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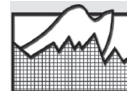
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PROPOSED GLOBAL LAND GUIDELINES: Peddling “Acceptable” Land Grabbing

Jennifer del Rosario-Malonzo

Food insecurity remains an immense problem troubling many countries despite increased global food production. This is essentially because food still does not reach those who need it most, the poor who lack the capacity to buy it. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that over a billion people in the world suffer hunger and millions have already died from the lack of food. Rising food prices underscored this crisis in 2008 and since then the solution being pushed has been increased investments for agricultural production and raising productivity in underdeveloped countries, mainly to expand crops export.

Amid this context emerged a growing trend that has sown disquiet among peoples of the Third World and concerned groups – the acquisition or lease by foreign investors and governments of large tracts of agricultural land in poor countries. This trend has been described as the “global land grab” as it involves rich nations and private investors acquiring thousands of hectares of lands from cash-strapped, underdeveloped countries for their food or agrofuel production.

To pacify the alarm raised by civil society and thwart opposition especially from landless peasants and indigenous peoples affected by the land grab, officials of developed countries and multilateral agencies like the United Nations and the World Bank are busy crafting guidelines

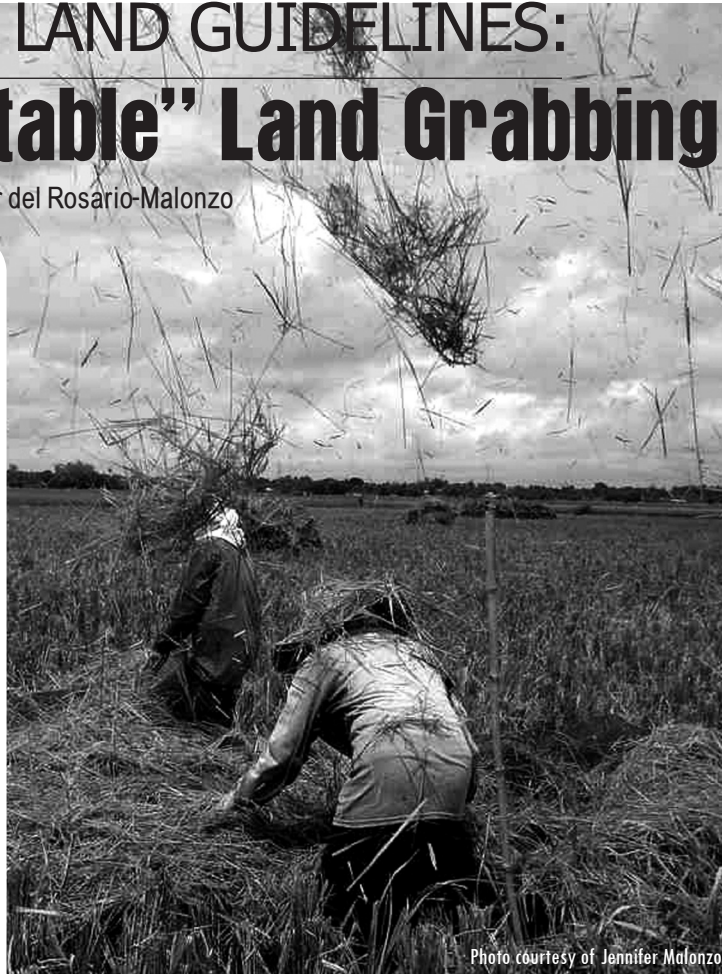


Photo courtesy of Jennifer Malonzo

to make these land deals acceptable and secure the property rights of investors – to become “win-win” and “sustainable” land grabbing.

Land grab across the globe

Foreign acquisition of land is not a new phenomenon in poor countries, but recent land deals are remarkable by their scope and the rapid rise of such transactions. The International Food Policy Research Institute estimates that 15 to 20 million hectares – equivalent to the total farm area of France, or 20% of the European Union’s farmland, or the whole of Uruguay – have been negotiated or secured between 2006 to 2009. At least 180 land transactions have been reported since mid-2008, while Oxfam points to some 120 hedge funds, retirement funds, agribusiness corporations, and private equity funds investing in agricultural lands in developing countries.

Target countries include Cameroon, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Somalia, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia in sub-Saharan Africa. There are also target lands in Central Europe, Asia and Latin America; among them are Brazil, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia

...Even Wall Street banks and investors have become interested in possessing farmlands oceans away, such as Morgan Stanley purchasing 40,000 hectares of Ukrainian agricultural land.

and Ukraine. Lands that attract buyers or investors are those near water resources, where the climate is favorable to crop production, close to markets and therefore easy to export from, and of course relatively cheap. In short, the best agricultural lands. The availability of cheap labor is also an important consideration.

For example, The Oakland Institute noted that in June 2008, the United Arab Emirates, which imports 85% of its food, bought 324,000 hectares of farmland in Pakistan; while China, aiming for a five times increase in rice production over the next half decade, procured 101,171 hectares in Zimbabwe and invested \$800 million in Mozambique. Meanwhile, South Korea, which imports some 60% of its food, has planned private sector-led land acquisitions abroad for food production.

Even Wall Street banks and investors have become interested in possessing farmlands oceans away, such as Morgan Stanley purchasing 40,000 hectares of Ukrainian agricultural land. The demand for biofuels has also prompted investors to target huge acres of land for the production of crops for biofuels. In the Philippines, for instance, the government has granted the use of 60,000 hectares of land

to Japan's Pacific Bio-Fields Corporation, a coconut biodiesel developer. In fact, the Arroyo government has already approved three million hectares for use of foreign agro-corporations.

The United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the right to food Olivier De Schutter reported that such large-scale land leases or acquisitions can be explained by: 1) the rush towards agrofuels production, encouraged by fiscal incentives and subsidies in developed countries; 2) population growth combined with the exhaustion of natural resources (long-term food security objective); 3) increased concerns on availability of fresh water, which is becoming a scarce commodity in some regions; 4) increased demand for raw materials from tropical countries, like fiber and other wood products; 5) expected subsidies for carbon storage through plantation and avoided deforestation; and 6) particularly for private investors, speculation on future increases in the price of arable land.

Promoting "principles and standards"

Citing concerns on human rights including informed participation of and benefits to local communities, UN agencies such as the FAO, donor governments and the World Bank are crafting non-binding guidelines for foreign investments in farmland to transform malpractices into "win-win" scenarios for investors and host countries. FAO has embarked on country consultations, which is intended to result in the *Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and other Natural Resources*.

According to FAO, the guidelines "set out principles and internationally accepted standards for responsible practices." They only serve as a framework for governments to use in creating their own strategies, policies and laws. The agency said the voluntary guidelines must be consistent with existing international instruments that address access to land and natural resources, noting that such access is

linked with livelihoods especially of the poor.

The World Bank, meanwhile, minces no words in favoring large-scale land acquisitions as it believes there are “land abundant regions” where such transactions are opportunities for development. It is proposing that these deals be done under a set of “principles”, emphasizing that these are not a code of conduct. It explained that the principles apply to all “stakeholders”, meaning that the proposed guidelines are never meant to discipline investors or financiers.

A FAO discussion paper that outlined examples of what might be included in the voluntary guidelines “to stimulate discussion of what should be in a draft proposal” put forward provisions on establishing criteria to identify land and other natural resources that can be privatized and procedures for transfer of ownership. It also suggested identifying public land and resources that can be leased or opened for other arrangements and creating procedures for access to such lands. Even with much reference to human rights and equitable development, it still promoted the acceptability of foreign and private acquisition of productive communal lands as it echoed the World Bank’s concept of responsible and sustainable investment in land and other natural resources.

Such guidelines or principles clearly tend to legitimize and perpetuate global land grabbing, which undermines the people’s sovereignty over their country’s natural resources. Since the guidelines are voluntary and non-binding, they do not have much use for preventing abuses. On the other hand, they will serve the interest of foreign investors who want to soften or appease opposition. The guidelines will encourage foreign ownership of vast fertile lands, which is deplorable amid landlessness of farmers and insecurity of the ancestral domains of indigenous peoples.

The current land grab trend further expands corporate control over the global food system, a development whose dire consequences are already suffered by the world’s poor and hungry population. Corporations and investors

are turning to agriculture not to ensure food stability, or address hunger and rural underdevelopment; they are simply out for profit. Thus, a “win-win” situation is hopeless as foreign investors produce for the profitable global market, while host countries themselves are food insecure and thus need to produce for domestic consumption.

Impacts of land grabbing

Despite claims that the global land grab is facilitating agricultural investment into impoverished nations, such land deals benefit only transnational corporations and large landowners and agro-corporations in developing countries. On the other hand, farmers, indigenous peoples, fisherfolk and other rural inhabitants effectively lose their farmlands and their access to the commons as these are transformed into industrial plantations producing for export. The implications are broad – from loss of access to water and other resources to wholesale displacement of communities and livelihoods. Disenfranchised

...Corporations and investors are turning to agriculture not to ensure food stability, or address hunger and rural underdevelopment; they are simply out for profit.

farmers easily become exploited, cheap labor for large plantations. As the rural poor become mired deeper in poverty, they fall into the hunger trap of malnutrition, disease, and curtailed productivity and damaged potential for human development.

Such foreign acquisition of lands also goes against the farmers’ long-running historic struggle for land. Many agrarian reform programs have already been diluted or perverted by the so-called market-oriented land reform, another World Bank-promoted concept. The increasing market pressures on



Photo courtesy of Jennifer Malonzo

land resources are further threatening small producers and minorities who have insecure or informal land rights.

The environmental impacts of large investments are also significant; in order to be lucrative, foreign investments mostly focus on industrial agro-production with intensive use of chemical fertilizer, pesticides, and large-scale irrigation schemes which lead to overuse of resources and land degradation.

Food self-sufficiency, a goal fervently expressed by many Southern governments at the peak of the food crisis triggered by high food prices, is jeopardized by such land deals as food production for export directly competes with local needs. It is the height of hypocrisy for developed countries and international agencies to speak of “win-win” and “sustainable” land deals when target countries are in fact net food importers or recipients of food aid.

The poor farmers and other marginalized sectors in rural areas have had long, bitter experience with transgressions of foreign corporations usurping their lands and resources, usually with the permission of corrupt governments. It is thus ridiculous to believe that these land grabbers would suddenly subsume their profit interests for the benefit of the poor. Any victory on holding corporations to account was won not by toothless codes but by arduous and unrelenting struggle of the people.

Bargaining Mindanao

The Philippines, where seven out of 10 farmers do not have their own land to till, has ironically become a hotspot in the rush for land lease deals. Mindanao’s fertile lands are prime targets for foreign investors looking for thousands of hectares to acquire for crops and biofuels production.

For example, investors from Saudi Arabia are reportedly staking \$300 million to produce cash crops such as bananas and pineapples in 20,000 hectares of land in Mindanao. Also, a Bahraini company entered into a P300-million agribusiness project with a local firm to produce crops for local and export markets. In Davao alone, some 4,000 hectares of land have been eyed by Middle East-based companies to grow their products. The Arroyo government is even mulling the possibility of a special economic zone for Arab investors, who are interested in grains, livestock and poultry, cattle-raising, fishery and mariculture production. Also, the government is looking at increasing land lease terms to 75 years, from the current 25 years.

