

FOR LAND, RIGHTS AND RESOURCES:

Stories of
Resistance

STOP
LAND GRABING
WOMAN
BANK
HEALTH



**NO LAND
LIFE!**

For Rights, Land and Resources:
Stories of Resistance

October 2014



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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
<i>Indonesia</i>	
Grabbing ancestral land for corporate profit	3
<i>Sri Lanka</i>	
Tourism projects dislocate the rural folk, destroy the environment	9
<i>Pakistan</i>	
Land grab to grow grass, while peasants go hungry	15
<i>Philippines</i>	
Land grabbing through contract farming	21
<i>Malaysia</i>	
Violating native customary rights for logging, palm oil	27

Introduction

With the objectives of contributing to the campaign against land and resource grabbing and supporting grassroots action in Asia, PAN AP and its partners embarked on a three-year collaborative project (2011-2013) that included the documentation of case studies on land grabbing.

This led to the publication of the book “Building Community Resistance against Land Grabbing: Documentation of Cases in Selected Communities in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Malaysia and the Philippines”.

A useful reference material, the book is remarkable as it involved the direct participation of community-based organizations in documenting, investigating and writing their respective cases of land grabbing and the struggles they waged to defend their rights.

But in order to further promote the book to more readers, PAN AP is re-publishing the book into this booklet, with the original case studies rewritten in a featured and more popular form. We hope that this booklet will be able to further contribute in informing and educating the public as well as policy makers about land grabbing issues in the region. It is also a part of our education and information efforts under the “No Land, No Life” campaign, which aims to highlight land and resource grabbing as a form of human rights violation.

We wish to thank again our partners for making this compilation of case studies and stories of struggles possible, including the Alliance of Agrarian Reform Movement (AGRA) of Indonesia, National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO) and Sri Lanka Nature Group from Sri Lanka, Roots for Equity of Pakistan, Peasant Movement of the Philippines (KMP), and the community leaders of Sarawak, Malaysia through the Sarawak Dayak Iban Association (SADIA).

Finally, we would like to thank Misereor whose support made this initiative possible.

Sarojeni V. Rengam
Executive Director
PAN AP



Grabbing ancestral land for corporate profit

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) in February 2010 announced the government's plans to develop Papua and Borneo into a giant agricultural estate to feed Indonesia, and then feed the world. Earlier, Indonesian Vice-President Budiono said that Indonesia was ready to provide food to the world during the World Conference on Food Security in Rome in November 2009.

The national policy of producing food on a large scale has required shifting the orientation of agricultural development from depending on the small farmers to allowing big investors to have a bigger role in agriculture.

The MIFEE project

The Indonesian government believes that food production can be doubled if foreign and local investors are allowed to invest in agriculture.

The Indonesian government launched its pioneer project, the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) to achieve this goal. But local peasants and indigenous peoples claim that the project will only benefit the investors to the detriment of traditional agriculture and food security.

Elsewhere, in Jambi province, the indigenous peoples of Koto Sepuluh are denied of their source of live-lihood. The government has allowed corporations to take over the forests in Merangin District.

Both the MIFEE project and the corporate takeover of forests in Merangin have practically grabbed ancestral lands in Indonesia.

MIFEE is located in Merauke Regency, an area covering 4.5 million hectares of land; of which 2.5 million hectares are ideal for cultivation. Agriculture senior officer Hilman Manan said, "We chose

The article is based on "Land grabbing for food and biofuel: Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) case study" and "Corporate Takeover of Forests: Merangin" case study written by Alliance of Agrarian Reform Movement (AGRA), an Indonesian peasant organisation that struggles for genuine agrarian reform with a membership of 250,000 small farmers, agricultural workers and landless peasants.

Swamp forest in Merauke



intercontinentalcry.org

Merauke because it's the ideal place for food crop cultivation, such as rice, corn, soybean and sugar-cane." The areas of MIFEE concession cover 1.2 million hectares. A large portion of this land consists of primary forests, savannah, and swamplands, which serve as the areas of hunting and food gathering of the indigenous peoples of Papua in Merauke. The government plans to lease the land for about 90 years.

According to the Vice-Minister for Agriculture, Bayu Krisnamurti, the MIFEE project can be developed as the biggest food estate in Asia with total investment of IDR 60 trillion (US\$ 4.93 billion). For the year 2010, the government was offering 100,000 hectares

out of 500,000 hectares available for medium-term development.

The MIFEE is considered as an integrated food and energy estate project. In addition to farming, the project will support a wide range of agricultural businesses, including post-

The MIFEE project



farmlandgrab.org

harvest industries such as sorting and grading, packing, storage and processing as well as agri-tourism, according to Minister Suswono. One million hectares of lands will be available to produce food crops such as rice, soybeans and corn. The rest will be split between plantations, fisheries and livestock.

Impact on indigenous communities

The Marind tribes, who comprise 40% of the population of Merauke, have every reason to oppose the MIFEE project. The Marind tribes have already been occupying the 413,810 hectares of land long before the Wasur National Park existed.



intercontinental.org

Yohanes Petrus Kamalaka of the Kimam people (Marind sub-tribes) said, “The indigenous peoples at hamlets are still gathering food, living from the forests. We usually take sago in the forest and fish in the swamps without maintaining them. If all of that is lost, what can we eat?”

According to Soeryo Adiwibowo, faculty head of the Department of Communication Science and Community Development of Human Ecology Faculty from the Bogor Agricultural Institute, the indigenous peoples of Merauke are still living on hunting and food gathering. Although they are already practicing agriculture, the system of food gathering, taking the sago, netting the fish, hunting, and doing simple gardening like *wambat* (making the series of knee-deep wall to be planted with bananas and cassava and the like) are still common.

The Marind people have their totem or symbols to describe their ancestors. Mahuze people have sago totem, Gebze have their coconut palm, Samsakai have kangaroo totem, Basik-basik have pig totem, and Balaize have their eagle totem. When the MIFEE project is plundering the land of savannahs and the swamps, nature and totem symbols of the indigenous peoples will be lost and the Marind people will eventually lose their identity.

These days, the Marind tribes can no longer survive on food gathering and hunting because the forests and the savannahs are already delineated by the companies as their lands, according to Jago Bukit, head of the Agency for the Social and Economic Development of Santo Antonius Foundation. In 2010, the Merauke Government issued 46 investment permits that covered 228,000 hectares, including the indigenous lands. Ironically, the indigenous lands are being sold at very cheap prices to the investors. Much of these indigenous

lands are being sold at IDR 10 (less than US\$ 0.001) per one square meter.

The fate of the indigenous Papuans is under threat. Since their very existence is dependent on land, losing control over this resource is tantamount to death for many indigenous peoples. Secondly, the agricultural production system that the MIFEE project depends on, using mechanisation and monoculture plantation, is absolutely strange for the indigenous Papuans.

The sago as main food for instance does not meet much maintenance. Fishes are everywhere and other main sources of food like deer and crocodiles are easy to be hunted in the forests and swamps.

