law allows indigenous communities to carry out fire-fallow cultivation on a maximum area of 2 hectares per family for planting local crop varieties and by building a ditch to prevent fire spread.

Banning shifting cultivation farming without providing any alternative is a tragedy for the Delang community. They have become victims of forest fires and forest clearing by corporate

burning. However, instead of receiving recovery support or compensation for damage caused by others, they have been punished. The government, using police and the army, harasses them, threatens villagers with many years of imprisonment, terrorizes communities with water bombs thrown from helicopters. The water used was sourced from fish ponds traditionally used by communities: their ponds were emptied and the water poured back at them in the water bombing.

Forest and land burning in Central Kalimantan

Forest and land fire incidents have been increasing in Indonesia in the last decade. In 1997 and 1998, forest and land fires were spotted in Sumatera, Kalimantan and Papua, with more than 2 million hectares of peatland having been burnt. These fires became one of the biggest contributors of greenhouse gas emissions in Indonesia. (1) In 2015, forest and land fires took a total area of 1.7 million hectares (2), of which 770,000 hectares were in Central Kalimantan and 35.9% of this was peatland. (3)

Forest and land fires in Central Kalimantan have been recorded since 1992, which coincides with the development of oil palm plantation in Kotawaringin Barat and Kotawaringin Timur Regency. (4) Forest and land burning in Central Kalimantan has three interconnected major factors, namely 1) deforestation and degraded land due to logging, 2) uncontrolled oil palm plantation expansion and 3) corporation's control over an expanding area of land.

80 per cent of forests in Central Kalimantan have been converted into oil palm plantation or been destroyed through mining, the highest figure of deforestation in Indonesia. (5)

Central Kalimantan's forestry office affirms that in 2010 there were more than 7 million hectares of degraded land, mainly due to logging activities. The Watershed Management office of Kahayan emphasized that 7.27 million hectares of the remaining Central Kalimantan forests have been destroyed, with a deforestation rate of 150,000 hectares per year. (7) Logged forests and degraded land with scrub are prone to fires. (8) Large fires are less common in intact tropical forests and, only after a prolonged dry season, these forests would become more vulnerable. Central Kalimantan's government adopted a policy that stipulated that oil palm plantations are supposed to only expand on "degraded land", however, in reality, intact forests have also been converted into oil palm estates. (9) The change in forests and climatic events like "El Niño" have aggravated forest fires in the last 20 years. (10)

Oil palm plantation companies began their operations in Central Kalimantan in 1992. Regional regulation essentially facilitates oil palm investment in the region. (11) As a result, massive expansion of oil palm plantations took place unchecked. Forest and agricultural land, including peatland, have been converted without hesitation. The total allowed conversion area covers almost the same or a bigger area than that of the regency itself. This reveals an out-of-control permit issuance. In 2012, at least 5 regencies issued land conversion permits to companies that covered equal or bigger areas as the administrative regency itself.

Lamandau Regency, where Delang people live, is one of these regencies. With a total area of 641,400 hectares, the Lamandau Regency authority issued permits to corporations covering a total area of 530,526 hectares. Barito Utara Regency issued permits covering a total area of 1,452,468 hectares, whilst the actual size of the regency is only 830,000 hectares. Kapuas

Regency issued permits for 1,761,579 hectares on a total size of 1,499,900 hectares. Gunung Mas Regency issued permits for 996,251 hectares for an actual size of 1,080.400 hectares. Barito Timur Regency issued permits for 359,043 hectares on an actual size of 383,400 hectares. (12)

The Indonesian NGO WALHI Central Kalimantan noted that corporations control 12,7 million hectares of a total 15.3 million hectares of land – more than 80 per cent of the province. They acquired control through logging, oil palm plantation and mining concessions. (13) Many land and forest fires started within these concession areas. In 2015 WALHI recorded 17,676 hotspots in Central Kalimantan, with the majority of those located in corporate concession areas.