US investors are equally scrambling for their share of productive soils in Mindanao, with the US Department of Agriculture itself leading the investment scam. US companies have been offered large tracts of land for biofuel and aquaculture production, assuring them of lands “cleared of issues” by concerned government agencies (agriculture, agrarian reform and environment and natural resources).

The government claims Mindanao has over 171,000 hectares open to foreign agro-investors. And yet peasant landlessness is an age-old problem in the island. The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) is appalled by the government’s land deals. Peasant leader Rep. Rafael Mariano said, “The increasing trend of global corporate land grabbing in this country is a direct affront to our national patrimony and undermines the Filipino farmers struggle for genuine land reform.” He scored the folly of selling our lands for other nations’ food security while the country is itself dependent on food imports and 24% of Filipino families is stalked by hunger (December 2009 SWS survey).

Jennifer del Rosario-Malonzo is a Policy Officer with IBON International.

50 YEARS OF MEANINGLESS RESEARCH IS ENOUGH!

Roundtable Discussion Tackled Why IRRI Should be Closed

Felix Canimo

Leaders of farmer's organizations, health professionals, scientists, non-government organizations (NGOs) and other concerned individuals gathered in a roundtable discussion on the 50 years of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). Spearheaded by the Resistance and Solidarity Against Agrochemical TNCs (*RESIST! Agrochemical TNCs*), the talk focused on natural calamities such as drought, El Niño, and climate change and how these severely affected Philippine agriculture. The discussion scrutinized IRRI's role in the country's goal of achieving self-sufficiency in rice.

IRRI claims to "help feed almost half the world's population". It is an international research institution established in 1960, assigned by the United Nations to safeguard the diversity of the world's rice germplasm at its International Rice Gene bank, and mandated to support the development of rice research within national agricultural research systems. IRRI is part of the Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research, which is composed of different agricultural research institutes around the globe.



IRRI is the so-called "home of Green Revolution in Asia"; the central institution through which the Green Revolution model for rice expanded throughout Asia in the 1970s.

The Philippines, as the host country of IRRI, has had access to the technologies that IRRI developed. But after 50 years of applying IRRI's programs on rice farming, the country is now the world's largest rice importer, procuring 10 percent of its rice requirement from the world market because Philippine agriculture has remained backward and farmers have been made dependent on agrochemicals. IRRI only served the business interest of transnational corporations (TNCs), including the propagation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and corporate farming.

The 50 years operation of IRRI propped up expensive technologies not beneficial to poor farmers. Rice farmers were forced to use expensive pesticides and fertilizers leading to costly production. Furthermore, farmers could no longer exchange seeds because of IRRI's rice varieties which tampered with the natural

regenerative attribute of seeds. With over a billion people suffering from undernutrition and some 2.3 million deaths due to hunger, IRRI has clearly failed to address hunger and malnutrition around the world.

MASIPAG (Farmers and Scientists for the Development of Agriculture) National Coordinator Dr. Chito Medina said that IRRI defends GMOs and puts a seal of legitimacy on the products of TNCs. This has led to increasing commissioned research, which depends on the priority of TNCs. This research is not environmentally sustainable or viable as a solution to climate change. For example, aerobic rice, a variety that needs less water, is in essence a high-yielding variety (HYV) that still requires so much fertilizers and pesticides. MASIPAG said that it is very clear that IRRI's new seeds and technology have not offered a workable solution.

To score IRRI's 50th anniversary, *RESIST! Agrochemical TNCs* has come up with 50 compelling reasons why IRRI must be shut down.

Among these are:

- IRRI has changed the nature of rice research in Asia; research that should be geared to genuinely address the needs of Asia's people.
- IRRI has systematically deceived farmers by introducing HYVs of rice to boost crop yields. But HYVs are a threat to the environment and agriculture of the Philippines and all countries where HYVs are planted.
- IRRI has declared its Green Revolution a success in increasing crop yields. But the Green Revolution has also led to the poverty of farmers and the people.
- IRRI cannot deny its influence on government policies on agriculture. It has

never been neutral. Governments have used the Green Revolution as an effective instrument to divert the clamor of farmers for genuine agricultural development to fake development focused on high crop yields.

- From the establishment of IRRI, agrochemical TNCs have been the sole beneficiaries of IRRI's programs and technologies. IRRI is a stamp pad for technologies created by TNCs.

IRRI must be replaced by a rice research institution that will serve the genuine interests, capacity and needs of farmers and the people.

The discussion also raised problems faced by IRRI workers. More than 700 workers of IRRI face job insecurity due to the management's current retrenchment scheme targeting those near retirement age. Other labor issues at IRRI include a management-established union that involved managerial-level employees and use of agency-hired workers to skirt labor standards on hazardous work conditions, particularly exposure to harmful chemicals.

The roundtable discussion was part of the year-long protest against IRRI's 50th year dubbed "Year of Rice Action (YORA)" that started last April 4, 2009. Every month different activities were conducted in 14 countries in Asia. The YORA culminated on April 12, 2010 in the Philippines, while simultaneous actions were held in different countries in Asia. It was led by the Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific with the participation of members of the Asian Peasant Coalition.

Felix Canimo is a former coordinator of the People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty, a network of grassroots groups of small food producers particularly of peasant-farmer organizations and their support NGOs working towards a People's Convention on Food Sovereignty.



Photo courtesy of Mon G. Lauron

While the whole world is grappling with the dreadful effects of climate change, the world's premier rice center, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), offers nothing but the same old technological solutions. Problem with drought? IRRI has a drought-tolerant variety. Problem with flood and salt-water intrusion? IRRI has the varieties too. But none of it is really going to work. The problem is not that there is climate change, but that it is largely a result of an industrial food system that IRRI's seeds and technology continue to perpetuate and reinforce.

FIFTY REASONS WHY IRRI SHOULD BE SHUT DOWN

Resistance and Solidarity Against Agrochemical
TNCs (*RESIST! Agrochemical TNCs*)

On April 04, 2010 IRRI will celebrate its 50th anniversary in the midst of a global food and climate crisis. At least 2.4 billion people are currently living in highly water-stressed environments. As we write, at least 2.3 million people have already died of hunger while more than a billion people are suffering from undernutrition. (<http://www.stopthehunger.com>)

The poor farmers and the rest of the marginalized sectors across Asia believe that it is time for IRRI to close shop. Fifty years of shameless existence is enough. We offer fifty reasons why this "IRRI-sponsible" institution should be shut down.

A. IRRI has changed the nature of rice research in Asia; research that should have been geared to genuinely address the needs of Asia's people

1. Because IRRI promoted the Green Revolution program which changed rice farming system into one that is costly, poisonous and not relevant to farmers' conditions.

...Because IRRI endorsed the use of chemical inputs and huge amounts of water, thereby contributing to the worsening of climate change.

2. Because of IRRI's influence, National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems (NARES) in Asian countries have been conditioned to adhere to IRRI's prescriptions.

3. Because IRRI advances the notion that the only solution to hunger is to increase rice production by any means and at any cost.

4. Because IRRI's research agenda is decided upon by its funding institutions, which are mostly private agricultural corporations whose main interest is profit.

5. Because IRRI systematically detached farmers from participating in any venue for the development of rice varieties.

6. Because IRRI turned farmers into passive and dependent recipients of IRRI technology.

7. Because IRRI, by deceiving farmers, has stored a rich collection of rice varieties in its facilities which only benefit local and

transnational corporations.

8. Because IRRI influenced the direction of agricultural education, research and decision-making by universities and public institutions, with strong private agenda.

B. IRRI systematically deceived farmers when it introduced high-yielding varieties (HYVs) of rice to boost crop yields, when in fact these caused massive environmental damage and far worse agricultural conditions.

9. Because IRRI, through its package of technologies, caused massive erosion of traditional yet effective farming systems and made farmers dependent on IRRI and transnational corporations.

10. Because IRRI promoted the massive loss of traditional rice varieties and genetic diversity in Asia.

11. Because IRRI essentially prevented farmers from freely exchanging seeds, by promoting use of hybrid rice seeds, and in the near future, IPR-protected genetically modified seeds.

12. Because IRRI promoted the extensive use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers which caused the poisoning of waters and soils.

13. Because IRRI endorsed the use of chemical inputs and huge amounts of water, thereby contributing to the worsening of climate change.

14. Because IRRI created seeds that invited more pests into farms.

15. Because IRRI's technology introduced two of the most destructive and persistent rice pests and diseases along with its seeds – the tungro virus and golden snail.

16. Because the productivity of IRRI's rice varieties had already reached its plateau as early as the 1980s.

17. Because IRRI's research on genetically modified rice varieties could seriously compromise the environment and people's health once released.

C. IRRI boasts of the success of its Green Revolution program in increasing rice productivity. However, it brought nothing but disappointment, frustration and much worse living conditions for small farmers and majority of the people.

18. Because IRRI encourages the use of costly farming inputs that pushed farmers neck-deep in debt and poverty.

19. Because IRRI has made the majority of farmers – ironically the food producers – at the forefront of hunger.

20. Because IRRI, through its poisonous chemical inputs, caused the sickness and death of many farmers. Pesticide poisonings is estimated at 25 million occurrences involving agricultural workers per year because of the increasing use of fertilizers and pesticides that IRRI's modern rice varieties require.

21. Because IRRI caused the helplessness and desperation of millions of farmers, forcing them to turn their backs on farming.

22. Because, despite the supposed success of IRRI's programs, the price of rice in the market has continued to go sky-high.

23. Because, in spite of IRRI's alleged developed technology, majority of the people in Asia still go hungry.

D. IRRI cannot deny its influence on government policies on agriculture. It has never been neutral. Governments have

used the Green Revolution as an effective instrument to divert the clamor of farmers for genuine agricultural development to fake development focused on high crop yields.

24. Because IRRI, in cahoots with the Philippine government, swindled farmers of their lands where IRRI's 252-hectare headquarters now stand.

25. Because IRRI pushed governments to adopt its seeds and technology to ensure rice sufficiency that all miserably failed.

26. Because IRRI can not deny its hand in the passage of the Presidential Decree 1620 to protect its interests. IRRI now invokes this law to dismiss unfair labor practices filed against it by IRRI employees and workers.

27. Because IRRI, again invoking PD 1620 (the presidential decree that grants diplomatic immunity to IRRI), does not own up to its obligation to provide protection to the workers in its experimental farms, who are perpetually exposed to poisonous chemicals that cause their sickness and death.

28. Because IRRI, in the face of farmers' protest actions that call for its closure, still had the audacity to continue its operations in the Philippines.

29. Because the Philippine government continues to adhere to IRRI's prescriptions, the country still has not attained self-sufficiency in rice.