The indigenous Papuans as hunters and food gatherers will face difficulty if forced to work. The concessions have in the MIFEE concession. The indigenous Papuans have limited working skills, and it seems resulted in the eviction that the plantation

managers of MIFEE will prefer working orce to come from outside of the people from their Merauke or even outside Papua.

Commercial timber and plantation operations

Meanwhile, in Merangin, several corporations have dislocated the Koto Sepuluh indigenous peoples from the Tanjung Benuang Village since 1988. A new wave of land grabbing efforts further threatens the livelihood of the indigenous peoples.

From a total of 1,700 hectares, the Tanjung Benuang Village has been reduced to only 437.5 hectares due to land grabbing. This is a result of commercial timber rights concessions (HPH or *Hutan Produksi Terbatas*) granted by the government in 1988.

Under the New Order era, timber concession rights for PT Sarestra II were granted. The HPH was also given to PT Nusalease Timber Corporation (NTC) based on the Minister of Forestry decision No.845/Kpts-II/1991 on 15 November 1991. This corporation had an HPH of 61,200 hectares in Merangin District, Jambi Province.

Communities oppose the MIFEE project



The concessions have resulted in the eviction of the people from their agricultural lands and other villages under the administration of Sungai Tenang Subdistrict. Since then, the people of Tanjung Benuang have been prevented to plant in their previous lands.

Another corporation, PT Duta Alam Makmur (DAM), recently acquired Industrial Plantation Forest (HTI) permit in the former HPH areas of PT Sarestra II and PT Nusalease TC covering 25,990 hectares.

The entry of PT DAM, a subsidiary of Sinar Mas Group (SMG), was SMG's way of expanding its forest domination for HTI. SMG already owns 884,180 hectares of land in Jambi Province for HTI for the supply of pulp and paper production. All of production plantation forests in Jambi Province are being controlled by SMG through its subsidiaries and joint operation schemes with the local government. PT DAM is SMG's scheme of expanding the HTI concession on eucalyptus and rubber plantation, with eucalyptus as the main crop to supply raw materials. Companies joining SMG are PT Indah Kiat, PT Tjiwi Kimia, PT Pindo Deli, and PT Lontar Papyrus, all under APP (Asia Pulp and Paper Co. Ltd).

The indigenous peoples of Tanjung Benuang Village can no longer farm in the HPT area. This government decision on forest function has forced the people to leave their own farm-lands.

After the first wave of dislocation, the Tanjung Benuang is divided into the

following: settlement area (four hectares), garden (two hectares), plantation area (200 hectares), dried agricultural land (200 hectares), wet agricultural land with simple irrigation (30 hectares), and public utilities area (0.5 hectare).

The indigenous peoples were content with their simple living before the corporations came. The dried agricultural land is being planted with the food crops and commodity crops while the wet agricultural land is solely for

*The concessions
have resulted in the
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from their
agricultural lands*

rice. They planted vegetables such as chili, beans, etc. The food crops they planted were not for sale but for their own consumption. For commodity crops, the people of Tanjung Benuang Village plant coffee and niam oil.

Tanjung Benuang Village is ancestral in nature and its use communal. No one owns a certificate of land both for settlement and for agriculture but the Koto Sepuluh tribe has their own way of managing the land and resources of the Tanjung Benuang. Unfortunately, this has been exploited by the government and big corporations to grab the ancestral land from the indigenous peoples.

Fighting back

Both the Marind tribes and the Koto Sepuluh tribe are not taking these threats to their livelihood and their very existence sitting down.

One year after the launching of the MIFEE project, the first land conflict emerged in Merauke. In the beginning of 2011, the people from Sanggase Hamlet in Kaptel District, around six-hour travel from Merauke City, conducted a rally at the sawmill of PT Medco Papua Industri Lestari. They demanded the compensation of IDR 65 billion or US\$ 5.34 million (at an exchange rate of one dol-lar=12,180 Indonesian rupiah) for 2,800 hectares land being used by Medco. Since then, land conflicts have erupted one by one. In Malind District, Domande people are fighting with the Ongari people. In Ulilin District, Kindiki people are fighting over land with the Selil people. Nearly all of plantations and forests in Merauke are now under conflicts. The common problems are that two indigenous groups are fighting over land because delineations have been blurred and that people are complaining about unfair land compensations. The issuance of permits by the Merauke Regent and forest delineations by the Ministry of Forestry has blurred the land demarcation and control by the indigenous tribes of Papua. So-called compen-

sations for land and timber are also not fair enough.

The indigenous peoples of Papua are becoming aware that such illegal mechanisms are replete with lies and manipulation.

The people of Tanjung Benuang have united to defend their ancestral land and triumphed. They earned the support of non-government organizations (NGOs) in Jambi and the vice-president of Merangin District. Their resistance to the land grabbing by PT DAM has resulted in the revocation of its permit by Minister of Forestry in 2009. The area is then being

proposed to become a village forest.

The people of Tanjung Benuang have united to defend their ancestral land and triumphed.

The Indonesian government has systematically abrogated the indi-

genous laws of the Tanjung Benuang Village but the indigenous peoples, aware of their rights, fight for them at all costs.

This increased consciousness of the indigenous peoples is the start in raising the issue to the national debate on the global trends in land grabbing, and making countries such as Indonesia accountable for the food and energy crises of the international corporations and governments. It is also a step in advancing indigenous peoples' rights to land, natural resources and livelihood and national food security.

Tourism projects dislocate the rural folk, destroy the environment

The government of Sri Lanka has identified tourism as a major driver for economic growth and job creation. After the tsunami that hit the country in 2004, the government-led Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (Taren) announced its goal to create a coastal tourism industry to include 15 proposed tourism development zones in the country.

Tourism development

The Kalpitiya, a peninsula in the Puttlam District, is one of the sites identified for the Sri Lanka's Tourism Development Strategy. According to the Conceptual Master Plan, 6,030 lodging units, underwater restaurant for 100 people, full-fledged international standard 18-hole golf course, indoor sports complex, racecourse with a riding school and 20 stables, a tennis academy with 12 courts, domestic airport, two seaplane harbors and 1,200-bed international

standard hospital with a sanatorium will be built.

Infrastructure of this gigantic scale points to the need for one success factor or ingredient in the presence and use of 'available' land. In other words, the eventuality for land grabbing is at its greatest. The Kalpitiya communities' control of their land and resources, which are their prime sources for survival, is being threatened.

Kalpitiya has 14 main islands with a total landmass of 1,672.67 hectares. It is home to 64,908 people (2009 Census), of whom 12,967 are small-scale fishers, and with 25% of women engaged in fishing-related activities.

The acquisition of some 1,619 hectares of land for the project has actually begun in 2004 pursuant to a cabinet decision. Currently, the fisheries isles have been acquired, blocked out and sold or leased to tourism industrialists while the families

The article is based on "Looting of Sustenance Lands: Kalpitiya Islands Case Study" written by National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO) and "Green Washing with Eco Golf Resort Project: Soragune Case Study" by Sri Lanka Nature Group. NAFSO organizes fisherfolk and coastal communities to defend their rights and to bring about good environmental practice in the coastal areas of Sri Lanka. SLNG is a consortium of 30 organizations working for sustainable development.