A 2008 study by Pasaribu, S.M and Friyatno Supena explained that the cause of fires in Kalimantan was associated with land clearing to establish plantations. According to the study, traditional shifting cultivation systems also contributed to land fires, although only 20 per cent. (14)

Indigenous communities as shield

The majority of land and forest fires have been located inside big companies' concessions. Yet, there is little legal persecution. WALHI Central Kalimantan noted that only 30 corporations were investigated and 10 of these cases are already closed without the companies having been held responsible. None of their cases were followed up. (15) At the national level, the central government listed 413 companies allegedly involved in a total area of 1.7 million hectares and only 14 were sanctioned. Further, WALHI explained, law enforcement has not yet touched the big actors which are involved in vast area of forest burning. Those include Wilmar Group, Best Agro International, Sinar Mas, Musimas, Minamas and Julong Group. They control land use not only through their own concessions but also through the purchase of crude palm oil from mid-size and small companies and profit from land and forest burning on these smaller companies' land. Sanctions and legal persecution are random and selective. (16) In Central Kalimantan, the big companies involved in forest burning include Sinar Mas and Wilmar. (17)

Land clearing using mechanical equipment is twice as expensive as by fires. (18) Oil palm companies employ local people to clear the land through burning. (19)

Research by Bambang Hero, a lecturer at the Forestry Department of Bogor Agriculture Institute, revealed that in 2015 many corporations employed local people to clear land using fire. Companies are using them as a 'human shield' to prevent legal consequences from using fire to clear the land and forest. When the team to verify fire incidence visited the site, the companies would claim that the cleared land belonged to the local community. Six months later, the very land would have changed hands to the corporation and local people who were blamed for clearing the land were nowhere to be seen. (20)

There is a systematic attempt to portray corporate crime as individual crime by putting the blame on indigenous or local communities. The regulation that protects local indigenous farming practices is used to shape public opinion so local customary communities are blamed for forest burning, even where the fires are a result of clearing within concession areas.

Instead of enforcing the law, the government prefers to punish indigenous communities, including the Delang people, for alleged crimes they have not committed. Central Kalimantan's

regulation protecting indigenous Dayak communities' traditional farming practices was revoked by Government regulation No.15/2015. 'No burning' signs were posted on every street corner. The army and police were sent to villages to check and harass people. Those indigenous groups who continued to practice slash-and-burn farming were terrorized, water bombs were dropped from helicopters to put out the fires used within their traditional farming systems.

Victims are punished

The indigenous Delang community is the victim. They have been exposed to the dangerous smoke of forest and land fires that originate in the concession areas controlled by the corporations. They also have taken the brunt of the expansion of the oil palm industry, which resulted in severe economic pressure on Delang peoples and their traditional economies.

In the last 10 years, in addition to losing land to oil palm plantations, the Delang have been exposed to economic pressure due to government policies that are not supportive to local people. They include (1) the drop of the rubber price, (2) the appropriation of community living spaces through designation of villages into forestry areas, (3) deforestation and climate change, (4) the expansion of monoculture oil palm plantations, and (5) environmental degradation through illegal logging by companies.

Rubber is the main crop from which Delang indigenous community generates income, besides rice, dogfruit and fruits. Since the government banned the export of raw rubber, the price has fallen from 20,000 rupiah in 2009 to 5,000 – 6,000 rupiah nowadays.

The issuance of excessive permits for corporate activities resulted in high deforestation rates. Loss of forest has also changed the micro-climate, which in turn affects farming cycles, too. This complicates traditional agriculture. Prolonged rainy seasons and extreme dry seasons lead to a drop in productivity and failed harvests. Unlike before, rice harvests are no longer sufficient to live on for a year. An increase in insect outbreaks further aggravates the situation.

Before oil palm arrived in the area, rice grew well and gave a good yield. There was no insect outbreak. Now, rats and bugs attack people's gardens and have become serious problems. Fruit trees are replaced by oil palm and bees are gone, which has led to a drop in fruit and honey production. On top of this, illegal logging is rampant in the area adjacent to the Delang land, especially after two logging companies started their operation there.

The economic situation of Delang people is dire. Many have sold their land to ease economic problems. The government is adding to the problems by banning traditional farming. People are afraid of the police and the military in charge of enforcing the ban, and yet, in order to survive, people have to farm wherever take-over from corporate concessions has left a little space and opportunity. Because of that, often the harvest is poor. Some dare to carry on with swidden farming. Due to these economic pressures, many have to look for work outside the villages.

Delang people have been treated unjustly. They are not the culprits of forest and land fires. They burn and clear their own fields. People's fields are not concession land. A field is a small plot of land, less than one hectare, whereas concession land can be hundreds to thousands of hectares in size. Farming is for subsistence, not for profit. There have never been large forest fires in Delang due to their traditional small farming practices. Delang people (and Dayak

peoples in general) apply a "fencing" system when practicing shifting cultivation, guided by strict indigenous rules and hefty fines for violators. Each household can only manage one hectare of land and the burning is managed collectively. It's a significantly different practice to the way corporations use fire, where thousands of hectares of land and forests are burned without any capacity to control it.