30. Because with IRRI's help, the Philippines is now the largest importer of rice in the world. The country is going to import an all time high of 2.2 million metric tons of rice this year.

31. Because IRRI serves as advisers to money-rich countries to lease from poor countries agricultural lands, where they can plant rice

and other produce.

E. Since the establishment of IRRI, agrochemical transnational corporations (TNCs) have been the sole beneficiaries of IRRI's programs and technologies. IRRI is a stamp pad for technologies created by these TNCs.

32. Because IRRI changed the sustainable and self-sufficient farming into a practice that is costly, based on chemical inputs and high technology, and tied to a market system that is monopolized by TNCs.

33. Because IRRI has been an instrument of imperialist countries, especially the US, for Asian countries to open up their markets for agrochemical products.

34. Because IRRI and its Second Green Revolution or Gene Revolution legitimized the control of TNCs over rice varieties and seeds. IRRI did this in exchange for continued funding from TNCs.

35. Because IRRI assisted agrochemical TNCs in gaining huge profits while billions across the world go hungry.

F. IRRI must be closed immediately! It must be replaced by a rice institution that will serve the genuine interests, capacity and needs of farmers and the people.

36. Because IRRI's costly, chemical-based and profit-oriented type of agriculture should be eliminated.

37. Because we prefer sustainable agriculture that is more environment-friendly.

38. Because we want safe, affordable, nutritious and appetizing food.

39. Because we demand genuine agrarian reform.

40. Because we want farmers to be free from debt and poverty.

41. Because we want farmers to have increased rice yields.

42. Because we want to nurture our environment.

43. Because we want to lessen farmers' costs of production.

44. Because we want farmers to adapt to the effects of climate change.

45. Because we want to eradicate malnutrition with the help of sufficient and balanced food.

46. Because we want to be free from the control and exploitation of foreign and local agricultural corporations.

47. Because we want the workers victimized by IRRI to receive indemnification.

48. Because we want IRRI to be held accountable for its crimes to the people.

49. Because we want the farmers to get back the lands which IRRI seized from them.

50. Because we want agricultural science and technology that serve the interest of the people.

Despite the 50 years of IRRI – the self-proclaimed home of the Green Revolution – rice farming throughout Asia has not improved. 50 years of Green Revolution, yet our food systems are in crisis with poverty and hunger rising across Asia. New technologies and modern varieties are clearly not the answer.

Enough with IRRI's worthless researches and seeds! Shut down IRRI now!



THE NORTH'S DESTRUCTIVE MODEL

After the failure of the UN's climate summit, the international community has to pick up the pieces and find a new approach to tackling global warming. Hans Dembowski discussed the matter with Tony Tujan of the Manila-based IBON Foundation.

In European media, China and the USA are considered to have caused the failure of the Copenhagen Climate talks. Do you agree?

I think it is too simple to blame these two countries in isolation. Several factors contributed to the failure. First of all, the notion that all countries should accept binding emissions targets is misleading. It does not make sense to try to resolve the major environmental crisis humanity is facing with such quotas. We need a new development paradigm, a model of development that would lead to a healthier world.

But greenhouse emissions are driving climate change, and climate change will have a severe impact on humanity. It is already felt – in the form of floods, landslides, draughts, storms et cetera – and particularly so in the poor world. So emissions must be reduced, and fast. I think large developing countries with fast growing economies like China or India must cut emissions too.

It is true, China and India are following the

North's destructive model of industrialisation. Their strategy of GNP growth at all costs is not sustainable, but neither is the life style of rich nations. On the other hand, it is much easier for rich nations to cut emissions than for poor ones that do not have the same technological options and do not have access to the same range of commodities.

China has promised to cut emissions per economic output. That is not a binding target in absolute terms, but is a target. Western governments seemed to be ready to accept such an approach in principle, but there were still arguments about who would check these data. And it obviously makes sense not to put too much faith in the statistics of an authoritarian government like China's.

Yes, China is run by a brutal regime, the data it publishes are probably distorted and the course it is steering is hurting its people. Eventually, the governments of other developing countries will understand these facts. Indeed, environmental concerns are growing in China too, and not in a romantic sense of people loving nature. They

Photos' Source: www.flickr.com

are feeling the pain, their health suffers from environmental damages. Obviously, the economic strategy that is basically focused on speeding up industrial growth and making China the factory of the world is not what the people need. However, your argument is still fixed only on emissions statistics, and that approach won't help. We need a better paradigm.

What would that mean?

I'm thinking of an economic model that does not emphasise individual incomes and their personal consumptions. We must look at people's quality of life in more comprehensive terms, taking account of health, creativity, skills and values as well as the welfare of communities. Such a model would obviously take into account a sound environment. A consumer society of the type you have in Western Europe or North America is neither desirable nor environmentally possible all over the world. Consumerism is not sustainable, it is as simple as that. Therefore, change will be more difficult in rich nations than in the developing world, because in the North, you are already used to consumer lifestyles.

But why do the governments of the least developing countries, who will suffer most from climate change, allow China to pretend to be their leader at UN events rather than to demand change from China too?

The governments feel pressed to the wall. As long as talks focus only on emission targets and do not take a more holistic view of things, including, for instance, climate debt, they will not budge. The rich nations have been polluting the atmosphere for decades, they are responsible for the climate change we are witnessing today. They will have to come up with reparation payments, but

cannot tie all other countries into a single system of binding emissions targets. That is something all developing countries agree on, including India and China. And look, the emissions from those countries that investment bankers call "emerging markets" have hardly had an impact on the global climate, they are only a tiny fraction of total emissions historically.

But their share is growing fast, and it will have an impact.

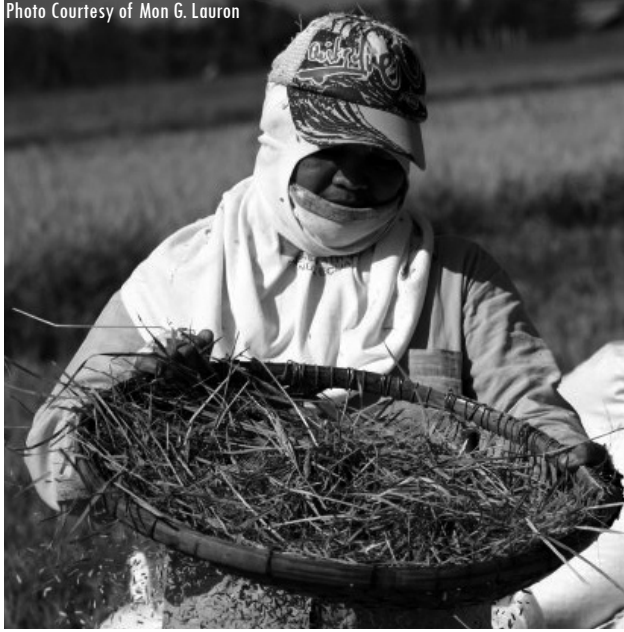
Yes, and as I have said, we need a new development paradigm for all of humanity, including the rich nations. The Kyoto Protocol, as it has been applied, is really about keeping matters as they are and trying to boost some kind of cleaner technology. It is not about change in rich nations, it is not about climate justice. If we were dealing with a more convincing proposal, one that was geared to a more holistic development model, you would see movement in the G77, the big block of developing countries in UN negotiations. The smaller countries would opt for that kind of change – and eventually China would follow suit. The regime in Beijing certainly does not want to be isolated. In a way, the dynamics of merely target-focused talks have allowed China to hide behind the bulk of developing countries.

Who can promote such a new model, apart from civil society organizations? Is there any government in the developing world that could press the matter?

I'm not sure; Bolivia might be in such a position but Brazil might have more clout. But I am an optimist, I believe in the power of good ideas. In a way, the failure of Copenhagen may yet prove useful, if it allows us to unravel some of the underlying misconceptions. Humanity really needs a new paradigm.

Tony Tujan Jr. is international director of the non-government organization IBON Foundation based in Manila. Hans Dembowski is the editor of D+C Development and Cooperation and the German twin publication E+Z Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit.

Photo Courtesy of Mon G. Lauron



Photos' Source: www.flickr.com



Women in Agriculture Food Rights and Wrongs

Molly D. Anderson

Food sovereignty encompasses many of the measures that are needed for women to achieve their full human rights, including the right to food.

The number of people in the world who are hungry because of insufficient calorie intake rose from about 840 million in 2003 to more than a billion in 2009, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Another billion people may have enough calories but are malnourished and in chronic poor health due to micronutrient shortfalls. This means that nearly one-third of the world's 6.8 billion people are malnourished and unable to secure sufficient healthy food to conduct normal activities.

The sharp surge in food prices and hunger in 2008 led to massive civil unrest and helped topple national governments in Haiti and Madagascar; currently there are 31 countries on the FAO's list of those in crisis and in

need of external food assistance. The one bright aspect of this global tragedy is that more wealthy nations and international organisations are recognising the need to increase funding for agricultural development, which had dropped precipitously since 1979. Yet there are still big questions about how these funds will be invested and who will benefit.

While hunger and malnutrition afflict people in every country, they impact women most severely. More than 60% of the chronically hungry are women. Pregnancy and lactation impose major nutritional stresses on women's bodies, menstruation leaches iron from women's blood, and laws and social customs giving women lower status and denying their rights to an equal share of household and public goods take food from women's mouths. Simply

being female is a significant risk factor for suffering hunger at some point in one's life, and the consequences of hunger are deep and lasting.

In almost all countries, female-headed households are concentrated among the poorer strata of society and often have lower incomes than male-headed households. The number of female-headed households is increasing significantly in rural areas in many developing countries as rural men migrate due to the lack of employment and other income-generating opportunities. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, 31% of rural households are headed by women, while in Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia, women head 17% and 14% respectively. Even in the US – the world's wealthiest country – the largest food-insecure group is mothers trying to raise children on their own. The latest US figures show that more than 30% of female-headed households with children are food insecure, compared with 10% of all households with children; and children in female-headed households are more likely to be hungry.

Food insecurity and hunger are malignant and have lifelong consequences even if food becomes available. Recent research is showing ways that the stress associated with food insecurity changes brain chemistry, leading to chronically elevated stress hormones and a less effective immune response. When hunger and food insecurity are rampant, they affect the ability to think, work and plan. So people who are suffering from hunger often cannot see a way out, even if solutions are there.

Ironically, at the same time that women are the most vulnerable to hunger, they produce most of the food, especially in those countries most prone to food insecurity. Women produce 60-80% of the food in most developing countries and are responsible for half of the world's food production. They make up the majority of urban farmers in many cities around the world, although their contributions to total agricultural production may be discounted or invisible.

Since the earliest stages of humankind's evolution, women have always been food producers and nourishers. They are largely responsible for feeding the children and the adult male members of the household as well. In addition, they have been the primary crop breeders, seed-savers and sources of knowledge about native biodiversity in traditional societies. Women bred most of the plants from which transnational corporations are trying to patent germ-plasm for crop breeding and pharmaceuticals. Women around the world continue to draw on extraordinary plant diversity to nourish their families. For example, peasant women in Uttar Pradesh, India derive almost half their income from forest species. Even middle-class women in the same region obtain a third of their income from the same source.

