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June 2011

Some Key REDD+ Players

REDD+ rewards polluters with carbon credits, allowing them to elude their responsibility to reduce emissions at source. There are billions of dollars at stake and no real obligation to respect human or collective rights – the so-called "safeguards" mentioned in the negotiating text states that they should only be "promoted and supported" rather than being obligatory for governments. These sneaky words are absolutely inadequate to protect Indigenous and forest-dependent Peoples' rights. REDD-type projects have already resulted in land grabs, jailings, servitude and threats to cultural survival.[1] It is crucial to ask who is gaining from REDD+, who is making the decisions, where is the money coming from and who is pushing REDD+, and why. Below is an overview of some of the key players who are behind designing, implementing and profiting from REDD+.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

The World Bank and the Regional Multilateral Development Banks

The World Bank and regional multilateral development banks (and their financial backers) are main actors for implementing "market readiness" strategies in developing countries to open up new forms of carbon markets and offset schemes.

At the UN climate talks in Bali in 2007, the Bank launched its Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), a "market readiness" initiative for REDD+. The FCPF was launched despite the lack of any UN agreement on the REDD+ mechanism. As Benoit Bosquet, the Bank official who led the development of the facility, put it at the time, "The facility's ultimate goal is to jump-start a forest carbon market." The FCPF consists of two funds: the Readiness Fund and the Carbon Fund. The former supports countries in developing a national REDD+ strategy (phase 1 and 2), while the Carbon Fund is a public-private partnership due to become operational in 2011 which facilitates the trading in forest carbon credits (phase 3). In the first phase, countries have to produce Readiness Plan Idea Notes (R-PINs), which are the bases for producing the Readiness Preparation Proposals (R-PP), in order to provide the framework for REDD+ in each country. An exhaustive review of eight R-PPs found that these documents overlook issues related to the respect of customary rights, the right to Free Prior and Informed Consent, land conflicts, and national consultations have been non-existent or inadequate.[2] The second phase consists of REDD+ implementation and pilot REDD+ initiatives, and the third phase consists of implementation of 'results-based actions'. However, the negotiating texts from 2010 leave it up to individual countries to decide which of the three phases to begin at; hence different phases could be done in parallel.[3]

The Bank is also managing the BioCarbon Fund, a fund aimed at projects that sequester or conserve carbon with forests and agriculture. This Fund "can consider purchasing carbon from a variety of land use and forestry projects; the portfolio includes Afforestation and Reforestation, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation and is exploring innovative approaches to agricultural carbon."[4]

The BioCarbon Fund will purchase 150,000 pollution credits by 2016 from a carbon sequestration project in Kenya. The Kenya Agricultural Carbon Project, which covers over 40,000 hectares, is the first project in Africa that sells carbon offsets from a land management project. It is being implemented by the Swedish NGO Vi Agroforestry, and it is being used as the basis for the development of a Sustainable Agriculture Land Methodology under the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS).[5]

The Forest Investment Programme (FIP) is part of the Bank's Strategic Climate Fund, which is one of two funds in the framework of the Climate Investment Funds. The FIP, established in 2009, will mobilize larger-scale funds to prepare national strategies for the implementation of REDD+ projects under the FCPC in selected pilot countries. Furthermore, it seeks to give funds to other schemes that promote carbon markets in forests, such as the UN-REDD programme. It achieves this by providing "scaled-up financing to developing countries for readiness reforms and public and private investments, identified through national REDD+ readiness or equivalent strategies."[6]

The FIP funds are channeled through five multilateral development banks: The African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Inter-American Development Bank, and the World Bank Group.

MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS

The United Nations

Many of the UN agencies, programmes and funds are promoting REDD+, including: the UN-REDD Programme, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Rio+20 process, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environmental Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Women Environment and Development Organization, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, among others.