The ban of traditional farming is not only denying people's right to food sovereignty and rights to a livelihood, but it also decimates the social and cultural fabric of indigenous communities that is connected to these farming activities. People are frustrated with the economic pressure they are facing and with the government policies that put even more pressure to them and jeopardize their livelihoods. In the end, the Delang have decided to resist. They will carry on with traditional swidden farming and they are ready to be put into jail together.

Sri Palupi | The Institute for Ecosoc Rights, Indonesia

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The Road that Threatens to Destroy the "Protected" Harapan Forest in South Sumatra, Indonesia

Posted on September 24, 2020. Included in Buletin 251

The approval of a road construction inside the first Ecosystem Restoration Concession in Indonesia puts in evidence the inherent contradictions of such concessions. While upholding an international image of being concerned with deforestation, the government is engaged in promoting policies that lead to more deforestation. Read the article online here.

The Indonesian government has approved a project proposed by the mining contractor company Miner PT Marga Bara Jaya, to build a 88-kilometer road through an Ecosystem Restoration Concession (ERC) forest in South Sumatra. The approval decision came to light in June 2020 and it gives the company control of 424 hectares of the Harapan forest. The coal-hauling road is for transporting coal from the company's mine to power plants in South Sumatra province. (1)

As explained in a WRM Bulletin article from March 2020, much of Indonesia's state-owned forests have been categorized as so-called "production forests" with Forest Concession Rights, mainly for the logging and plantation industries.

The category of Ecosystem Restoration Concessions (ERCs) was launched as a market-oriented tool, with the stated aim of reversing the increasing deforestation inside the "production forests" that are considered to have high potential for conservation. The regulation for managing ERCs establishes that the license holder should promote restoration activities to "re-establish a biological balance". Once that balance is reached, logging can be allowed again.

The first company to receive an ERC was Resotrasi Ekosistem Indonesia (PT REKI) in 2007, for the Harapan Rainforest Project. That forest is also home to an indigenous, semi-nomad community, the Batin Sembilan. PT REKI is the license holder, while the British Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), BirdLife International and its Indonesian affiliate Burung Indonesia created a non-profit foundation that became the major shareholder of PT REKI.

The project covers an area of almost 80,000 hectares of lowland forest in the provinces of South Sumatra and Jambi. Previously, it was a state-run logging concession and was logged intensively in the past. Now, it is surrounded by oil palm plantations and it is filled with land conflicts, illegal logging and illegal forest clearings for oil palm plantations. (2) Yet, the road project is its single biggest and most destructive threat.

Apart from the deforestation, forest fragmentation and the overall disruption caused by the construction of the road, and subsequently by the constant passing of heavy coal trucks and workers, the road will unavoidably give access to more poachers, illegal loggers and encroachers in the area as well as an increase in human-wildlife conflict.

The approval of a road construction inside the first Ecosystem Restoration Concession in Indonesia is an emblematic example of its contradictions. While the government of Indonesia

upholds an international image of being concerned with tackling deforestation, it is, at the same time, actively engaged in promoting plans and policies that lead to more deforestation. This was also a main reason why in August 2020, organisations from Indonesia and abroad sent an open letter to the Green Climate Fund, demanding it to reject Indonesian government's request for REDD+ funding for supposedly having reduced emissions from deforestation in the past. It is unacceptable that the Fund rewards governments that continue to heavily engage in and promote large-scale deforestation. (3)

WRM interviewed an activist committed to social and environmental justice in Indonesia, who has closely followed the situation in this concession area and the road project, in order to understand better the context and conflicts. His name is kept anonymous for security reasons.

WRM: Conservation NGOs claim that they are restoring the Harapan Rainforest, have you seen this happening? If not, what are the main problems?

Activist:
The condition of the Harapan Rainforest due to the ex–Forest Concession Rights, which have now transformed into the Hutan Harapan Ecosystem Restoration Concession Project, is very critical as a result of forest exploitation.

During the implementation phase of this project, not all the Batin Sembilan Indigenous Communities who reside in this area were invited to participate, one of those left out is the Pangkalan Ranjau People.

In my opinion, the restoration of what once were extractive areas through Ecosystem Restoration Concessions, like the Hutan Harapan Project, should be done by ensuring the strong involvement and guidance of Indigenous Communities at all stages: implementation, restoration, preservation, management, etc., because they are the ones who know the area best and the ones who have already been protecting the forest for generations.

WRM: Why have you been opposing the construction of the road?

Activist:
I am against all forms of exploitation of natural areas, including the exploitation generated by coal mining projects and the establishment of its supporting infrastructure.

The coal haul road is only a manifestation of a bigger problem of exploitation, namely the coal mine itself. Therefore, I firmly reject its presence.