Tourism development is displacing fishing communities in Kalpitiya



blog.srilankacampaign.org

Kalpitiya islets for generations without documents. They harnessed the areas for fishing activities. Although most of the fisheries settlers in Kalpitiya have no legal documents to prove ownership of land, there are proofs that the islets have been inhabited by fisherfolk for centuries.

are in the islands through the Tourism Affairs Act No.38.

Fishing communities

Asanka Cruz, a fisherman from the Sinnamunnakkarei isle, one of the 14 main isles in Kalpitiya, told members of the National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO) who conducted a study in Kalpitiya, “We have been living in our lands for the last 70 to 80 years. Now our people are frightened with the news that our lands are being acquired for the tourism industry. If our lands are acquired we will be deprived of everything including our livelihood. We are frightened of that. The government might not help us. The officials want us to produce deeds’ for lands if we need any assistance from them.”

After independence, many fishing families like Cruz’s went to inhabit

The Keerimundal Church situated at the corner of Mutwal Island keeps a list of the names of priests who have served in the Catholic Church since 18th century. This is a proof of how long the fisherfolk have inhabited the land.

Under the 1979 No. 43 Land Donation Program, inhabitants of Nonathottam and Sembukkuliya in the isle of Mutwal received official documents from Kalpitiya Divisional Secretariat for land ownership. Land distribution was also carried out for the Uchchimunei and Keerimundal fishing communities. Another form of legal ownership is the registration as voters. Most of the inhabitants of the isles go to their ancestry places for voting during elections.

Settlers in Uchchimune isle said that their names were included in the Keerimundal electoral list but their names have been removed from the Voter’s List as of 2012.

Forms of land grabbing

The patterns of land grabbing in Kalpitiya vary. War presented an opportunity for the government to grab and utilize lands used in the absence of the families who migrated to other areas. When the war was over and people were reclaiming their properties, the government was presenting the lands in Kalpitiya Islands to businessmen. Now, businessmen from Colombo, Chilaw and Puttlam have produced documents to claim their ownership of the lands.

One force behind land grabbing is the army. Public notices are displayed by the Navy to say that the land has been acquired for defense purposes.

The people naturally do not question and complain since they know that national security is of prime importance. When there is no objection from the fishermen, the second phase of land grabbing is the transfer of ownership to the resort or hotel owners whose identities are not known to the people and fishermen.

Grabbing of beach seine has also become common. Each year beach seine owners must obtain fishing permits from both the District Secretary (DS) office and

Fisheries Department. The DS office issues land rights permit while the Fisheries Department issues the fishing rights permit. In 2011, the DS office issued land rights permits but the Fisheries Department refused to issue fishing rights permits. In 2012, the DS office had also refused to issue land rights permit. When the fishermen asked why, the DS office said that it was not allowed by the Fisheries Department.

The real costs

The Sri Lanka Tourism Board claims that the Kalpitiya Integrated Tourism Development Project will generate at least 15,000 jobs directly and a further 22,500 jobs indirectly. It is important to note, however, that the resorts being planned are essentially upscale properties targeting the higher end of the global and regional tourist spells decline in nation-traffic. Minimum requirements for frontline service staff

Private companies build signboards around the island



would be “O” level, which means staff should have competency in English and aptitude for service.

The 2006 survey by the Department of Census and Statistics shows that only 1,437 out of tourism 160,123 in the entire Puttlam district were studying in an English medium school. Opportunities for local employment are therefore not realizable. And even if indeed a substantial number of local residents get to be employed, jobs would be of low pay, casual, and saddled with problems such as long working hours and abuses.

On the other hand, the adverse impacts on the livelihood, the economy and the environment are real.

Fishing in Kalpitiya has significant contribution to the national economy. Displacement of fisherfolk therefore spells decline in national and local incomes from fishing, which cannot be offset by tourism.

Mutwal islet alone has around 4,000 kilos daily catch. Keerimundal, Sinnamunnakkarei and Uchchimunei small-scale fishermen produce a combined catch of 5,000 kilos of fish and other varieties of aquatic fauna. Sea cucumber and conch harvest are 300 to 400 pieces per

day for the three islets. Kalpitiya dry fish is well-known seafood in the country. The total dry fish production in islets per year is around 250-400 metric tons.

The fishermen in Kalpitiya isles are already facing problems due to boulder-laying along the beach by hotel builders. Meanwhile, barbed wire fences erected along the coastal line by Hasan Gaate company's Bay Watch Eco Hotel have prevented the fishermen from entering the coastal belt.

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Roshanthi Fernando of the Keerimundal Holy Cross fisheries cooperative society, said she and other mothers in the village used to fish in mangroves of the isle for small fish, shrimp and crab. The hotel companies have put up barbed wire fences and prohibited them from entering the mangroves.

Serious damage has been done to the environment. The coral reef and natural sand dunes are in stages of being destroyed. The freshwater resource in the isles, the sea water and the lagoon water are already polluted by the hotel builders. Non-biodegradable garbage such as plastic bottles, packaging materials and other similar waste materials pollute the area and create breeding grounds for disease-carrying mosquitoes.

Environmental impact assessment reports at Wellai Island and Mutwal islands revealed that the fish breeding grounds and coastal grass can be destroyed with the progress of construction.

An independent environmental impact study of the Sri Lanka Nature Group showed many aspects of the destruction from the tourism promotion activities. Removal of mangroves, changes in natural streams, setting up of water drain system, land filling, etc., will definitely bring destruction to the aquatic environment in Kalpitiya.

Eco Golf Resort

Another tourism project, the Eco Golf Resort, has posed threats to the agriculture and biodiversity of the

Badulla district in Uva province. According to the Central Environment Authority (CEA), the project will feature a massive luxury hotel with a golf ground inclusive of swimming pools, 18-hole golf course, 5,426 rooms, and 922 building unit.

The adverse effects of the project include environmental, economic, social and cultural destructions, which are closely linked with each other. The hotel and golf course are to be built in a 628-acre (254 hectares) extent of land located in the Weli Oya water resource zone and if completed would have adverse impacts on farmers in the Badulla as well as the Moneragala Districts.

The area is agricultural and more than 90% of the population is directly or indirectly linked with agriculture.

Paddy is the major crop of the area while vegetables, cereals, pulses, root crops and spices are cultivated as the minor crops. Eighty-two percent of the farmers are cultivating paddy and are highly dependent on the irrigated water of Weli Oya. Loss of vegetation caused by deforestation



An international fact-finding mission was held in Kalpitiya in 2011.

prjaabhilashanetwork.blogspot.com

leads to soil erosion and run-off. The silted water ends up in the Weli Oya reservoir, which irrigates more than 3,000 acres of paddy land.

This project covers a prime forest territory, with savannah grasslands inhabited by elephant, bear, sam-bhur, and other animals. If the golf course project pushes through, Sri Lanka will lose a considerable area of forest land that has rich bio-diversity.