United Nations REDD Programme (UN-REDD)

The UN-REDD Programme was launched in September 2008 to prepare and implement national REDD+ strategies in developing countries and was formed by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). UN-REDD currently has 29 partner countries in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America, of which 13 are receiving support for national programme activities, worth US$55.4 million.[7]

This multi-donor trust fund states that "the final phase of REDD+ involves *developed* countries paying *developing* countries carbon offsets for their standing forests," making it clear that they see REDD+ as a carbon trading scheme.[8]

Norway continues to be UN-REDD's first and largest donor, committing US$52.2 million for 2008-2009, US$31 million for 2010, and at least US$40 million for 2011-2012. Denmark is the second donor country committing US$2 million in June 2009 and another US$6 million in November 2010. At the end of 2009, Spain announced its pledge of US$20.2 million over a period of three years, and confirmed US$1.4 million for 2010. In March 2011, Japan made its first funding commitment of US$3 million and the European Union pledged approximately US$14 million (€10 million).[9]

PRIVATE SECTOR

At the UN climate talks, corporate lobbyists are often larger than governmental delegations, especially in comparison to those from Least Developed Countries. The UN climate negotiations and the parallel decision-making meetings are packed with corporate lobbies trying to prevent any real mandatory commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at source. They very successfully lobby to maintain their polluting activities "safe" from any restrictions and to ensure that the decisions made are profitable for them.

There are many corporations interested in REDD+, from logging and soy industries to power and service sectors. Also, financial players are keen to increase speculation bubbles for financial gambling. Merrill Lynch, for example, is funding the Ulu Masen project in Indonesia and the Marriot Hotels is involved in the Juma Sustainable Development Reserve in Brazil. Mining companies also want to get in on the REDD+ action. For example the Rio Tinto company, infamous for violating human rights and causing environmental destruction, states: "REDD+ is used as an economic tool to offset the carbon footprint of Rio Tinto".[10]

Fossil Fuel Industry

The extractive industry frontiers continue to expand into the oceans, forests and the Arctic while endangering ancestral peoples and biodiverse territories. At the same time, powerful fossil fuel companies support and finance REDD+ projects. Well aware of the conflicts being generated by their activities, extractive industries seek to greenwash their images by "offsetting" the destruction. There are many examples of fossil fuel companies profiting from carbon trading schemes including Shell, ConocoPhillips, Chevron-Texaco, Statoil, Gazprom, BP, to name a few.

BP

To greenwash its image, the oil giant BP has spent millions on lobbyists and campaigns to prevent climate regulations and has actively participated in offsets schemes related to forests and lands. On April 2011 it was revealed that the company spent at least US$2 million on federal lobbying in the US in the first quarter of 2011, on issues ranging from advocating for an end to the offshore drilling moratorium imposed by President Obama after the Gulf Coast oil spill, to proposed EPA rules relating to greenhouse gas emissions and air quality standards.[11]

BP recently became the first company to join the World Bank's FCPF Carbon Fund. The other founding members are the governments of the UK, Germany and Norway, as well as the EU and the NGO Nature Conservancy. The new fund, as mentioned above, is designed to facilitate the trading in forest carbon credits. BP will be allowed to offset its own emissions via this fund, or could buy carbon offsets and sell them on the open market.[12]

The Noel Kempff Climate Action Project in Bolivia is another example worth noting. BP, together with other two energy companies, American Electric Power (AEP) and PacifiCorp, set up in 1997 a REDD-type project to "offset" their emissions. This means that the corporations pay to "protect" almost 650,000 hectares of rainforest for 30 years and in return, the credits generated allow the companies to continue polluting. A report from Greenpeace found that between 1997 and 2004, AEP, Pacificorp, and BP reported about 7.4 million tons of carbon offsets from the Noel Kempff project to the US Department of Energy. This is considerably more than the amount verified for the 30-year project, listed at 5.8 million tons. In other words, the investors may have claimed millions of tonnes of CO_2 emissions reductions that never occurred. Greenpeace also found that some of the logging companies had simply moved their machinery on to the next rainforest. In addition, one villager told Greenpeace about a herd of cows the project provided in an attempt to provide "alternative livelihoods" for the community. Unfortunately, the cows were European and unable to survive in Bolivia. "They all died in the end," the villager said. "The cows were so expensive that a whole herd of local breeds could have been bought for the price of a single one."[13]

Moreover, BP is the latest major oil company to extract from the tar/oil sands in northern Alberta, Canada. The massive tar sands project violates the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, destroys environmental health, contaminates water, clear cuts boreal forests, and is a major contributor to climate change. It processes and burns high-carbon dirty fuels and over 5,000 miles of pipeline corridors are being constructed through North America to refineries in the US. In this regard, allowing offsets means allowing more destruction where these companies operate.[14]