In my opinion, the area is in a very critical condition, affected by all major logging companies due to previous extractive permits.

WRM: A road built in an area that should be restored and conserved does not make sense. Who is benefiting from and supporting such a proposal?

Activist:
The only beneficiaries of this road construction is the coal mining company itself.

WRM: How could the Harapan forest be best restored and conserved, considering the interests of the mining, oil palm and logging industries?

Activist:
The Hutan Harapan Rainforest Restoration must ensure the involvement and guidance of Indigenous Peoples in the area in all aspects and stages. They are the ones who are able to prevent the exploitation of the rainforest and protect the environment. Thus, a collaborative work is needed.

WRM: Now that the road project is approved, what are your plans and what kind of national and international solidarity actions you think are needed?

Activist:
We support Indigenous Peoples in preserving and protecting their customary areas; we continue to object and protest this road construction to the government and related parties both, at the national and international levels; and we are making litigation and non-litigation efforts to reject coal mining expansion in the country.

International exposure of this road project and other destructive projects in Indonesia is crucial to create pressure towards the government and the companies that plan to destroy large areas of forest that forest-dependent communities depend upon.

(1) Mongabay, Indonesia approves coal road project through forest that hosts tigers, elephants, July 2020
(2) REDD-Monitor, Questions for the Harapan Rainforest Project: Land conflicts, deforestation, funding, and the proposed construction of a coal transportation road, 2019
(3) The Green Climate Fund (GCF) must say No to more REDD+ funding requests, August 2020

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Indonesia: Legalizing Crimes Under the Slogan of "Creating Jobs"

Posted on January 15, 2021. Included in Buletin 253

The government of Indonesia endorsed the criticized Omnibus Law by saying that it is "crucial to attract investment and ultimately create jobs." The Law is a direct attack on the territories and communities resisting the increasing destruction that has been ongoing for decades in Indonesia. This article gives voice to six activists confronting firsthand various damaging investments across the islands. Read the article online here.

With the adoption of a so-called Omnibus Law on Job Creation in October 2020, the government of Indonesia has amended more than 75 laws. The biggest impact of this change is expected to be on the environment, for peasant communities and indigenous peoples' rights as well as for worker's rights. This Law modifies (and de-regulates) land-use planning and licensing processes for corporate operations. The Law also gives more power to the central government and the corporate sector –including the coal industry, which directly benefits from a bundle of incentives. For example, the Law exempts coal companies from paying royalties if they develop downstream facilities, such as coal-fired power plants.

This is particularly problematic in Indonesia. A recent article in the WRM bulletin (1) mentions how President Widodo and his family, his Vice-President and other close collaborators are involved in the coal mining industry. Moreover, 262 out of 575 parliamentarians in Indonesia are employee, owner, shareholder or CEO of some of the country's biggest extractive industries and trading companies. Strong signals that businesses have effectively taken over the apparatus of the central government. In this context, it is critical to highlight another key feature of the Omnibus Law: the central government rescinds the right of regional governments to veto an investment project already approved by Jakarta (the capital city where the central government resides). This will increase the conflicts between existing local dynasties and the political elite in Jakarta. (2)

At the same time, the Law limits (and, in cases, even eliminates) the possibility of civil society and affected communities to consult on or challenge the approval of projects like large mines or industrial plantations. It also limits the public's right to file objections against environmental impact assessments once these are approved, even if it can be demonstrated that the approved project will cause ecological and social harm.

Indonesia's Environment Minister argued that this limitation is "based on findings that the interests of directly impacted local communities have often been diluted by indirect outside interests." Likewise, a lawmaker in the parliament's legislative committee which passed the Law, said that criticism from those not directly affected should be limited if they "aren't in line with national interests." (3) These statements are highly problematic. Affected communities are not only rarely informed in a timely and proper manner, and realize the extent of the impacts only when machinery or security agents appear in their territories; but also, what are these "national interests" that the government representatives talk about? Whose interests do they represent?

Since this proposal came to light, thousands of workers took to the streets to reject the Omnibus Law and hundreds of protesters were arrested. Workers' rights have been hijacked, in particular rights aimed at protecting women, who are more vulnerable to being subjugated and exploited. (4) Much has been written about the dangers and risks of the Omnibus Law, even from profit-seeking companies that are worried about their images being tainted as a result of the implementation of the law.