But at some point in history, women's essential contributions to feeding society became devalued. This may have been part of the commercialisation and commodification of foodstuffs, when food was shifted from the realm of the sacred and the home into the realm of commerce and profits. Or it may have happened earlier in human history, when paternal societies began to dominate and view women and their labour as the property of men, comparable to cows or inanimate objects. What is certain is that today, women are excluded in many countries from owning or accessing the natural resources that they need to grow food.

Recent FAO studies confirm that while women are the mainstay of small-scale agriculture, the farm labour force and day-to-day family subsistence, they have more difficulty than men in gaining access to resources such as land, credit and the inputs and services that enhance productivity. Women's limited access to resources and their insufficient purchasing power are a consequence of interrelated social, economic and cultural factors that force them into a subordinate role, to the detriment of their own development and that of society as a whole.

This imbalance in power and perception of

the value women provide in the food system exists not only in poor developing nations: males have much more power in the global food system and they dominate administrative and management positions. Women are under-represented in agricultural extension, research,

...Food sovereignty encompasses many of the measures that are needed for women to achieve their full human rights, including the right to food.

teaching and business, even where the majority of students in biology and several agricultural and food disciplines are female. Sadly, even alternative agriculture replicates the male-dominated model: women staff and run most of the non-governmental organisations in the US that promote healthier, fairer and more environmentally responsible agriculture, yet almost all of the 'experts' interviewed in several recent US films that promote food systems with these attributes were male.

Food sovereignty has emerged as a different way of viewing how food systems are and should be, and its principles draw attention to the particular needs for women to have ownership and control of land and for rural women to be direct, active decision makers in food and rural issues. The concept of food sovereignty was first raised at the 1996 World Food Summit by La Via Campesina, the international movement that represents peasant family farm-based food production across the globe. Food sovereignty, at its simplest, is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.

At the third international world food summit, held in November 2009 in Rome, a parallel

forum on peoples' food sovereignty was organised by non-governmental and civil society organisations. Women fishers, farmers and pastoralists from all regions of the world and representing numerous Indigenous peoples attended to tell their stories and work on remedies to the global food crisis.

Although food sovereignty advocates might not prioritise this solution, an obvious need is to better document women's contributions to food systems through gender-specific data collection and better monitoring of the impacts of barriers to participating in food systems and achieving the right to food for women. More direct on-the-ground needs include ensuring women's ability to own and access resources to produce and market food; providing education for women and by women (such as by training women to become agricultural extension agents and encouraging girls to attend school); investing in technology and services that smallholding women and their organisations need to raise family incomes and increase production of healthy food; and giving women control over decision-making relevant to their own and their families' food systems. Many of these measures will require changes in legal systems that are skewed against women, or do not recognise they have human rights.

Food sovereignty encompasses many of the measures that are needed for women to achieve their full human rights, including the right to food. Although political will to invest in agriculture seems to be growing, hungry people can't wait. It is essential that the questions about who will benefit from that investment and how women's food sovereignty can be increased with added funds be answered promptly and transparently. While more investment in agriculture is vital, the wrong kinds of investment could contribute to further inequity in the food system. – **Third World Network Features**

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Gaviotas: Village Of Hope

Seth Biderman & Christian Casillas

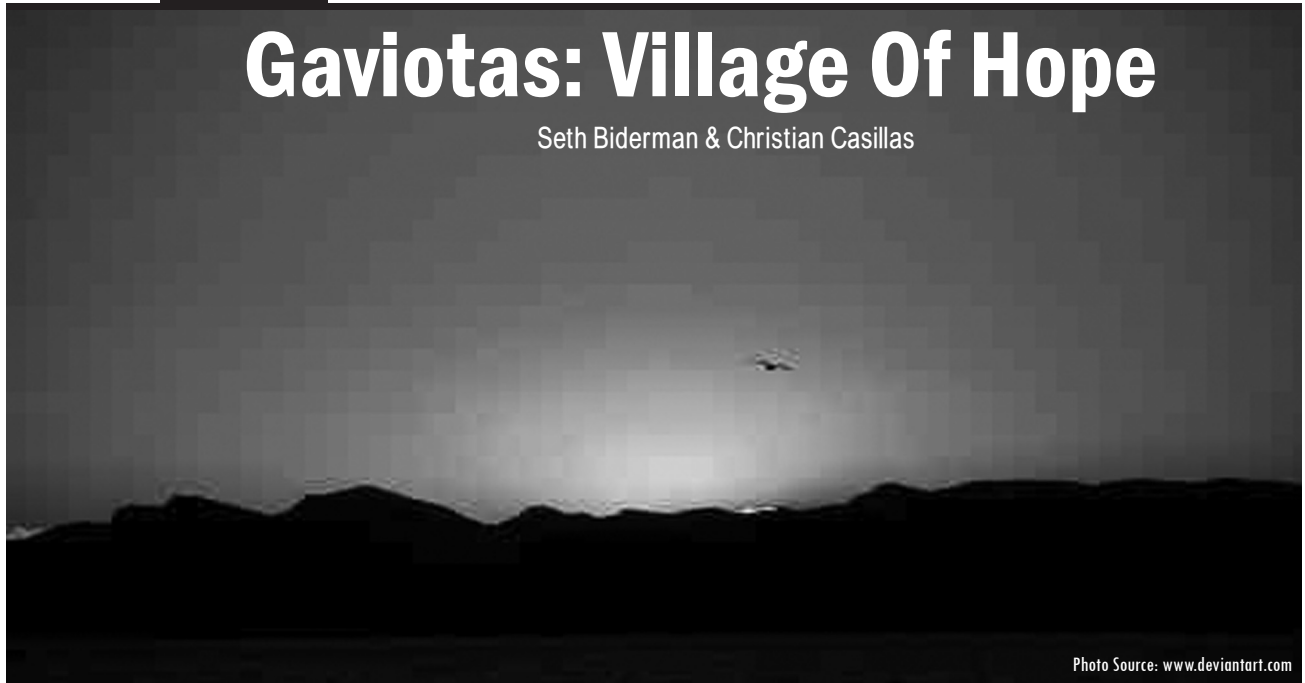


Photo Source: www.deviantart.com

For three decades, the village of Gaviotas has worked to build a sustainable, imaginative community in the eastern savannahs of Colombia. They have planted 20,000 acres of pines, creating shade and soil that has nurtured the return of hundreds of species of native plants and animals.

We first learned about Gaviotas, the legendary sustainable Colombian village, in 2004, while working in our home state, New Mexico. The two of us helped found a group called La Mesita, “the small table,” composed of three educators, a renewable energy scientist, a water-rights attorney, and a community organizer. We decided to start a project that would involve teenagers in organic agriculture and renewable energy in Ribera, a rural village in the north of the state. We believed that reviving northern New Mexico’s agricultural and cultural traditions could help the region confront both its environmental crises, like unsustainable water use, and its deepening social problems, such as rural drug abuse and teen pregnancy.

A member of our group brought us a copy of journalist **Alan Weisman’s** book, *Gaviotas: A Village to Reinvent the World*.

“This is what we’re trying to create,” she said. “This village proves it’s possible.”

All of us took turns tearing through the book, spellbound by the story of a visionary man

named Paolo Lugari and the remarkable group of scientists, students, Guahibo Indians, and cowhands who had succeeded in creating a resilient community amid the barren soils, shifting politics, and sporadic violence of Colombia's eastern savannahs.

The book's stories of innovation and perseverance inspired us as we moved forward. Our project convened scientists, educators, farmers, builders, and youth for a six-week, hands-on institute, where participants taught permaculture and organic farming, helped build an off-the-grid, energy-efficient house, and handcrafted a working wind turbine. The pilot project ran for two summers, but we were unable to maintain funding, and our colleagues went their separate ways.

It wasn't until five years later that the authors of this piece had the chance to visit Gaviotas. We had wondered if it held clues that could have moved our New Mexico project forward. Then by coincidence, the two of us ended up in Colombia at the same time.

We contacted New York Times correspondent Simon Romero, a fellow New Mexican who had grown up near the site of the La Mesita summer institutes. Romero had long wanted to report on Gaviotas. With his help, we arranged a one-day tour with Lugari.

Village of Surprises

The night before our visit, we all met up in the busy city of Villavicencio, gateway to the region of savannah known as los llanos. Over steaks and Colombian pilsner, Paolo Lugari captivated us with impassioned conversation that ranged from subjects like the brilliance of Leonardo da Vinci to the failure of Western education.

He was just as energetic the next morning at daybreak in Villavicencio's tiny airport as he pointed out the black Gaviotas dot on a wall map, and told us to expect the unexpected.

"In Gaviotas," he said, "one lives in a state of perpetual surprise."

Ninety minutes later, we began to understand what he meant, as our tiny Cessna airplane descended over Gaviotas. We'd read Weisman's account of the **village's reforestation projects**—Caribbean pines had created shade and soil that nurtured the regrowth of hundreds of species of native flora and fauna. But nothing prepared us for the sight of 20,000 acres of dark green trees bursting impossibly from the acidic savannah soils.

...Gaviotans mimic nature by keeping the forest diverse, one palm to every 10 pines, interspersed with fruit trees and native plants.

A small group of Gaviotans met us on the airstrip and invited us onto a broken-down minibus, towed by a tractor that ran on biofuel produced in the village. The tractor hauled us into the forest, where the Gaviotans demonstrated how they collect pine resin with little more than an axe and a plastic bag.

Between the pines was their new fuel crop, African palms. But the Gaviotas palm plantings looked nothing like the massive, monocropped rows of palms we'd seen outside Villavicencio. Gaviotans mimic nature by keeping the forest diverse, one palm to

every 10 pines, interspersed with fruit trees and native plants.

The bus headed past a full-sized dirigible, constructed on-site to monitor forest fires, and into the village. There we watched children pump drinking water from depths of over 100 feet. The award-winning Gaviotan sleeve pump has allowed residents to stop using the contaminated shallow water sources around the village.

We paused at the community kitchen, which produces hundreds of meals a day using an energy-efficient stove that burns wood thinned from the forest.

We then followed Lugari into one of the resident's simple homes, so he could show us the passive cooling system and demonstrate that water from the bathroom faucet was scalding hot, thanks to the rooftop solar water heater the Gaviotans had manufactured themselves.

The longest stop on our tour was in the economic heart of Gaviotas, its pine-resin processing and packaging factory, which now generates almost 80 percent of the community's revenue. Here, cartloads of resin are brought from the forest and distilled for use in making varnish, paints, and adhesives.

The entire factory runs on renewable

...Gaviotas showed us that there is not an orchestrated march toward a finished product—there is only the process, the unpredictable evolution of strategies and ideas.

energy. Steam used for processing the resin is created in a boiler fueled by sustainably harvested wood, while the generator and tractors operate on African palm oil or recycled vegetable oil from Bogotá mixed with pine turpentine. Many of the residents' motorcycles run on a gasoline and pine-turpentine mix.