Agribusiness and Logging sectors

REDD+ includes agricultural lands and practices in its offset schemes. Despite the difficulties in measuring soil carbon, the lack of technical expertise, the variability of soil ecosystems, the amount of land required, among many other challenges, industries continue to attempt inclusion. The industries base claims on growing crops for biomass-based energy from agricultural crops and forests. In addition, they justify the use of biomass as a way to substitute the need for fossil-fuel energy. However, including agriculture and monoculture plantations in REDD+ will add pressure to existing land conflicts and local food sovereignty while benefiting industrial agriculture and tree plantation companies. There is an increasing number, scope and percentage of agricultural methodologies approved by the UNFCCC for carbon offsets and carbon sequestration projects.

Genetically engineered "climate-ready crops" threatens farmers' rights to seed biodiversity through patent claims and genetic contamination. Six agro-corporations, DuPont, BASF, Monsanto, Syngenta, Bayer and Dow, control 77 percent of the 262 patent families identified. However, DuPont, BASF and Monsanto alone account for over two-thirds of the total. The public sector researchers hold only 10%.[15] These multinationals are active in promoting soil-based REDD+ in climate negotiations.

Industrial tree plantations, moreover, are being promoted as "forests" that sequester carbon. The UN definition of forests is so vague that it includes monoculture tree plantations, even though such plantations destroy habitat for biodiversity, waterways and the livelihoods of forest-dependent and Indigenous Peoples. Groups globally have been challenging this definition of forests, insisting that any definition of forests must be scientifically based and must include social and ecological criteria.[16] Simply said, plantations are not forests.

Once again, those who benefit are the large, industrial, and agrochemical corporations.

Monsanto

Agribusiness does not only aim to make money from REDD+ carbon credits but also to use supposedly "climate ready" genetically modified crops and thus expand its business. Monsanto is the world's largest seed and pesticide company, which has controversially saturated the world with genetically modified (GM) crops. According to Monsanto, GM crops are not just the solution to world hunger but they can also help tackle climate change. It claims that they are supporters of "sustainable agriculture" –while monopolising the world's food supply. They are the makers of RoundUp Ready seeds and the toxic chemical RoundUp. Monsanto has a long history of producing GM seeds, including "terminator" seeds that do not reproduce, forcing farmers to buy more Monsanto seeds each year.

In this sense, *La Via Campesina* expressed in a statement after the climate talks in 2010, "Monsanto tries to convince us that monoculture plantations of its GMO Roundup Ready soybeans qualify for carbon credits because they contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases that heat the planet by accumulating organic matter in the soil. Communities living nearby soy monoculture plantations are a living example of the mortal and destructive effects of these monocultures. Similar false arguments are used to sell carbon credits based on forest monocultures, agrofuel crops, or industrial animal production."

International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

The ITTO is an intergovernmental body that includes 60 countries of producers and consumers of wood in tropical forests and the European Union. It is a key actor in the push to approve REDD+, especially in relation to "sustainable forest management" activities. The ITTO has launched a thematic program on REDD+ and environmental services with an initial funding of US$3.5 million dollars from Norway. The 45th session of the ITTO Council held in November 2009 recommended that efforts related to REDD+ should focus on promoting "sustainable forest management", legitimizing the myth of "sustainable logging".

This sector's lobbying seeks above all to include forest extraction (i.e. logging) inside REDD+ in order to benefit from carbon markets while maintaining business as usual.[17] The NGO Global Witness alleged that a major cause of forest degradation and a precursor to deforestation is industrial logging, even when it follows "best practices" to reduce its impact. In the Brazilian Amazon for example, 32 per cent of "selectively" logged forests were completely destroyed over a period of four years.[18]

COUNTRIES

Interim REDD Partnership Agreement

After the failure of the climate talks in Copenhagen in 2010 to agree on a REDD+ text, Norway and France established the Interim REDD Partnership Agreement to hurry along the process of starting up REDD+. In 2010, 55 countries met in Paris and then again in Oslo to discuss how to fast-track funding for REDD+. The meeting in Paris was heavily criticised by grassroots organizations for their lack of transparency and participatory process.[23] At the Oslo Conference, Norway signed a REDD+ agreement with Indonesia for immediate financial support of about US$1 billion, and then, it signed another with Guyana for a $250 million deal.