The forest also feeds two streams that enter the Weli Oya, which in turn feeds into the Walawe. After implementing the project these streams will dry off, creating a huge water problem in the area. The entire area is a hugely important water-shed for populations downstream.

Tourism will cause social abuses in the area. We need to discuss these issues with the government to protect and fight for our rights.

The project also poses serious health problems. In order to maintain the golf course in good condition, water and the fertilizer urea as well as pesticides should be used in large quantities. Further, aluminum compounds should be applied to the field in order to enhance binding of soil particles and prevent soil erosion. These chemicals will finally accumulate in the tanks irrigated by the Weli Oya Irrigation Project. Contamination of these tanks causes serious health problems in the

community that depends on these tanks for their water requirements. There is a threat of skin diseases and cancer due to the intensive use of pesticides and other agro-chemicals for the management of golf ground.

These chemicals are also harmful to existing faunal and floral diversity. The unpublished report, A Vertebrate Faunal Survey of Samanala Wewa, Towards Declaration as a Wildlife National Park, identifies around 390 species from five vertebrate families. Out of that, 59 are endemic to Sri Lanka.

Hope lies in struggle

The fishermen and farmers in the two provinces of Sri Lanka only want to continue living their simple lives. Sadly, the Sri Lankan government's paradigm of development does not include the rural folk.

Moulavi Janab Ibadulla, Chief of Kalpitiya Mosque, encapsulated the situation, if the tourism industry continues as it happens today, it will be a cause to break down the income and economy of the people in the area and will cause the people to become poorer. Although the tourism industry supposedly means development, there is no development at all. The younger generation tends to get corrupted. Tourism will cause social abuses in the area. We need to discuss these issues with the government to protect and fight for our rights.

Hope lies in the continuing struggle of the islanders in Kalpitiya and of the farmers in Soragune.

Land for grass as farmers go hungry

Seven years ago, over 150 households of Meghwar community, a subcast of the Hindus, worked as tenants in the village of Syed Ali Nawaz Shah, Mirpukhas, Sindh district in Pakistan. They produced cotton, sugarcane, wheat, chili and vegetables and reared cows, buffalos and goats.

Today, most of them do not have regular work. Some work in the cities with an income ranging from Rs. 200 to Rs. 250 (US\$1.45 to US\$2.24 a day) ; this is not enough to put food on the table. Others work as sharecroppers in other villages but also earn very little.

The land they used to till has been leased to Al Dahra Agriculture, a foreign-owned company formed in 1995 for agriculture and animal production. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) firm has acquired in 2007 a contract for the lease of a total of 3,200 acres (1,295 hectares) of land in

Pakistan for a period of ten years, according to company employees and locals.

Agricultural products and livestock have been replaced with Rhodes grass produced by Al Dahra Agriculture. The grass is grown in four villages namely Syed Ali Nawaz Shah, Khaskhaili, Jumoo Machi and Syed Khadim Ali Shah. The grass, delivered straight to UAE, is used as fodder for camels and for other purposes. Thus while UAE's camels have grass to eat, the peasants in Mirpukhas experience hunger.

Since the company took control of the land, the peasants could no longer access even the grass for their livestock. Each household used to have four to five animals.

A resident said, "We used to have our own *lasi* (milk and water drink made from curd), milk and butter from our livestock. We also used to take out our livestock for grazing but this has also stopped even since the company occupied the land."

* The article is based on "Of Collusions and Collaborations: Sindh Case Study" written by Roots for Equity. Roots for Equity works to fight against oppression faced by communities in Pakistan, including working women; specially focuses on the impacts of globalization on small farmers and landless peasants.

Another said they could not even get a single *dinghri* (wild shrub) for making *baar*, a boundary wall around the mud houses.

Employment

Only a few of the residents were hired by Al Dahra.

For first two months, the company hired local women for grass cutting in exchange of biscuits and milk.

According to the residents interviewed, 15 workers were employed for one water course but the company eventually reduced the number to only five or six laborers. This means that no more than 24 people are employed for the four water courses.

They were paid a minimum wage of Rs. 6,500 (US\$63.38) per month. In the beginning they had been paid Rs. 4,500 (US\$43.88), which was later increased to Rs. 6,000 (US\$58.51). In the past few months, the pay has been increased to Rs. 6,500 (US \$63.38). Their work includes watering the grass fields, realigning the land (called *banoo*), spreading urea, and cutting grass at the sides of the field (which machines were unable to do) as well as any other support work needed.

Workers in the field were not given any day to rest.

When the company's supervisor was interviewed, he claimed that the company has employed 50 to 60 local salaried laborers at Rs. 8,000 (US

\$78.01). Their working hours, according to him, were from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm and they were also paid overtime. Drivers are paid Rs. 12,000 (US\$117.02) per month and heavy machine operators were getting paid Rs. 40,000 (US\$390.05), monthly.

The company's grass production is highly mechanized and does not need huge manpower. Rhodes grass cultivation process is being done by heavy machinery. Blade machinery and tractors are used for land preparation.

Seed sowing process is also done by machine. Automatic heavy machines are also used for watering, spreading urea, and harvesting. Work was mechanized to such an extent that machines would also make bundles of the cut grass. Then, bundles are picked by loader machine from the field and loaded in containers for import to the UAE.

According to the supervisor, the company has hired one person from every house in the village. Tractor drivers and machine operators are hired from two particular castes, the





www.aldahra.com

Khosa and Khaskhaili tribes. He added that Al Dahra has employed eight to ten guards from the same tribes as watchmen for the grass fields.

But participants of the focus group discussion belied this, saying the company had not employed people from their village and all of the workers hired were from the village of Ali Nawaz Shah, the Agriculture Minister of Sindh, the second largest province of the country.

Land acquisition

It was the Minister who facilitated the entry of Al Dhara in Sindh. Earlier, it was reported that Mr. Ali Nawaz had meetings with the Abu Dha-bi Ruler's Representative in the Western Region, H.H. Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan where methods to boost cooperation between the UAE and Pakistan in the area of agriculture were discussed. Based on the information posted at the Al Dahra website, the contract on leasing land to Al Dahra in Mirpurkhas was initiated in 2007 and the meeting between the agriculture minister and

Sheik Hamdan bin Zayed was at a much later date. However, there is clear conflict of interest, given that the minister is able to use his official contacts to broker private business ventures.

In the village of Syed Khadim Ali Shah, residents had worked for generations on the lands of Syed Qutab Ali Shah as sharecroppers and peasants. When Qutab Ali Shah died, his daughter's husband took over the land. The son-in-law employed a munshi from another village who exploited the peasants by giving them low wages and deliberately reduced their share. Ensuing debts pushed the peasants to withdraw from their lands, forcing them to seek jobs in the city.

Two or three years later, Al Dahra took over the land.

Impacts

Food security is imperiled.

The marginalized communities have to work hard just for their daily survival. During wheat cultivation season people have to go to other landlords'

land for wheat harvesting and get three maunds for harvesting one acre of land. It is indeed ironic that rural population primarily responsible for the country's food production cannot feed their families.