We kept our eyes open for some lesson we could bring back to New Mexico, a secret to Gaviotas' success. Our first clue came from an offhand comment we overheard in the factory. Lugari asked a foreman how work was proceeding on a project to use byproducts from the resin processing to pave the muddy roads. The foreman gave an inconclusive report.

"Excellent," said Lugari. "We'll proceed A.V.V."

"A.V.V.?" we asked.

"Allí vamos viendo," he explained. "We'll see what happens as we go along."

The response seemed nonchalant, but it represented an approach that has been fundamental to the village's longevity. Everywhere we looked, we saw examples of how the Gaviotans had encountered obstacles, gone back to the drawing board, and "surprised" themselves by discovering a way to adapt.

The very building in which we stood, for example, had been a solar hot-water panel factory before shifting markets and government policy forced Gaviotans to search for a new product. Gaviotans' efforts to grow their own food had led them through experiments in hydroponics, use of organic fertilizers, and African goat-herding. The beautiful glass and steel building that was once



a fully functioning hospital was converted into a research laboratory and then a water-purification and bottling plant.

It became clear to us that most of the successes at Gaviotas were not a result of brilliant planning but of a trial and error process, replete with wrong turns and detours.

Gaviotas showed us that there is not an orchestrated march toward a finished product—there is only the process, the unpredictable evolution of strategies and ideas.

Back in Bogotá, we looked for more clues to Gaviotas' success as we met with Dr. Jorge Zapp, the 67-year-old scientist who served as unofficial technical director of Gaviotas in the 1970s and 1980s.

After leaving Gaviotas, Zapp spent years as a technical evaluator for the United Nations Development Program, and we asked him how Gaviotas had influenced international development projects elsewhere in the world.

Zapp said Gaviotas never had a formal plan for disseminating solutions or technology. But ideas flowed in and out of the community through “natural diffusion.” He rattled off a list of appropriate technologies pioneered in Gaviotas and adopted in projects “from Patagonia to Maine.” There was the double-action water pump, a simplified cement and chicken-wire building technique, and pioneering work in low-cost hydroponics. Gaviotan solar water heaters have been installed atop buildings across Colombia. A brick-making press—not invented by Gaviotans but proven viable when they used it to build their factory, hospital, and homes—became a key tool in the reconstruction of cities across Latin America leveled by natural disasters.

But the real lessons of Gaviotas aren't about technology. “What was spread in large part,” Zapp said, “was that people learned to believe in their own abilities.”

Gaviotas demonstrated to the world how effective it is to involve ordinary people in creating their own technologies and solving

their own problems.

Case in point: A Peruvian government official visited Gaviotas in the early 1980s and took note of the village's nutritional program, which provided a daily glass of fortified milk to each child. The official brought both the idea and Gaviotas' collaborative approach back to Lima. Instead of creating a top-down government program, he helped mobilize poor mothers to prepare and distribute the milk themselves. The program ultimately empowered thousands of women through the popular movement known as Vaso de Leche. The nutritional practice spread, and with it the Gaviotan emphasis on community participation.

Zapp's experiences at Gaviotas led to a turning point in his work. He left what he calls the "priesthood of science," in which experts deliver knowledge to "the masses," and committed his life to helping people develop their own solutions. In Zapp's definition, development means renewing one's faith in the collective intelligence of humans.

Making Space for Creativity

We came away from our visit to Colombia with a new understanding of what it looks like to address environmental and social problems in a sustainable, inclusive way.

Lugari made it clear that Gaviotas is not something you can replicate. He'd visited organizations and ecologically friendly towns around the world. But none combined all the essential ingredients he feels are necessary for sustainability. Security concerns, shifting national politics, and financial constraints have hamstrung efforts to create larger versions of Gaviotas elsewhere in the savannah.

We spoke with Alan Weisman, who confirmed Lugari's assessment. Weisman has received thousands of inquiries about Gaviotas from professors, energy experts, high schools, international NGOs, and even a dance company in Oregon. "People constantly tell me," Weisman says, "that the place just gives them hope." But Weisman knows of no one who has started a Gaviotas replica.

Lugari never intended for Gaviotas to serve as a blueprint for sustainable development, or even a clearinghouse of appropriate technologies. Instead, he wanted to show the world that it was possible to live sustainably by drawing on local resources, or as he describes it, living within the "economy of the near." And he has done so by staying faithful to two principles: allowing space for adaptation and creativity, and ensuring that everyone, not just "experts," is involved and empowered.

To realize our New Mexico vision, we'll need to embrace Lugari's principles and release our grip on our plans. We are now exploring ways to collaborate with others and expand our summer institute into a year-round "school." We envision a place where youth work with community members and create their own new strategies and technologies, searching for the imaginative "surprises" that our own little corner of New Mexico so desperately needs.

Seth Biderman and Christian Casillas wrote this article for America: The Remix, the Spring 2010 issue of YES! Magazine (Yesmagazine.org). They were born and raised in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Biderman is a teacher and writer currently based in Colombia. His work has appeared in New Mexico Magazine, the Santa Fe Reporter, and The New York Times. Casillas is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California-Berkeley's Energy and Resources Group.

The Soils of War

GRAIN

Photo Credit: hunterkiller.deviantart.com



The US's agricultural reconstruction work in Afghanistan and Iraq not only gives easy entry to US agribusiness and pushes neoliberal policies, something that has always been a primary function of US development assistance, but is also an intrinsic part of the US military campaign in these countries and the surrounding regions. These are not unique cases born from unusual circumstances, but constitute a likely template for US activities overseas, as it continues to expand its "war on terror" and pursue US corporate interests.

Afghanistan: Food and Bombs

When the US began its campaign of bombing Afghanistan in 2001, one of its first targets was the Soviet-built Shindand airfield in the west of the country, near the border with Iran. A year later, the US took control of the airfield, one of the largest in the country, amid accusations that it intended to use the site as a possible base for operations against Iran. Today the area around Shindand remains a scene of intense warfare between US/NATO and Taliban forces, with civilians caught in the middle.

In the war in Afghanistan, bombs and food are a package deal. At the very airfield from which the US planes launched their deadly attack, US forces had established an agricultural training centre just months before. “The agricultural centre has many positive effects for both the troops and the local population,” says a leader with the US Special Forces civil affairs team. “This allows us to build a rapport with the villagers through education and employment; therefore, they are given a reason to think twice about allowing the anti-Afghan forces to step in and influence their lives in a negative way. The presence of this agricultural centre is a security measure in and of itself.”¹ Its explicit objective is to give a positive spin to the US occupation.

The US officials say that the centre will eventually build up agricultural production for export in the area and wean local farmers away from producing poppies – a crop that still provides more security and income to farmers than the millions of dollars in foreign aid, so little of which trickles down to them. The centre is equipped with laboratories, classrooms, several fish ponds with hatcheries, vineyards and orchards. A weather station and drip irrigation system are planned. All of it is run by the US military.

To the south-east, USAID contracted the US firm Chemonics Inc. to build an agriculture centre outside Lashkar Gah, a city in the province of Helmand, another area of intense conflict with

the Taliban. Chemonics is an international firm that specializes in private sector development and agriculture, and operates under the slogan “to catalyse agribusiness”². It was founded in Washington in 1975, and since then USAID has been its major client³. Chemonics says that the location originally chosen for the agriculture centre, in a farming area, was rejected; they were instead “instructed” for “strategic military and security considerations” to establish it at the Lashkar Gah airfield, which is under the control of the UK military⁴. It is clear that the line between the military and aid objectives has been blurred – and purposely so.

Rather than genuinely helping Afghans to recover their old farming skills, the agriculture centres provide a veneer of agricultural reconstruction to a military mission that is destroying Afghanistan’s food systems. They are an attempt to legitimize the military bases of an occupying power.

The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) that the UK and US deploy in the Afghan countryside with increasing frequency serve a similar purpose to the agriculture centres. A PRT typically consists of 60–250 military personnel, a USAID field officer and a US State Department political officer.

Some of the PRTs are called Agricultural Development Teams, and they have a specific agricultural mission. These teams also make critical contributions to military operations. “It helps in the military kinetic part because it involves cooperation of the local population, and intelligence resources can be brought to bear”, explains Army Major-General King E. Sidwell. “It makes friends when you might not otherwise be able to make friends.”⁵

Agribusiness grows on the battlefield

The support between the military and agricultural work runs both ways. While agricultural reconstruction facilitates US/NATO

military operations, the military operations push forward the agenda of US and other foreign-based agribusiness corporations by creating a context where they can easily put pressure on the government to adopt neoliberal policies. The war provides these corporations with both a lucrative short-term market in the blossoming “reconstruction” industry and an opportunity to integrate Afghanistan into their global production networks and markets in the long term.

Seeds are at the centre of these processes. Those “rebuilding” Afghanistan’s agriculture zoomed in on exactly that. In 2002 a global multi-partner exercise with 34 organizations was brought together under the banner of the CGIAR, with US and Australian funding. This Future Harvest Consortium to Rebuild Agriculture in Afghanistan (FHCRAA) lasted about a year, within which time it imported and distributed several thousand tonnes of wheat seed from Pakistan and set up seed multiplication programmes for varieties of other crops that it brought in from the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) in Syria.⁶

The Consortium and other CGIAR-led initiatives have completely bypassed the rich heritage of farmers’ varieties in Afghanistan, which would have provided the basis for genuine agricultural reconstruction. According to an ICARDA survey conducted in 2002, neither rain-fed rice varieties nor rain-fed and irrigated wheat varieties that have been supplied by the aid organizations have included any Afghan genetic materials. The authors of the survey concluded that Afghan wheat farmers are “on their own when it comes to replicating and reselecting local variety seed.”⁷

Afghanistan has instead been deluged with all manner of foreign seed varieties, some of which have come through projects with foreign seed companies seeking to test their varieties in a potential future market. Concerns were raised early on about the indiscriminate importing of seeds and the disregard of local seeds, prompting

the FAO⁸, ICARDA⁹ and the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture to propose a Code of Conduct for seed aid in 2002. But any concern for farmers’ seeds has been overrun by the insistence of the US and EU on crafting a seed industry in Afghanistan allied to their larger political agendas. Essentially this means building up a few local seed companies that can initially serve as a conduit for seed aid, and later, if the US wins the war, open the door to foreign seed companies and agribusiness.