Nonetheless, few materials include voices of community activists from across the islands talking about the likely implications of the Law on their territories and lives. That is why the WRM reached out to a close ally in Indonesia, who dialogued with six community activists who are resisting –some for decades- various damaging investments across the islands. Each of these activists grew up witnessing their island, forests, rivers, coastal water, protein-providing animals, fresh air, being destroyed and seized with the sequences of aggression by the government and/or corporate investment projects. "For each", our Indonesian ally said, "the story and the groundwork which they are part of are deeply personal. Despite the resolute undertone in their voices, the dialogues were marked by a noticeable absence of joviality– something very strange in the local oral cultures in Indonesia. It is a reflection of how dark their inner state is at the moment".

These are their stories (all names are kept anonymous for security reasons).

"Mama Na" fighting industrial oil palm and timber plantations

Mama Na belongs to the Muyu tribe. She lives in Kampung Subur, Boven Digul regency, Papua. Between 2013 and 2014, PT BCA (PT Berkat Cipta Abadi), a subsidiary of the Korean

palm oil and timber conglomerate Korindo Group destroyed at least 12,300 hectares of forest. The Korindo Group is the biggest oil palm plantation company in Papua.(5) Industrial tree plantations company PT MRJ (PT Merauke Rayon Jaya) is also threatening Mama Na's forests and land with its expansion plans.

The plywood company was first established in 1990 and has changed owners three times. The forest had gone. Where will they get the timber from? So, now, outsiders are coming to cultivate oil palms, pursuing other areas, joining the timber plantation company [a category known in Indonesia as HTI]. They just change their name to obtain the business permit. In Kampung Subur, the oil palm plantations company PT BCA has entered the Toweb, Tomba and Burok clans' territories. They have never entered my land. I oppose them because I would lose my land and livelihood. I have seen the impacts.

The water is polluted. Dead fish are all over the Bian and Digul river. When they came to the area, they built a hospital, the Korindo Hospital. It is literally a "sick house" (in Indonesian, Rumah Sakit, means "Sick House") as the company came to make us sick. The damage sinks underground, to the water. So the fish die. When we use the water for cooking, the pot is oily. Since the company entered, we feel that we have lost our culture. No longer do we have our traditions. For example, we have lost our artisanal skills, like making noken, enok, nyiru ayak, which are made using reed and bamboo.

I am now prepared and remain alert to confront PT MRJ and other industrial timber plantations companies. Company people are putting their eyes on the land of the Ikoké clan to build a log pond. They come and say that they are there for tourism or conservation purposes, playing tricks on the community.

Someone from the PT MRJ came yesterday and said in the village hall, "We will make you prosper. We will build, provide clean water, good jobs, we will do that and that for the community." But it turned out that the people said NO to all of that, because they have already felt the real situation. The company tricks have been discovered. So we no longer accept those who want to persuade us. We are suffering more for doing that.

We all rely on forests for food and, nonetheless, we see how forests have been destroyed. We refuse so that we can use the forest that is left together, protecting it and caring for it. If not, where will my children and grandchildren go in the future?

I have six children and they all say that Mama Na is like a warrior for them. All of them are one heart with Mama Na. Our life is not easy. We are neither stubborn nor arrogant. They are wealthy and they never mean wellbeing for us. Time has run out.

Ey fighting a mining company's devastation

Ey is from the Aramsolki Village, in the Agimuga District, Mimika regency. Ey is very active creating a space for community members in three districts to voice their grievances due to the complete devastation of the rivers and estuaries in the area. This high pollution and damage is a result of the massive and direct tailing disposals into rivers and waterways from the mining company PT Freeport Indonesia. Freeport Indonesia operates one of the world's largest copper and gold mines in Papua. (6)

The people who live at the banks of rivers and by the sea have a culture of hunting and they depend on the sea or river. This irresponsible disposal of waste destroys people's lives. Animals start to die slowly as every day they inhale and consume water contaminated by the mud in the mine tailings. We also observed that many people suffer from itching and other health issues.

Freeport tailings waste also results in loss of community access to river transportation. The sedimentation of waste in the Ajikwa / Wanogong river has resulted in an extraordinary siltation along the Sampan river, Puriri Island and Kampung Pasir Hitam, towards the estuary. Previously, community members used this route to cross between islands or to go to the city to meet relatives, sell their crops or exchange economic products from hunting or harvests, and it has also been a route for children to access education. Nowadays people have to wait for the river water to become high enough so that boats or canoes can pass. Sometimes people wait for five hours and sometimes even for a day and a night. Desperate people push their boats over the river covered in waste, resulting in a lot of damage to their boats. Others choose to cross by the high seas, which is very dangerous.