The area under land grab was used for cultivating wheat, chili, cotton and other crops. Now the communities living in the land grab area purchase vegetables and flour from their daily wages, and are faced with increasing prices of these commodities. Average wheat yield in Sindh is 30 maund per acre; 3,200 acres (1,295 hectares) of land can produce 96,000 maunds of wheat, but after the land lease to Al Dahra, this has not been possible.

The marginalized communities have to work hard just for their daily survival. During wheat cultivation season people have to go to other landlords' land for wheat harvesting and get three maunds for harvesting one acre of land. It is indeed ironic that rural population primarily responsible for the country's food production cannot feed their families.

A focus group of women shared the information that they have reduced their livestock due to scarcity of grass in the area. The women said that in the past, they would keep half the milk from their animals for household consumption and sell half in the market to earn some money for other household expenses. But this situation has stopped after the land grabbing.

One of the women testified that her son, who attempted to cut the grass

being grown on the Al Dahra leased land, was arrested by the police and it became very difficult to get him released. After that, the villagers have reduced their livestock and ensured that they do not access grass from there.

Al Dahra's operations have also caused water shortage. According to the locals and Al Dahra farm workers, Alfalfa and Rhodes grass production requires high quantity of water, and for

It is indeed ironic that rural population primarily responsible for the country's food production cannot feed their families.

this the company has constructed concrete water courses. There are four concrete water courses in this area, and the company also uses big water turbine motors to lift water from water courses in the days of water shortage.

Al Dahra has installed a heavy water sucking machine, which extracts water from the water channels, creating water shortage in adjacent lands.

Before Al Dahra's contract, 400 to 500 acres (162 to 202 hectares) of land was cultivated. But cultivation declined to 100 to 150 acres (41 to 61 hectares) due to water shortage. According to a woman interviewee, many crops were cultivated on the

lands leased to Al Dahra some eight to ten years ago. However, increasing shortage of irrigation water led to the land going barren and was later leased to an Arab company.

One of the women said that there are more than 10 family members dependent on just one working family member. After the land had been leased to Al Dahra, the women could no longer work as cotton pickers.

According to them, the Kohli women had to go to fields, which were far from their village. But it was more difficult for the Muslim women who had no contacts, which would have afforded them cotton picking opportunities.

On the environment, the locals were unaware of the impacts of fertilizer use. According to the workers, on the average four bags of urea were used per acre in a month and about 12,800 bags of urea were used on 3,200 acres (1,295 hectares) per season.

For fear of being driven away from their homes, the residents could not

speak against the Al Dahra and the Minister.

One of them said, 'How can we resist against land given to Al Dahra as our community people stopped working on lands 2 to 3 years before the coming of Al Dahra? Suppose, if we put our objection to the land lord Syed Ali Nawaz Shah for contracting his land with company, then surely he would ask if we can pay the amount of lease the Arabs are paying.'

Miseries for minorities are increasing in Sindh especially for Hindu communities. They are forced to compromise their way of living because they face insecurity in their own land.

The situation in the rural communities was already serious even before the land grabbing, with poor families experiencing severe hunger. The issue of displacement is thus very significant because it makes the situation more precarious. Religious minorities are even more vulnerable; this was often seen during the focus groups. The

M u s l i m communities were willing to speak whereas the Hindus were only willing to say good things about their landlord. The extremely high cost of living in urban areas is well known to villagers. In rural areas, at least they do not



have to pay rent for residential quarters. Utility and water bills are not a monthly reality. They are well aware that if they 'do take up arms' and organize them-selves they and their family members will certainly face eviction if not charged for criminal activity.

Despite these fears there is no doubt among the people that the only means of bringing back dignity to the lives of these marginalized communities is to ensure an organized movement of small and landless farmers

It is the fear of the known that stops them from standing up and putting up a resistance against the many atrocities that they face on an hourly basis. The fear of the unknown is also there. Many have no skills which they could employ in a city. Secondly, they know that the cost of living would be beyond their means in an urban environment.

However, despite these fears there is no doubt among the people that the only means of bringing back dignity to the lives of these marginalized communities is to

ensure an organized movement of small and landless farmers.

Opposing collusion

The collusion of local political powers and foreign capitalist class can be seen very clearly from the above case study of land grab in Mirpurkhas, Sindh.

The economic policies of the Pakistan government allowed such tragedy to happen in the rural communities. Pushing forward the imperialist agenda of foreign trade and investment, the Government of Pakistan promoted the Green Revolution (an alliance of small and landless farmers in Pakistan, namely Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek, call it the 'Black Revolution').

Then during General Pervez Musharraf's regime, the Government started leasing farm lands by passing the Corporate Farming Ordinance in 2001. The ordinance was approved by the cabinet in 2004 when the provinces identified 1.14 million hectares of land that were available to be leased. This law now allows Pakistani land to be leased to foreign companies.

The situation of peasants, long deprived of land to till, has become even worse. They are left with no choice but to resist.

Land grabbing through contract farming

Agapito Ijalas, 57 years old, was born in Davao City in Southern Philippines. In 1959, his family moved in Pantaron village in the municipality of Sto. Tomas in Davao Del Norte.

Ijalas started working in the farm at the age of nine, helping his father who was planting rice and corn. They had their own carabao. They were tenants under the family of Royo and Francisco.

From 1980s until 1994, Ijalas was planting rice and corn on more than one hectare of land. He stopped when the farm he was tilling was converted into a banana farm. This was after his landlord entered into a contract-growing arrangement.

Today, Ijalas earns a living by peeling rejected bananas and sells these at Php4 (US\$.09) per kilo either to Packing Plant 40 or Packing Plant 42. Bananas are processed in the packing plants. The buyer that has rejected the bananas gets to set the

selling price. The rejected banana is for feeds. Ijalas earns only Php500 (US\$ 11) per week during peak season, but during rainy season, he earns nothing.

Ijalas' situation is no different from the rest of the rural folk in Pantaron village. The conversion of their rice, corn and coconut farms into banana plantation rendered them helpless in providing food for their families. The contract-growing program has intensified the feudal exploitation of the farmers and farm workers. The farmers have lost control over their land since the entry of Yoshida Farms and NEH-Philippines into their village.

Yoshida Farms and NEH-Philippines

In 1992, the heirs of Ambrosio Villafuerte, who owned 50 hectares of land in Pantaron, agreed to sell 48 hectares of land Yoshida Farms and Trading Corporation (Yoshida Farms). Yoshida Farms is owned by

This article is based on the "Land Grabbing Through Contract Farming: Pantaron Village Case Study" written by the Philippine Peasant Movement (KMP). KMP is a democratic and militant movement of landless peasants, small farmers, rural youth and peasant women with leadership over 1.3 million rural people.

Lilia Yoshida Ibabao, a Filipino-Japanese.

During its early operations, Yoshida Farms planted taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) from Japan, which is used for cakes and chocolates. Later, Yoshida Farms planted taro and palay alter-

In early 2007, Gapadaro ceased operations in Pantaron due to farm management problems. NEH worked with Gapadaro in recovering the farm and in June 2009 Gapadaro farm management was turned over to NEH at Packing House 84 (PH 84) in Pantaron.