Rebuilding Iraq

Iraq has long been important to the US as a market for its agricultural commodities. While it is true that the US has long-term interests in developing such a market in Afghanistan, Iraq is already the number one destination for its hard red winter wheat exports and a top destination for its rice¹⁰. It is a US\$1.5bn market that wasn’t accessible to US companies before the invasion, because of the sanctions¹¹. Indeed, controlling the development of Iraq’s agriculture and food systems was so important to the US that in the early years of its occupation it brought in Dan Amstutz, an ex-Cargill executive and a veteran insider with US trade delegations, to be in charge of this sector.¹²

Dan Amstutz was put in charge of the USAID’s Agriculture Reconstruction and Development Program for Iraq (ARDI). This work, which was managed by one of USAID’s most trusted private contractors, Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI), focused on accelerating “the transition from a command-and-control production and marketing system to a market-driven economy where farmers and agribusinesses are able to take risks and realize profits.”¹³

At the top of ARDI’s list was wheat, Iraq’s most important food crop. In the field, ARDI’s work with wheat focused on the import, multiplication and distribution of certified wheat seed¹⁴. Its central objective was to liberalize and privatize Iraq’s wheat sector, and its Public Distribution

System in particular¹⁵. While the chaos following the US invasion made an immediate sell-off or dismantling of Iraq's wheat sector impossible (and illegal under the Geneva Convention), ARDI tried to push the Iraqis down the alternative path of neoliberal reforms that could arrive at the same ends while sidestepping political sensitivities and immediate practical problems¹⁶. Some of this privatization is now being implemented in Iraq through the "International Compact with Iraq" – a five-year plan negotiated by the Iraqi government with the World Bank, the US and other major donors¹⁷. Whatever the eventual outcome, the combined devastation of Iraq's wheat production and the opening of its wheat markets to US imports, both brought about by the US invasion, has yielded billions of dollars for US grain companies.

When ARDI came to a close in 2006, USAID launched two new programmes – a US\$343 million Inma Agribusiness Program¹⁸ and Izdihar (Iraq Private Sector Growth and Employment Generation)¹⁹. Both programmes are designed to prepare the way for agribusiness investment in the food industry.

Yet, like similar programmes in Afghanistan, these agriculture reconstruction programmes also serve a military function and are immersed in military operations. Of the US\$250 million of "reconstruction" funds that the US has so far spent on the 581 agricultural projects that it has either proposed, planned or completed since the beginning of the invasion, more than 97 percent of the projects have been paid for with funds from the Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP), which is managed by the "Multi-National Corps-Iraq". Funding for agriculture reconstruction in Afghanistan is also dominated by a similar CERP, meaning that, in both cases, it is the military that ultimately decides which projects get done.

The USAID and other so-called civilian programmes in Iraq work with PRTs – modelled

on the PRTs that were first set up in Afghanistan. A December 2008 report by the United States Institute of Peace, "an independent, nonpartisan, national institution established and funded by Congress", provides more details about how the PRTs relate to the US military mission in Iraq:

"PRTs tend to play a supporting, advisory role for the military, providing them with civilian expertise they would not otherwise have access to and offering suggestions on how to shape operations. As one member of a PRT working in a counter-insurgency environment in Baghdad said, 'The military is the blunt instrument; we provide the fine tuning.' Nonetheless, in counter-insurgency environments, the military has the unambiguous lead, and freely ignores PRT's advice if, in their judgment, security concerns dictate..."²⁰

It now seems likely that, under President Obama, the PRTs' importance to the US mission will greatly expand. According to a report in the New York Times on 3 December 2008, "Pentagon planners" are proposing "relabeling some units, so that those currently counted as combat troops could be 're-missioned', their efforts redefined as training and support for the Iraqis"²¹. As a result of this ploy, the Pentagon intends to keep as many as 70,000 troops in Iraq beyond 2011, which is the date established in the US–Iraqi Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) for the complete withdrawal of all combat troops.

Conclusion

It would be dangerous to see the integration of the US military operations and aid work in Afghanistan and Iraq as an aberration. The same merging of "hard" and "soft" power under the military in Afghanistan and Iraq is happening with US overseas programmes in other parts of the world.

It is essential for people around the world to stop aid being hijacked in this way. Aid policies and practices need to be rethought. This has to go

hand in hand with demanding demilitarization and an end to the wars in Afghanistan and the occupation of Iraq. No matter how good aid work is, it will not contribute towards genuine reconstruction if it is also being used to reinforce the military interests of the principal donor country and to maintain its hegemonic dominance.

GRAIN is a small international non-profit organization that works to support small farmers and social movements in their struggles for community-controlled and biodiversity-based food systems. This article was abridged from "The soils of war: The real agenda behind the agricultural reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq", GRAIN Briefing, March 2009.

¹A US Special Forces civil affairs team leader, quoted in Anna Perry, "Afghan Agricultural Center Contributes to Better Security", American Forces Press Service, 3 July 2008. <http://tinyurl.com/br3zlc>

²To get a sense of the nature and extent of Chemonics' interventions, see "Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Program (RAMP) Afghanistan: Fiscal Year 2006 Work Plan. <http://tinyurl.com/bva5ap>. Among the USAID partners in this is the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE – www.cipe.org). See also "Windfalls of War: US contractors in Afghanistan & Iraq", on the website of The Center for Public Integrity. <http://tinyurl.com/bwra93>

³See "Chemonics International", Washington Post, Post 200 – Top DC area businesses <http://tinyurl.com/dds7eh>

⁴Chemonics International Inc., "Lashkar Gah Bost Airport and Agriculture Center, Helmand Province, Afghanistan: Environmental Assessment", October 2008. <http://tinyurl.com/ajn8ze>

⁵Quoted in Army Staff Sgt Jon Soucy, "Missouri Guard's Agricultural Mission Grows in Afghanistan", American Forces Press Service, 23 December 2008. <http://tinyurl.com/couxfb>

⁶See ICARDA's web page about the FHCRAA. <http://tinyurl.com/c8793l>

⁷J. Dennis, A. Diab and P. Trutmann, "The Planning of Emergency Seed Supply for Afghanistan in 2002 and Beyond", a draft concept paper prepared for the Tashkent Conference, 2002. www.afghanseed.org

⁸FAO Newsroom, "Code of conduct on seeds for Afghanistan reached", 30 May 2002. <http://tinyurl.com/3sphbl>

⁹See also ICARDA website's "Seed for Afghanistan" section. <http://tinyurl.com/b44kba>

¹⁰See Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "Iraq buys 200,000 t of Russian wheat from Glencore", arabian Business.com, 25 September 2008. <http://tinyurl.com/bngmlv>

¹¹Policy Archive, "Iraq Agriculture and Food Supply: Background and Issues", June 2004. <http://tinyurl.com/br6dmd>

¹²Cargill, the biggest global trader of agricultural commodities, is a multinational corporation registered in the US. <http://www.cargill.com/>

¹³See DAI – Projects: ARDI, "Revitalizing Iraq's agricultural sector", n.d. <http://tinyurl.com/b739o6>

¹⁴It should be noted that since the invasion the US has sought to dismantle former public programmes which provided subsidized inputs, including seeds, to Iraqi farmers, and that the provision of seeds by US forces is seen as a temporary measure before a "freemarket" seed system takes over.

¹⁵Robert Looney, "Neoliberalism in a Conflict State: The Viability of Economic Shock Therapy in Iraq", Strategic Insights, Vol. III, No. 6, June 2004. <http://tinyurl.com/ah4zvc>

¹⁶See Rich Magnani and Sawsan Al-Sharifi, "Reform and Rehabilitation of Iraq's agricultural sector: The case of the Iraqi wheat sector", USAID–Iraq, 2005. <http://tinyurl.com/dgllqr> and <http://tinyurl.com/afh7ml>

See also "Iraq Private Sector Growth and Employment Generation – The Potential for Food Processing in Iraq", USAID–Iraq, 15 March 2006. <http://tinyurl.com/ck4rn6>

¹⁷See the annexes to *The International Compact with Iraq: Annual Review*, May 2007–April 2008, which show progress against benchmarks. <http://tinyurl.com/atv6lr>

¹⁸"Inma" means "growth" in Arabic. The Program's website can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/bq7oyn>

¹⁹"Izdihar" means "prosperity" in Arabic. The Program's website can be found at <http://www.izdihar-iraq.com/index.html>

²⁰Rusty Barber and Sam Parker, "Evaluating Iraq's Provincial Reconstruction Teams While Drawdown Looms: A USIP Trip Report", USIPeace Briefing, December 2008. <http://tinyurl.com/Sokaaa>

²¹Tom Shanker "Campaign promises on ending war in Iraq now muted", New York Times, 3 December 2008.

<http://tinyurl.com/cab7jy> (The Pentagon is the military headquarters of the US Department of Defense.)



Climate Activists and People's Movements Meet in Cochabamba for Alternative Climate Summit

Reileen Dulay



Photo Courtesy of Tetet Lauron

THE FAILURE OF GOVERNMENTS MEETING IN THE UN CLIMATE CHANGE Conference in Copenhagen to conclude a strong and just deal for global climate action brought widespread disappointment. Dissatisfied with the official process, thousands of climate and social movement activists met 19-22 April 2010 at Cochabamba, Bolivia in an alternative people's summit to discuss real solutions to climate change.

The summit, called Conferencia Mundial de los Pueblos sobre el Cambio Climático y los Derechos de la Madre Tierra (CMPCC), was convened by Bolivian President Evo Morales.

The CMPCC brought together civil society and indigenous peoples' organizations, scientists, and government delegations from more than 100 countries. It was intended to give voice to the South and the world's poor, whose plight and solutions were largely ignored in Copenhagen. The summit also sought to influence the next UN climate conference, to be held in Cancun, Mexico in December 2010.

Among the summit's participants was the Peoples' Movement on Climate Change (PMCC), a network of CSOs advancing people-centered solutions to the climate crisis. On 19 April, the PMCC, together with Asia-

Pacific Research Network (APRN), Plataforma Boliviana Frente al Cambio Climático, and Union Nacional de Instituciones para el Trabajo de Acción Social (UNITAS), held a very successful side event at Sala Cultura in Univalle, Cochabamba. The event, entitled "Peoples' Assembly and Speak Out on Climate Change", was attended by some 200 participants coming from different organizations present for the alternative summit. Also on 21 April, another side event titled "Encuentro intercontinental sobre crisis climática y visiones alternativas de las sociedad civil de América Latina, Asia, África y Europa" was held to provide a space for sharing experiences of struggle for climate justice.

Among the presenters were indigenous leaders from Bolivia, who spoke of the impacts of mining activities in a number of indigenous communities as well as their struggle to push for laws and policies that would protect them and Pachamama (Mother Earth).

Also present was Ms. Joan Carling of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact. Carling spoke of how indigenous communities are the most vulnerable in the face of climate change, and how they are in fact living solutions of sustainable, and simple lifestyles.

Ms. Tetet Lauron of the APRN stressed that at the root of the climate crisis is the fundamental unequal relations that resulted from exploitation by colonialism and neo-colonialism. As such, struggles for climate justice should also be combined with other struggles for social transformation.

Reileen Dulay is a Program Assistant with the Asia Pacific Research Network.

Public Water Sector, Not Private Power, Should Manage Angat Dam

Water for the People Network

ADVOCACY GROUP WATER FOR THE PEOPLE NETWORK (WPN) said that the water sector, instead of private power companies, should take the lead in managing the facilities of the Angat Dam in Bulacan, Philippines. The group issued the statement during a roundtable discussion that it organized last March 23 regarding the planned privatization of the Angat Dam, whose bidding is scheduled in April.