We have lost one village: Kampung Pasir Hitam. And also five rivers: the Yamaima, Ajikwa / Wanogong, Sampan, Ajiira, and Manarjawe river. This is a very serious problem.

Peculiarly, in the middle of a shallow river that has dried up, Freeport is planting trees. We are very angry about this. The company claims to be reforesting, but no one knows that a river has disappeared there! The company plants trees and it also eliminates the evidence.

Ni fighting a geothermal energy project

Ni comes from Jailolo, in the Halmahera Island, North Maluku. Jailolo is an earthquake-prone cluster of villages, bordering a stretch of forests. It is also the name of a recently re-activated volcano. Over the past decade, strong earthquakes have been recurring every year. Since 2008, the PT Star Energy Geothermal Company, a subsidiary of PT Barito Pacific Tbk., was awarded the Jailolo geothermal field concession and began exploration in the 12,960 hectares concession area. The US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) awarded a 733 thousand dollars grant to PT Star Energy Geothermal Halmahera to conduct a feasibility study for the project. (7) In 2017, however, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources took back the concession from Star Energy, and from then on the exploration activities have been carried out by PT Sarana Multi Infrastruktur (SMI) – a joint venture of the Ministry of Finance, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. In early 2020, the government gave a strong endorsement to this investment.

In my opinion, the biggest threat in Jailolo is the government because the government doesn't care and they want to join the geothermal company. Star Energy started to enter since 2008, collecting information. There has been no development or construction yet. But the fear is that most of the people in Jailolo are fisherfolk or farmers. For example, there is one village, the village of Saria, where fishing is the main livelihood and the people farm on the side. There are villages that still depend on the forest, namely the villages of Payo, Pateng, Bobo, Bobo Joko, and Idamdehe. Idamdehe is planned to become a place to drill a geothermal well.

Our forest is still very healthy and we will not let the geothermal project clear away the forest. We have never received proper information about this power plant project. The new Omnibus Law will unquestionably have an enormous impact. The land will be invaded. Those who are

fisherfolk and farmers will lose their livelihoods. With this new Law, the government is helping the company. But the villages have strong unity, especially the Indigenous Peoples of Saria and Idamdehe.

Na fighting a nickel mine

Na is from south-east Sulawesi, where they confront a nickel mining operation. (8) The community successfully blocked the mining activities in 2019 and pushed back their heavy equipment all the way to the project camp on shore. Na has been in the forefront of resistance.

For the community, mining does not do any good. Nothing. If the mining would arrive here, it would be dangerous. First of all, our plants will not bear fruit, because of the dust! There are coconuts, guavas, cloves, nutmeg, and pepper here. Secondly, water. Thirdly, where will the waste go? Into the sea? But this is a fishing village! Those who fish will obviously be hampered. So for us, mining is no good. The impact is huge; we have seen it. Mining is only for a moment. In the blink of an eye, the money will be gone. It is only for a moment because it is all a lie. And indeed, it is all about money. We are so traumatized because of this mining. We must be vigilant, especially not to give up. That is all.

But all lands around the mining site are affected. From the land of my parents to mine, everything is affected. For example, the access road, where vehicles go back and forth, dust is everywhere. We have to wash the banana leaves before using them. Besides, with the mine, the family has broken up. The impacts are obvious, but they weren't aware. There is already this effect. Previously, one stick of fish cost ten thousand Indonesian rupiahs, now it will go up to fifty thousand. Who can afford that price? And we cannot go fishing anymore.

Now, the new Law wants to make licensing easier for big companies, but we defend our rights. The base of my life is in my land. If there are crops, there is hope. We have our plants there. We can make some money from our crops. Without it, I cannot dream with my children and my grandchildren. The mine is so painful for us. Everything is being destroyed. We will cry blood later. But never! I will never give up the land.

Yati Dahlia fighting the plans for a new capital city

Dahlia comes from Penajam Paser Utara, East Kalimantan. Dahlia is an activist and a traditional performing artist who belongs to the Balik tribe, a small tribe located in the heart of where the new capital city of Indonesia is being planned, and near one of the biggest mining regions. There are approximately 5,000 Balik people who also speak their own language.

We don't want to differentiate between tribes. There are the Balik, the Paser and the Dayaks here. But with this enormous project, we feel like we are being set up. They want us to hand over the land… Then we are asked for a photocopy of our ID cards. The main reason is that they want to split the land. Some are thirsty for positions of becoming customary leaders or whatever … We are really agitated. How can we be united if we are still being used by people who only care about themselves?