A banana plantation in southern Philippines.

The Yoshida Farms, meanwhile, was also convinced to enter into arrangements with NEH.

Contract-growing scheme

In contract growing, the corporation dictates the whole production process—from what, where, when and how to plant to harvesting,

nately every year until 2005 when the corporation started planting Latondan, a variety of banana. In 2006, it started planting Cavendish banana on 10 nut farms into banana hectares as a pilot area. Later, Yoshida Farms planted it on all 48 hectares plantation rendered of land.

packing and delivery. The growers shell out the cost of production while the corporation buys the produce at its stipulated price.

Meanwhile, the NEH-Philippines financed the Gapadaro (Galapin/ Parami/ Dano/ Romero) Banana Growers Multipurpose Cooperative to expand in Pantaron village in 2005. NEH also expanded as a buyer.

Before the village got into contract-growing arrangements, farmers were deeply indebted to a landlord-trader, Benefredo Honorario. Every planting season, a farmer would borrow from traders for production expenses, and the loan would be paid after four months or during harvest. A farmer would borrow Php35,000 (US \$779.34) on the average with a 25%

monthly interest (or an equivalent of Php8,750 per month or US\$194.83 or Php35,000 or US\$779.34 for four months). Thus the farmer would pay Php75,000 (US\$1,670) after four months for his original loan amount of Php35,000 (US\$779.34). At least 15 families were indebted to Honorario.

As already mentioned, Gapadaro proposed to the farmers to rehabilitate the land and 'rent' it with bananas as payment. Gapadaro did not explain that the cost of land rehabilitation would be shouldered eventually by the farmers. Neither did the growers' association reveal that NEH was financing it.

When NEH entered the village, middlemen promised the farmers that NEH would pay for their debts with the rice traders such as Honorario, and that the farmers could pay NEH back in installments. Middlemen also promised the farmers hefty profits if they would get into banana grower-ship arrangements with NEH.

Feudal exploitation continues

But the farmers were surprised to learn after the first time they harvested bananas that aside from the debts that NEH paid for, the company also deducted items such as stalk disposal, farm maintenance, and 'rehabilitation'.

For example, Andres Caldito, a tenant of a 1/4-hectare land, entered in to a contract-growing agreement with NEH under PH 84 Banana Growers Cooperative. In his harvest proceeds

The farmers were surprised to learn after the first time they harvested bananas that aside from the debts that NEH paid for, the company also deducted items such as stalk disposal, farm maintenance, and 'rehabilitation'

covering March 25 to April 7, 2012 (14 days), his total gross proceeds was Php5,150.70 (US\$125), but he netted only Php82.07 (US\$2). PH 84 is getting 36.54% from the gross proceeds for loan repayment of the principal and interest amounts. Farmers, however, cannot explain how the amounts are arrived at. Furthermore, the total cost of rehabilitation that PH 84 spent when they converted the use of land from rice to banana is also deducted from gross proceeds. Caldito said that PH 84 informed them that it spent Php100,000 (US\$2,227) to rehabilitate his one-fourth hectare, but PH 84 did not present receipts.

Principal payment plus an 'old loan' and NEH's applied interest are also dubious deductions. Caldito said that the 'old loan' might be their loan to Honorario. The 'principal payment' might be the amount paid by PH 84 to their loan to Honorario. 'NEH's interest' might be the interest paid to NEH since the company supposedly shelled out everything. NEH is a major

buyer and financier of banana production in Pantaron.

Meanwhile, the 'item on cooperative', which covers capital share and savings retention amounting to Php297.25 (US\$7) and deducted bi-monthly, goes directly to PH 84, since it is supposed to be a growers cooperative. Caldito said they can avail of a percentage share of this amount at the end of the year.

Farmers do not know why they cannot get the whole amount collected from them because this item was never explained to them. PH 84 is also deducting a 13th month pay from the gross proceeds supposedly for the hired agricultural workers. If a regular worker is receiving gross monthly pay of Php7,008 (US\$156) (based on Php292 daily wage or US \$6.50), he or she should receive a 13th month pay of Php7,008 (US\$156), but instead receives only Php936.48 (US \$21). Finally, PH 84 is also deducting a 'withholding tax' amounting to Php103 (US\$2.30) per month, which should be charged to PH 84 and not the growers.

Tenants and small landowners have signed a 10-year agreement with NEH. Today, majority of the people in Pantaron village are working as agricultural workers in banana plantations.

Yoshida Farms is implementing a one-peso higher minimum wage from the minimum wage in Davao as prescribed by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), amounting to Php292 (US\$6.50) per day for a regular worker. A regular worker works six days per week and receives his or her salary every 15th or 30th of the month.

Workers of Yoshida Farms said that government social security benefits such as Social Security System (SSS), Pag-ibig, PhilHealth as well as income taxes are deducted from their salary twice a month. But Yoshida Farms management cannot show proof that the company is remitting its collection to the government agencies.

Workers are also agreeing to work even without contracts, because those with contracts, according to the workers, can only work for a minimum of three to a maximum of five months.

Workers are also agreeing to work even without contracts, because those with contracts, according to the workers, can only work for a minimum of three to a maximum of five months.

Worse, women hired as packing crew only work for four days per week with a minimum daily wage of Php292 (US\$6.50). Yoshida Farms is implementing "no packing, no wage policy". Still, there are cases where agricultural workers are receiving below minimum daily wage amounting to Php170 (US\$3.77). They do not get benefits and are casuals.

Health at risk

Four agricultural workers at Yoshida Farms, ages between 22 and 27 years old, said that they apply pesticides on bananas without any protective gear. Aerial spraying is being conducted once a week.

Since the Yoshida Farms and NEH came to Pantaron, the residents complained of the quality of water. Before the two companies came, the people got their drinking water from a water pump and each sub-village had one water pump. When the banana plantation was established, the residents observed that the water had a different taste and they could no longer drink it. They believe that this was due to aerial spraying of pesticides.



Waging the struggle

The agricultural workers are fighting for their rights. Those working in the Yoshida Farms formed the Yoshida Farms Labor Union (YFLU) in June 2011.

Back when there was no union, workers always experienced harassment from their supervisors or from the management. Now, the workers have a bargaining power, they cannot be easily harassed, and their voices are heard, according to the YFLU official.

The YFLU had a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) in November 2011, but it was violated. In January 2013, the management implemented the CBA. On February 26, 2013, when the YFLU union members reported for work, the security guards blocked their entry and told them to proceed to the municipal office because the meeting with the management was set there. In the meeting, the management of Yoshida Farms declared that it was stopping its operation, citing the low dollar-exchange rate and the debt of workers to NEH-Philippines amounting to Php1.3 million (US\$29,000). NEH-Philippines will take over the operation, according to Yoshida Farms, and it has offered a separation pay where for

every three years of service, workers will be paid an equivalent of 15 days salary or a measly Php3,504 (US\$78). The union refused to be deceived. They invoked their right to job security and accused the management of union busting.