Also speaking at the said forum entitled “*Angat Dam privatization: Defending water for the people*” held at the University of the Philippines (UP) in Quezon City was the Commission on Human Rights’ (CHR) Karen S. Dumpit. Dumpit, who serves as Director of the rights body’s Government Linkages Office (GOVLINK), talked about the implications of the Angat Dam privatization on the human right to water.

Also in attendance during the roundtable were representatives from Manila Water, affected farmers from Bulacan and consumers in Metro Manila, as well as water advocates from the academe, environmental groups, and non-government organizations (NGOs).

“The question that we should ask is what will be the value-added of Angat dam’s privatization? Will it make water more accessible? Will the benefits rebound to the communities?” Director Dumpit asked during her presentation.

Water supply for irrigation and domestic use has been declining in recent months due to the El Niño phenomenon and has been particularly harsh on vulnerable sectors, a situation which small farmers and poor consumers fear will worsen if the privatization of Angat Dam pushes through.

The WPN said that whoever controls the hydropower facilities of the Angat Dam also effectively controls the dam’s water allocation. Earlier, the group raised concern that the access to water for basic domestic use of some 14 million

people in Metro Manila and parts of Cavite and Rizal, as well as the use of Angat Dam for the irrigation needs of around 28,000 farmers in Bulacan and Pampanga may be undermined by the planned privatization.

In an earlier advisory on Angat Dam privatization, CHR commissioners led by Chairperson Leila de Lima maintained that the “right to water is more fundamental and primary over the need for power” and advised government to “always consider paramount the most basic resources necessary and indispensable for human survival, which include water”.



Photo Source: www.flickr.com

The privatization of the Angat Dam forms part of the implementation of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira) of 2001. At present, the dam is being managed by the National Power Corp. (Napocor). The Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), which under Epira was formed to dispose of the assets of Napocor, scheduled the bidding of Angat’s hydropower facilities on April 28. The group said that the PSALM must stop the bidding.

The Water for the People Network is a nationwide multi-sectoral alliance of various groups campaigning for people’s control over their water resources. IBON is part of the network secretariat.

AS EL NIÑO THREATENS IRRIGATION SUPPLY Water used by golf courses can supply 1,500 hectares of rice paddies per day

IBON Foundation, Inc.



Photo Source: www.deviantart.com

AS THE NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES BOARD (NWRB) warns against cutting water supply for irrigation because of the El Niño, independent research group IBON said that there may be enough supply if consumption is regulated among wasteful users such as golf courses.

A study made by the group reveals that the water consumption of 18-hole golf courses nationwide consumes 194,400 cubic meters of water per day— enough to supply the water needs of 1,500 hectares of paddy rice. This amount is computed based on an NWRB estimate that an 18-hole golf course consumes 51.84 cubic meters of water per hectare per day. There are 75 major golf courses in the country covering a conservative estimate of 3,750 hectares of land.

Moreover, water consumed by golf courses can supply the crucial water needs of 516,085 households nationwide.

In Metro Manila including in Antipolo (a total of 13 golf courses with an estimate of 650

hectares), around 18,576 cubic meters of water per hectare per day is spent for golf courses. This volume is enough to meet the water needs of 12,355 households in Metro Manila, where some 53,300 households in areas covered by private concessionaires Maynilad and Manila Water are denied of water service.

When dams reach a critical level, water allocation for irrigation is usually among the first to be reduced. In the case of the Angat Dam, this would mean cutting irrigation and threatening the rice production of around 31,000 hectares of agricultural land.

IBON, a member of the water advocacy group Water for the People Network (WPN), said that amid the tightening water supply, the NWRB should further lower the allocation for excessive water users such as golf courses. Authorities should also strictly monitor and regulate water use by large commercial establishments like malls, hotels, private parks, and others. Water needed by agricultural land and domestic

use should be prioritized to help ensure food security as well as the health, sanitation and important water needs of the people.

RP Jobs, Quality of Work in 2009 Worst in 50 Years

IBON Foundation, Inc.

THE PHILIPPINES' EMPLOYMENT AND QUALITY OF WORK was at its worst in 2009, with around 64.4% to 81% of the 39.4 million-labor force in 2009 either jobless or in poor quality work. Its true unemployment rate of around 11% counting 4.32 million jobless Filipinos puts the Philippines in the worst crisis of joblessness and of poor quality work in its history.

According to research group IBON, the average unemployment rate for the period 2001-2009 is 11.2%, which is the country's worst nine-year period of sustained high joblessness since 1956. Unemployment rates were much lower in 1956-1960 (8%), 1961-1970 (7.3%), 1971-1980 (5.4%), 1981-1990 (10.2%) and 1991-2000 (9.8%).

IBON added that the estimated jobless figures grossly understate the seriousness of the country's job crisis. Although statistics show that 35.06 million are employed, the figure actually includes 4.22 million "unpaid family workers" and 12.16 million "own-account workers" covering those in informal sector work.

Also, the category "wage and salary workers" covered by employment figures that imply job security and stability includes another layer of poor quality work: 4.67 million non-

regular wage and salary workers or those with casual, contractual, probationary, apprentice or seasonal status and 11.21 million wage and salary workers employed but with only verbal contracts or none at all.

These layers of poor quality jobs partially make up the underemployment figure of 6.69 million in 2009. It covers those employed but nonetheless still looking for more work and income, but may not reflect those discouraged or otherwise practically unable to find the time for any additional work given their current job. Meanwhile, 36.4% of jobs in 2009 were merely part-time work at 12.75 million.

These figures sum up to 25.35 to 31.91 million Filipinos – or 64.4% to 81% of the country's labor force either jobless or in poor quality work – the combined unemployed, unpaid family workers, own-account workers and non-regular or non-contract wage and salary workers.

Amid record high unemployment and worst quality of work, the country's employment situation remains the greatest challenge for the next administration, IBON said.





The Growing Movement for Publicly Owned Banks

Ellen Brown

We the people have given away our sovereign money-creating power to private, for-profit lending institutions, which have used it to siphon wealth from the productive economy. Some states are moving to take that power back.

Photo Source: www.aolcdn.com

“Hundreds of job-creating projects are still on hold because Michigan businesses and entrepreneurs cannot get bank financing. We can break the credit crunch and beat Wall Street at their own game by keeping our money right here in Michigan and investing it to retool our economy and create jobs.” -- Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero in *The Detroit News* March 9, 2010

Michigan, which has an unemployment rate of 14 percent, has been particularly hard hit by the economic downturn. Virg Bernero, mayor of Lansing, the state's capital, and a leading Democratic candidate for governor, proposes to relieve the state's economic ills by opening a state-owned bank. He says the bank could protect consumers by making low-interest loans to those most in need, including students and small businesses; it could also help community banks by buying mortgages off their books and working with them to fund development projects.

Bernero joins a growing list of candidates proposing this sensible solution to their states' fiscal ills. Local economies have collapsed because of the Wall Street credit freeze. To reinvigorate local business, Main Street needs a heavy infusion of credit, and publicly-owned banks could fill that need.

In a recent article for YES! Magazine, I tracked candidates in five states running on a state bank platform and one state (Massachusetts) with a bill pending. Just one month later, there are now three more bills on the rolls--in Washington State, Illinois and Michigan--and two more candidates joining the list of proponents (joining Bernero is Gaelan Brown of Vermont). That brings the total to seven candidates in as many states (Florida, Oregon, Illinois, California, Washington State, Vermont,

and Idaho) campaigning for state-owned banks, including three Democrats, two Greens, one Republican, and one Independent.

The Independent, Vermont's Gaelan Brown, says on his website, “Washington, D.C. has lost all moral authority over Vermont.” He adds, “Vermont should explore creating a State-owned bank that would work with private VT-based banks, to insulate VT from Wall Street corruption, and to increase investment capital for VT businesses, modeled after the very successful state-owned Bank of North Dakota.”

The Bank of North Dakota, currently the nation's only state-owned bank, is the model (with variations) for all the other proposals on the table. The Bank of North Dakota acts as a “bankers' bank,” partnering with other banks in “participation loans,” which allow them to compete with larger banks. In a participation loan, the community bank originates the loan and takes responsibility for it, while the participating bank contributes funds and shares in the risk and profits. The Bank of North Dakota also makes low-interest loans to students, farmers and businesses; underwrites municipal bonds; and provides liquidity for more than 100 banks around the state.

Three New Bills Pending for Publicly Owned Banks

Proposals for publicly owned banks in other states have now progressed beyond the campaign talk of political hopefuls to be drafted into several bills.

The Michigan Development Bank

The Michigan bill has gotten the most press. Introduced into the legislature earlier this month, it mirrors Bernero's state bank idea.



According to a press release issued by Michigan Senate Democrats on March 9, the bill's aim is to "keep Michigan's money in Michigan" by putting tax dollars into a proposed "Michigan Development Bank." The bank would function like a traditional bank, but would focus on economic development rather than profit. The press release quoted Senator Gretchen Whitmer (D-East Lansing):

Investing in the state's economy is the greatest way to create jobs, and this proposal will provide small businesses and entrepreneurs the funding they need to invest and grow. Our economy has stagnated due in part to stale thinking in Lansing, and this is just the type of innovative idea we need to create real economic change, using our own money to rebuild the state.

Senate Democratic Leader Mike Prusi (D-Ishpeming) stated:

Michigan's economy has been suffering, and working families in the state have had difficulty keeping up with credit card bills, college tuition

prices and mortgage payments. Establishing the Michigan Development Bank will keep our hard-earned dollars right here in the state to invest in small business, create good-paying jobs to get people back to work, and help protect the middle class.

Also quoted was Senator Hansen Clarke (D-Detroit):

With the current state of our economy, every dollar counts, yet we're depositing our money in other people's pockets by investing in big corporate banks without seeing much lending in return. It's time for the Mitten State to lend itself a helping hand and establish a bank that is willing to invest in our small businesses and offer the financial support necessary to see job growth.

For start-up capital, the Senate Democrats suggested that Michigan could sell voter-approved bonds. With an initial capitalization of \$150 million, they estimated the bank could lend up to \$1 billion to small businesses,

students and farmers, and offer low-interest credit cards to consumers. For deposits, the bank could follow the model of the Bank of North Dakota and use state revenues. So says Gene Taliercio, a Republican candidate for the state Senate, who has also put his weight behind the Michigan Development Bank. In a video clip on the website of the local Oakland Press, he says, “We’re talking about restructuring the whole tax system, in the sense that the way it’s set up is that all taxes are going to go into this central bank ... Every dollar that the state of Michigan makes goes into this bank.”

The State Bank of Washington

A similar bill, HB 3162, was introduced to the Washington State Legislature on February 1. The bill has generated so much interest that Steve Kirby, chair of the Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee, has scheduled a special work session on it. According to John Nichols in *The Nation*, the State Bank of Washington was formally proposed by House finance committee vice chair Bob Hasegawa, a Seattle Democrat. Nichols quotes Hasegawa:

Imagine financing student aid, infrastructure, industry and community development. Imagine providing access to capital for small businesses, or otherwise leveraging our resources instead of having to do it with tax incentives. Imagine keeping our resources local instead of exporting them as profits, never to be seen again--that’s what this bank could do.