We have read about this new Law. But this is the land of our ancestors. We are very restless and distressed. The government will not stop until they persuade us to sell our land. They say, "Let's cooperate". I have told my family and friends, who own the land here, that our ancestors do not close their eyes and are watching us from above. Even though the Balik Tribe is a minority, we

need to live in unity to defend the land.

Ah fighting a geothermal energy project

Ah is from Salingka Gunung Talang, Solok regency, West Sumatra. Ah is a community activist who belongs to a movement involving four mountain communities under threat by a geothermal project run by the Turkish consortium PT Hitay Power Energy and PT Dyfco Energi. (9)

Almost all of the residents at the foot of Mount Talang, Solok District are farmers. Even civil servants [known as PNS is Indonesia] are involved in farming to earn additional income. We are proud of our vegetable products, and our delicious and famous rice, namely Bareh Solok. In general, it was a safe place, until 2017, when the geothermal mining project disrupted our lives. Even then, the project was not clear. But we knew that the electricity that they want to produce is not meant for the community. It would not benefit us. The company people forced their way in. Then, the arrests began due to the burning of a company car, although it was not clear who burned it because of the large number of people involved. The people imprisoned because of this incident were locked up from February 2018 to the first month of 2020. Nonetheless, we have consistently blocked the attempts of security brigades and armed forces to enter our area.

We have no news from the company now, and we also observe that there has been no attempt to enter our territory again. But we remain vigilant. With the Omnibus Law we know that there is a huge risk to our safety if the project is carried out.

Despite people's increasing alarm of having their land and livelihoods curtailed further and stolen with the approval of the Omnibus Law, these stories also show how communities will keep resisting the destruction of their forests and land.

(1) WRM Bulletin 252, Indonesia: REDD+, European Development Funding and the 'Low Carbon Economy'
(2) The Interpreter, Indonesia's Omnibus Law won't kill corruption, 2020
(3) Mongabay, Indonesia's Omnibus Law a 'Major Problem' for Environmental protection, 2020
(4) Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, Omnibus Law on Job Creation reinforcing patriarchal mentality, 2020
(5) Greenpeace, PT Berkat Cipta Abadi Oil Palm plantation in Papua, 2018; EJAtlas, Korindo clearing forests for oil palm plantations, Papua, Indonesia, 2020
(6) The Insiders Stories, Freeport Indonesia's Production Rises 9% in the 2Q of 2020; London Mining Network, Mimika's Coastal Dystopia: Besieged by Freeport's Indonesia's Mine Tailings Slurry
(7) The Jakarta Post, Geothermal Projects expand clean energy, 2010
(8) The companies with mining permits on the island include PT Alatoma Karya; PT Bumi Konawe Mining; PT Derawan Berjaya Mining; PT Gema Kreasi Perdana; PT Kimco Citra Mandiri; PT Konawe Bakti Pratama; PT Hasta Karya Megacipta; PT Pasir Berjaya Mining; PT Cipta Puri Sejahtera; PT Natanya Mitra Energy; PT Investa Pratama Inti Karya; and PT Kharisman Kreasi Abadi. See, Asia Times, Mining permits revoked after Wawonii protests, 2019
(9) WRM Bulletin 244, Indonesia. The Gloomy Truth Behind Geothermal Energy: A misleading Narrative of "Clean Energy", 2019

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WRM BULLETIN ISSUES IN INDONESIAN LANGUAGE

Southeast Asia: Connecting People Resisting Large-Scale Investments And Conservation Initiatives

Bulletin 229, February/March 2017 - (In Indonesian)

In 2016, WRM colleagues and friends from most of the countries in the South East Asia region gathered in Thailand / Siam, to share stories from the diverse local contexts of crisis. The gathering centered around a common concern: "what is happening to our forests?" While comparing, discussing and weaving together the similarities, a story of "forest lost" was revealed – in contrast to the "growth and development" image that is falsely presented by political elites and policy-makers. This bulletin includes 7 articles from participants in this gathering.

Women, Tree Plantations And Violence: Building Resistances

Bulletin 236, March 2018 - (In Indonesian)

This bulletin seeks to shine a light on and denounce many of the realities that are generally hidden behind the termed "differentiated impacts" on women who live in and around monoculture plantations. It aims to make visible one of the most violent impacts—and at the same time one of the most cruel forms of oppression, exploitation and domination: sexual abuse and violence against women as a result of establishing industrial tree plantations.

Good Fire or Bad Fire, Who Decides? A Reflection on Fire and Forests

Bulletin 238, June/July 2018 - (In Indonesian)

Forest peoples' knowledge and practices of the use and management of controlled fire in forests have been identified within climate change policies as the cause of uncontrolled forest fires. Nevertheless, fire is critical for ensuring the food and cultural sovereignty of forest peoples. This bulletin contains 6 articles reflecting on the contentious issue of Fire, including an analysis on how capitalism uses Fire for its own benefit.