The YFLU filed a notice of strike on February 27 and held an election on February 28 where majority voted for the strike. The union had series of negotiations with the management but no agreement was reached. On the March 6 negotiations, Yoshida Farms presented to the YFLU some documents regarding their loans payable amounting to Php32.4 million

(\$721,000) but there were no documents presented stating that the company was closing down.

On March 8, the YFLU staged a strike. The union was filing charges of union busting and claimed that if NEH would take over the farm, the workers will be absorbed as contractual workers and would be paid a daily minimum wage of only Php180 (US\$4). The company also wanted to evade the CBA that was supposed to be effective for five years, according to the union. As of this writing, the strike is ongoing.

Majority of the people in Pantaron village depend on land and agriculture, but the entry of Yoshida Farms, NEH-Philippines and other local and foreign corporations has facilitated corporate control of the resources of the village and turned the farmers into low-paid agricultural workers.

The entry of foreign investments is supported by the Philippine gov-

ernment, which also facilitates agribusiness land deals. This is happening because the government is implementing liberalization, deregulation and privatization of the economy, making it equally responsible for land grabbing by Yoshida Farms and NEH-Philippines, which is done through 'contract growing' and 'leasehold schemes'. This situation has further aggravated landlessness, food insecurity, poverty, and loss of livelihood especially in the rural areas.

The farmers and agricultural workers have demonstrated the necessity of organizing themselves and educating all the people to wage the struggle for genuine agrarian reform. The continuing foreign control of farmers' lands in Pantaron village highlights this political necessity and the urgency of genuine land re-distribution and re-orienting production planning for the full benefit of the local community and society.



Filipino farmers continue the fight for genuine agrarian reform.

Source: femamagazine.com

femamagazine.com

Violating indigenous people's rights for logging, palm oil

The indigenous peoples have inhabited the Kebuaw village in the town of Mukah, state of Sarawak, Malaysia along the Ilas River for centuries. Along the Ilas River there are three deep spots named after their ancestors: Lubok Dasun, Lubok Meramat and Lubok Holek.

Currently there are four longhouses, traditional dwelling of indigenous peoples in Sarawak, around the mouth of Ilas River and these longhouses are of Rumah Bangit, Janting, Diana and Suwai, with a total population of about 550 people.

Their main source of living is cultivating sago trees, while other sources are hunting wild animals, capturing marine lives with nets, trawling, fishing nets, installing traps, and growing rice, fruits or vegetables.

Kebuaw Village and Kampung Baru Sungai Sah are about three and a half miles (5.6 kilometers) away from

Sungai Kut, Batang Igan (Igan river), of Dalat District in Mukah Division, Sarawak. The residents of these two villages in the olden days practiced traditional beliefs (Melanau Liko or pagan) and now with a total household of 123 families with the entire population of around 720 people. About 70% are Christians, with 25% of the population still practicing their traditional Melanau Liko or pagan customs, while 5% are Muslims due to marriage with Islam communities outside of Kebuaw village. At the same time, the Melanau communities are also mixed with the Dayak Iban communities of four longhouses, where they have a very good relationship as brothers and sisters despite their Melanau communities differences in culture, customs, traditions and beliefs. They are of Kebuaw Village and respectful of each other and they help each other in times of need, regardless of the occasion: death, gatherings, Gawai Dayak festival, Christmas and Kaul Festival for Melanau communities. They also share Native Customary Rights (NCR)

This article is based on "Case Documentation of Kebuaw and Ilas River on the Violation of Native Customary Rights" written by indigenous community leaders of Kebuaw in Sibu (Sarawak, Malaysia). The Sarawak Dayak Iban Association is an indigenous community-based organization championing the rights of the indigenous peoples in Sarawak, East Malaysia.

Communities are arming themselves with education on native customary rights.



Gilbert Sape

in their ancestral territorial domain or Guun Kinah in Melanau language.

Today, Melanau communities of Kebuaw Village and Iban communities of Ilas River in Sibul, Sarawak in Malaysia are fighting for their native customary rights against encroachment by private companies in collusion with the government of Sarawak.

The communities are way behind development, particularly in public facilities such as electricity, water and roads. Their only means of transportation is by boat. The four longhouses of Sungai (river) Ilas share a common boundary with Müden village based on the centre of the river where water split into two directions, flowing toward the river mouth. This place is

known as the Rogda River. The total area for all these villages is approximately 6,000 hectares.

Generally, the current community leaders of indigenous peoples have no power to make decisions and adjudicate cases concerning the native customary rights. The hierarchy of community leadership follows this order: Temenggong, Pemancha, Penghulu (Headman) and Village Chief. And because of that, all NCR cases now have to be tried in Civil Court (High Court) in the State of Sarawak.

Apparently, the Native Court in Sarawak now has been politicized by the government. Every time an outsider or even the capitalist encroaches into the NCR lands, the

authorities always blame the indigenous peoples.

Recognition by the British Government

During the colonial times, the British showed respect toward native customary rights of the indigenous peoples. They did not encroach or invade NCR lands. They even released or issued a grant or title to these lands either individually or in

The actions of the State of Sarawak indicate a lack of respect for the native customary rights of indigenous peoples in the area.

groups, and recognized territorial domains. One of the evidence grants or titles of NCR is still in the custody of indigenous peoples to this date, located within the Kampung Kebuaw and Ilas River, Batang Igan.

Based on the common map plotted in 1956 by the Sarawak Land Survey Department, and the aerial photograph of the Royal Air Force (RAF) in 1950, a part of the area of Kebuaw and Ilas River has been cleared by the indigenous peoples for farming. An aerial photograph by the Royal Air Force (RAF) of the land in 1968 showed that most of the area of Kebuaw and Ilas River after 1956 transformed into a wide variety of class/type of cultivation such as sago

cultivation, mature rubber trees, shifting cultivation farms, permanent cultivation and inter-cropping gardens.

River Ilas/Kebuaw under national and state governments

Ever since the government was established in the State of Sarawak, the villagers of Kampung Kebuaw, residents of longhouses in Ilas River, Batang Igan, were only able to enjoy a wooden walkway project, water tank for storing drinking water, primary school building, five housing units, two boats and two units of outboard engines.

However, the government seems unconcerned about the needs and welfare of the Melanau communities of Kampung Kebuaw and the Iban communities of four longhouses in the Ilas River. Similarly, the actions of the State Government of Sarawak indicate a lack of respect for the NCR of indigenous peoples in the area. They also do not implement what has been agreed by the Government of Malaysia with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

The indigenous peoples sent a letter of application to the Department of and and Survey o Sarawak to request for demarcation of their lands and for the issuance of grants, but their applications were turned down. These were tendered as early as the 1980s, and copies of these applications are still in their custody as proof of their continuous efforts at

appealing to authorities, the letters dating as far back as 21 November 1988 and 18 January 1991.