...Leveraging, rather than taxing, is how private banks have been creating “credit” for centuries.

Leveraging, rather than taxing, is how private banks have been creating “credit” for centuries. States could do the same thing, cutting the middlemen out of the equation, saving significant sums in interest and fees and generating revenue for the state.

A nonpartisan analysis of the Washington bill prepared for the state legislature noted that the bank would be the depository for all state funds and the funds of state institutions, and that these deposits would be guaranteed by the state. The bank would be run by a board of 11 members and would be chaired by the State Treasurer. It would have the same rules and privileges as a private bank chartered in the state. Since current law prohibits the state from lending credit and investing in private firms, voters would have to approve the state Constitution to get the bank off the ground.

The Community Bank of Illinois

A third bill, introduced by Illinois Representative Mary Flowers, is on its way through the legislative process in Illinois. According to the Illinois General Assembly website, the Community Bank of Illinois Act would establish a state bank with the express purpose of boosting agriculture, commerce, and industry. State funds and money held by penal, educational, and industrial institutions owned by the state would be deposited in the bank and would serve as reserves for making loans. The bank could also serve as a clearinghouse for other banks, including handling domestic and foreign exchange; and it could buy property under eminent domain. All deposits would be guaranteed with the assets of the state. The Bank would be managed and controlled by the Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, with input from an advisory board representing private banking and public interests.

An amendment to the initial bill would enable the Community Bank of Illinois to make loans directly to the state's General Revenue Fund, helping the state cope with its current budget challenges.

A Massachusetts-owned Bank

On March 12, the Associated Press reported that a jobs bill sponsored by Massachusetts Senate President Therese Murray also includes a call to study a Massachusetts-owned bank. She told a business group that a state-owned bank has worked in North Dakota, helping to insulate that state from the worst of the recession while also keeping its foreclosure rate down; similarly, a state-owned bank could spur job creation and free up lending to Massachusetts businesses.

Grandfather of the Concept: The Bank of North Dakota

All of these proposals take their inspiration from the Bank of North Dakota, which was founded in 1919 to resolve a credit crisis like that facing other states today. Last year, North Dakota had the largest budget surplus it had ever had. It was the only state that was actually adding jobs when others were losing them. In March 2009, when 46 of 50 states were in fiscal crisis, the Council of State Governments noted that North Dakota was in the enviable position of discussing tax cuts and looking for ways to spend its surplus.

With the deepening crisis, according to National Public Radio, by January 2010 only two states could still meet their budgets--North Dakota and Montana. On February 8, however, the Montana paper the *Missoulian* reported that the Montana State Legislature's chief revenue forecaster foresees a budget deficit by

mid-2011, leaving North Dakota the only state still boasting a surplus.

North Dakota's riches have been attributed to oil, but many states with oil are floundering. The sole truly distinguishing feature of North Dakota seems to be that it has managed to avoid the Wall Street credit freeze by owning and operating its own bank. According to the North Dakota Department of Commerce, the BND turned a profit in 2009 of \$58.1 million; this money goes into the state's General Fund. North Dakota's economy is ten times smaller than Michigan's, suggesting that Michigan could generate \$500 million per year in this way; Washington State and Illinois present similarly inviting possibilities.

That defuses the objection raised in a March 15 editorial in *The Detroit News*, arguing that Michigan can ill afford the \$150 million capital investment to start a bank. If operated like the BND, the Michigan Development Bank could soon be a net generator of state revenues. There are other possibilities, besides a bond issue, for providing the capital to start a bank, but that subject will be reserved for another article.

The BND's 90-year track record of prudent and profitable lending defuses another objection to state-owned banks: that a public agency cannot be trusted to act responsibly in managing public funds. The *Detroit News'* editorial concluded that Michigan should "leave banking to the bankers," but it is precisely because the bankers have destroyed the economy with their reckless lending practices that the public needs to step in. We need a "public option" in banking to set standards and keep private banks honest.

The True Potential of Publicly-owned Banks

North Dakota broke new ground nearly a century ago, but the true potential of publicly owned banks remains to be explored. Nearly all of our money today is created by banks when they extend loans. (See the Chicago Federal Reserve's "Modern Money Mechanics," which begins, "The actual process of money creation takes place primarily in banks.") We the people have given away our sovereign money--creating power to private, for-profit lending institutions, which have used it to siphon wealth from the productive economy. If we were to take that power back, we could generate the credit we need to underwrite a whole cornucopia of projects that we don't even consider because we think we lack the "money." We have the labor and we have the materials; we just lack the "liquidity" necessary to put them together to create products and services.

Money today is just a ticket, a receipt for work performed and goods delivered. We can fund the work we need done by creating our own credit. The real promise of publicly-owned banks is not that they can bail out subprime borrowers but that they can jumpstart the economy by creating real wealth. They can provide the liquidity to put labor and materials together, allowing the economy to build and grow. Our private, profit-driven banking sector has been bleeding wealth from the rest of the economy. Public-interest banks can transfuse the economy with the credit it needs to flourish and be productive once again.



Photo Source: www.deviantart.com

...Money today is just a ticket, a receipt for work performed and goods delivered. We can fund the work we need done by creating our own credit.

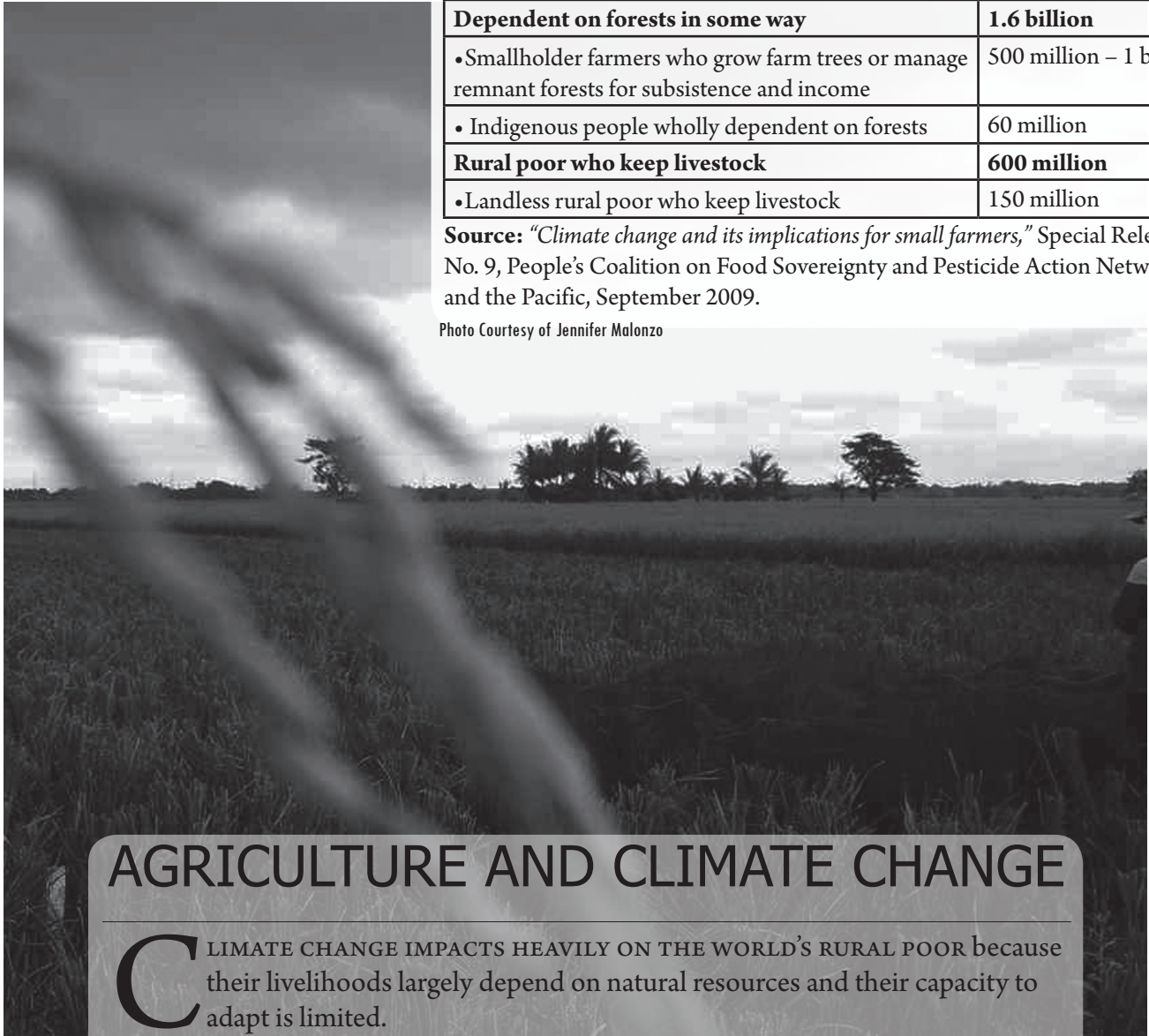
*Ellen Brown wrote this article for YES! Magazine, a national, nonprofit media organization that fuses powerful ideas with practical actions. Ellen developed her research skills as an attorney practicing civil litigation in Los Angeles. In *Web of Debt*, her latest of eleven books, she turns those skills to an analysis of the Federal Reserve and "the money trust." Her websites are webofdebt.com, ellenbrown.com, and public-banking.com.*

Number of People Dependent on Ecosystems

Dependent on forests in some way	1.6 billion
• Smallholder farmers who grow farm trees or manage remnant forests for subsistence and income	500 million – 1 billion
• Indigenous people wholly dependent on forests	60 million
Rural poor who keep livestock	600 million
• Landless rural poor who keep livestock	150 million

Source: “Climate change and its implications for small farmers,” Special Release Issue No. 9, People’s Coalition on Food Sovereignty and Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific, September 2009.

Photo Courtesy of Jennifer Malonzo



AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

C LIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS HEAVILY ON THE WORLD’S RURAL POOR because their livelihoods largely depend on natural resources and their capacity to adapt is limited.

- Some 60 to 80 percent of the people in poor countries engage in small-scale agriculture. Change in rainfall patterns or decrease in volume of rainfall, floods, droughts and salinity due to a changing climate have grave implications for these small farmers.
- Over 90 percent of the 15 million people working in coastal waters are small-scale fishers. Rise in sea levels, destruction of natural systems such as mangroves and seacoasts have disastrous impacts for fisherfolk and coastal communities.

- About 500 million to 1 billion smallholder farmers grow farm trees or manage residual forests for subsistence and income, while 60 million indigenous people rely fully on forests. The destruction of forests due to aridity and fire results in decline of forestry production, loss of biodiversity, decreased resources for food and livelihood, erosion, etc.
- Over 600 million rural poor keep livestock, an important asset in the countryside. Adverse changes in biodiversity translate to imbalances in the food chain and increase in livestock diseases.

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