Voices from the Ground: Communities in Movement and Resistance Strategies

Bulletin 241, November/December 2018 - (In Indonesian)

Despite the many profound damages that industries cause in the world's forests, they also cause something else to emerge: the strong and diverse resistance movements of affected communities defending their territories, livelihoods, cultures and even their existence. This bulletin is a reflection on the diverse resistance movements and enormous challenges that exist today, and on those that are to come. The bulletin asks: how can resistance movements and organization at the grassroots level be strengthened in order to stop the destruction of forests and peoples in the current global context? The bulletin includes 7 articles from activists in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

OTHER RELEVANT ARTICLES AND INFORMATION AVAILABLE ONLY IN ENGLISH

1. Protests on Java against forest destruction by the expanding cement industry

Posted on April 4, 2017. Included in Bulletin 229

Resistance against the cement production complex of the company Semen Indonesia which will destroy the Kendeng karst forest area in uphill Java, has been growing. Patmi, a woman from one of the villages in the district of Tambakromo, died on March 21st, 2017, after days of sit-in protest in front of the Presidential Palace in Jakarta. Summary available also in Indonesian.

2. The resistance of the sacred in Bali to the "green revolution" and the tourism industry

Posted on April 29, 2018. Included in Bulletin 237

Sistem organisasi masyarakat yang berakar pada keyakinan dan konsep sakral memandu hubungan di Bali, Indonesia, dan membantu menentang agribisnis dan mega-pariwisata.

3. Indonesia: The trail of destruction behind a sheet of paper

Posted on September 26, 2018. Included in Bulletin 239

The continuous expansion of industrial tree plantations that provide the raw materials for the production of paper cause a chain of severe impacts. This article looks especially at companies linked to Asia Pulp & Paper Group (APP), APP-Sinar Mas Group, and APRIL.

4. Indonesia: Fate of Fishing Villages in the Climate Crisis and the Failure of 'Blue Carbon'

Posted on May 14, 2019. Included in Bulletin 243

A new carbon offset scheme called Blue Carbon (or Blue REDD+) appeared as a way to allow polluters to keep business as usual while absorbing their emissions within coastal and marine territories. Organizations in Indonesia warn that this scheme is a strategy to transform these territories into tradable assets.

5. The Gloomy Truth Behind Geothermal Energy: A misleading Narrative of "Clean Energy"

Posted on July 15, 2019. Included in Bulletin 244.

"If our land, water sources, air and livelihoods are being destroyed by geothermal exploration and exploitation, how can this energy be called "clean"? "Clean" for whom?" Despite the heavy violence and criminalization towards those resisting the destruction of their territory in Indonesia, their struggle is now getting bigger and stronger.

6. How the Pandemic Strengthens Immunity for Mining Corporate-Oligarchy and Paves the Way to a New Dictatorship

Posted on July 15, 2020. Included in Bulletin 250

This article highlights four trends that evidence how the mining industry continues to benefit from the Covid-19 pandemic while continuing its destruction throughout the archipelago. While corporate-oligarchs are hijacking democracy by perpetuating emergencies, a new dictatorship is being installed under the flag of mining capitalism.

About the World Rainforest Movement (WRM)

The World Rainforest Movement in as international initiative set up in 1986 by activists from different countries to facilitate, support and reinforce the struggle against deforestation and land grabbing in countries with forests and forest-dependent communities. In a gender sensitive way, it aims to assist communities in their struggle to secure access and control over their lands, forests and livelihoods. The WRM supports efforts that defend forests and forest-dependent communities from commercial logging, dams, mining, tree plantations, shrimp farms, agribusiness, as well as other forest preservation-type projects that threaten them, like REDD+ and other offset projects that are part of the increasing trend of commodifying nature..

About the WRM Bulletin

The electronic bulletin of the WRM is intended as a tool to support the struggles of peoples defending their lands and forests as well as to give visibility to the voices of many resistance struggles. Furthermore, the bulletin aims to inform and alert on international initiatives dealing with forests that might have impacts and risks for forest-dependant peoples and other populations. It has been published since 1997 and is distributed in four languages: Spanish, English, French and Portuguese; although sometimes it is also translated in other languages such as Bahasa Indonesia.
To receive the WRM bulletin and other relevant information (in English), you can subscribe at: http://eepurl.com/8YPw5. Subscription is free.

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