Aside from the titles given by the British colonial government, another concrete evidence of the NCR was a document ordering a logging company, Hua Seng Sdn Bhd to pay fines for trespassing into the sacred burial site of the Iban and the Melanau communities. The said site is situated at the mouth of the Sungai Anak Besar, a tributary of Ilas River. The indigenous peoples filed a suit of Trespassing Ilas River Cemetery on 11 January 1998. On 21 January 1998



Some of the community leaders and members who are actively defending indigenous peoples rights in Sarawak.

the company was fined with RM 3,000 (US\$ 827.61) for the offense.

At first, the government released licenses to a logging company. The logging company then began operations in the NCR lands in 1993 and continued until 2005. This ancestral domain is now gone.

People's resistance

On 28 November 2010, the indigenous peoples came to know that two private companies, Sarananas Sdn. Bhd. and Pelita Holdings Sdn Bhd had encroached into their NCR lands.

Sarananas Sdn. Limited Company is engaged in large-scale oil palm plantation in the area of NCR lands. The company obtained approval from the State Government to commence palm oil plantations in Blk 56 Lot 271 with an area of 2,517 hectares, for a period of 60 years, beginning 3 September 2008 until 3 September 2068. The main shareholder is Roziah Mahmud, the sister of the Chief Minister of Sarawak, Taib Mahmud.

The second company that encroached into their customary rights land, Pelita Holdings Sdn. Bhd., a company engaged in sago plantation, had invaded ancestral lands with an area of 3,772 hectares. The indigenous people could not obtain details about the second company as they have no means to access such information.

Once they knew that their NCR lands had been encroached, they held an emergency meeting among their fellow indigenous peoples and set up in 2011 the Steering Action Committee of Customary Lands of

Kebuaw Village, Kampung Baru Sungai Sah Kebuaw and four longhouses along Ilas River.

The indigenous people set up blockades three times to stop Salananas, which has destroyed their sago palms from further encroaching into their native land. There were hundreds of indigenous peoples who took part in the blockade to demand for the immediate cessation of operations and leave the areas of the ancestral territorial domain.

They also lodged three police reports but there was no action taken by the police.

They had a dialogue with the company twice, but no resolution was reached. Even without their consent as indigenous peoples, the company decided to continue their destructive operations.

The company violated the indigenous peoples rights by encroaching into their native customary right lands and the traditional ritual custom (Piring pangul) of the Dayak Iban societies and Simah of the Melanau communities. The government also violated their rights by releasing provisional leases over the NCR lands as well as the titled lands of individuals that have been recognized by the British colonies decades ago. The

government did not conduct field investigations (Land Inquiry) before approving provisional leases.

No environmental impact assessment studies or reports were conducted before commencing oil palm plantation operations. The company also closed down the channel of the Drainage and Irrigation Department and also part of Ilas River that has been there for decades. No compensation was offered by the company.

Furthermore, the company also damaged the protected grounds such as former old house sites (Tembawai), water springs, hunting areas, and the areas rattan, timber and *jelutong* or rubber are traditionally collected. Finally, the company has caused destabilization and division among the local communities.

The indigenous peoples of Sarawak are demanding that the indigenous native customary rights lands be recognized by the State Government and for the company to immediately cease operation and leave their ancestral lands. They also demand that the existing government respect the rights of indigenous peoples and address their demands genuinely.

There were hundreds of indigenous peoples who took part in the blockade to demand for the immediate cessation of operations and leave the areas of the ancestral territorial domain.

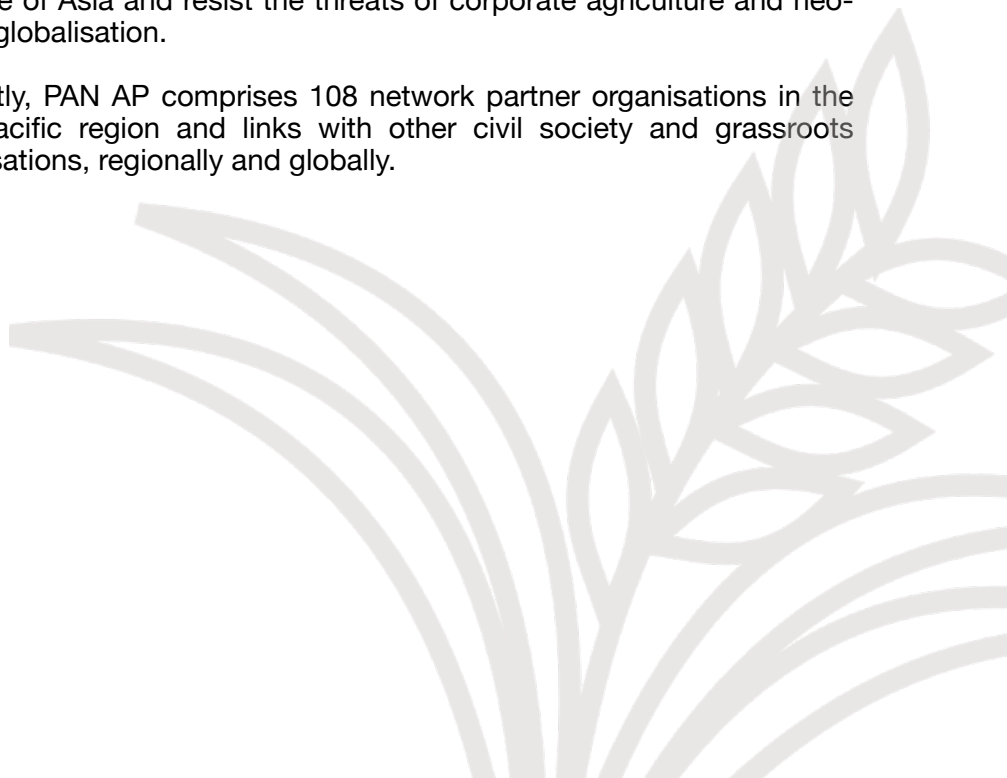
About PAN AP

Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PAN AP) is one of the five regional centres of Pesticide Action Network (PAN), a global network dedicated primarily towards the elimination of harm caused to humans and the environment by pesticides and towards promoting biodiversity-based ecological agriculture.

PAN AP's vision is of a society that is truly democratic and culturally diverse, based on the principles of food sovereignty, gender justice and environmental sustainability. PAN AP has developed strong partnerships with peasants, agricultural workers, indigenous peoples, fisherfolks, rural women movements and other small food producers in the Asia Pacific region. Guided by the strong leadership of these grassroots groups, PAN AP has become a strong advocacy network with a firm Asian perspective.

Our mission lies in strengthening people's movements to advance and assert food sovereignty, promote biodiversity based ecological agriculture and the empowerment of rural women; protect people and the environment from highly hazardous pesticides; defend the rice heritage of Asia and resist the threats of corporate agriculture and neo-liberal globalisation.

Currently, PAN AP comprises 108 network partner organisations in the Asia-Pacific region and links with other civil society and grassroots organisations, regionally and globally.





A useful reference material, the book is remarkable as it involved the direct participation of community-based organisations in documenting, investigating and writing their respective cases of land grabbing and the struggles they waged to defend their rights.

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