Bilateral agreements: A closer look into Norway

The Norwegian government has been an important player in financing and implementing REDD+ both as a major donor to UN-REDD, the Amazon Fund, the Interim REDD Partnership and through bilateral and multilateral agreements including billion dollar deals with Indonesia and Brazil. Norway committed US$600 million a year to support REDD+ activities. Its profit and greenwash-base motivation became clear when it donated a billion dollars to the Amazon Fund in Brazil shortly after sealing the deal between its state oil company, Statoil, and the Brazilian oil giant, Petrobras, to cooperate in oil exploration in deep waters. Moreover, the government of Norway is investing in bauxite mining and aluminum production in the same Amazon rainforest that it purports to be protecting.[19] Norway also made an agreement with Mexico in December 2010 with US$15 million to build Mexico's REDD+ capacities in the area of measuring, reporting and verification (MRV). It has also allocated US$250 million to Guyana for REDD+ activities, although the president of Guyana publicly scolded the Norwegian minister of environment at the 2010 climate talks because the promised funds had still not arrived – meanwhile the rate of deforestation in Guyana is actually increasing.[20]

Within the **Norway-Indonesia REDD Agreement**, Indonesia agreed to implement a decree for a two-year logging moratorium starting in January 2011, and chose Central Kalimantan as a REDD+ pilot project. The moratorium came into force in May 2011 – but the moratorium was never intended to be a "ban on deforestation". As set out in the Letter of Intent signed by Norway and Indonesia in May 2010, the moratorium is part of Phase 2 of the Indonesia-Norway cooperation on REDD+, which is to "be initiated in January 2011, with a shared aspiration to complete it by the end of 2013."[21]

Moreover, while a number of oil palm companies operating in Central Kalimantan are doing so without proper licenses (including companies owned by Golden-Agri Resources Ltd., Wilmar International, IOI, Sime Darby and Astra Agro Lestari), Norway's Government Pension Fund Global has invested a total of US$183 million shares in these five companies: Golden-Agri Resources Group, the palm oil arm of Sinar Mas; Wilmar International Group, Singapore; IOI Group, Malaysia; Sime Darby Group, Malaysia; and Astra Agro Lestari.[22]

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS)

The WWF, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, Environmental Defense Fund, Woods Hole Research Center, CIFOR, Wildlife Conservation Society and other "conservationist" NGOs are among those who stand to make billions of dollars from REDD+.

The interests of these conservation NGOs and large corporations have become more clear. Corporations on one hand have been using these NGOs as their best green public relations' agencies – if paid the right amounts of money, and the NGOs funds on the other hand, have grown more dependent on the "contributions" from these same corporations.

Several groups like **The Nature Conservancy (TNC)** and **Conservation International (CI)**, for example, have lobbied for sub-national targets to be at the core of REDD+. Sub-national targets allow the implementation of specific projects without having a national-based target. An insider who is employed by a leading green group explained to the journalist Johann Hari the motivations: "It's because they will generate a lot of revenue this way. If there are national targets, the money runs through national governments. If there are subnational targets, the money runs through the people who control those forests – and that means TNC, Conservation International and the rest. Suddenly, these forests they run become assets, and they are worth billions in a carbon market as offsets. So they have a vested financial interest in offsetting and in subnational targets, even though they are much more environmentally damaging than the alternatives. They know it. It's shocking."[24]

TNC states in its website that they "pursue non-confrontational, pragmatic solutions to conservation challenges", however, right below they continue saying that they "partner with indigenous communities, businesses, governments, multilateral institutions, and other non-profits".[25] Conservation organizations such as these thrive on these types of conflicts of interest. The Noel Kempff Climate Action Project in Bolivia where TNC is a partner mentioned in above, shows how social and environmental considerations are left aside over profit interests.

CI is also an intensive promoter of REDD+ including a very controversial REDD-type project in the Lancondon rainforest in Chiapas, Mexico. In 2009, the government of Chiapas began work on the Climate Change Action Programme for the State of Chiapas (PACCCH), financed by the British Embassy, with CI as a key actor in its implementation. The pilot projects were planned by CI for 2011 in Chiapas – where there are 1.3 million hectares of land considered natural reserves – fall under the framework of an agreement signed in November 2010 between California in the US, Chiapas in Mexico and Acre in Brazil. The agreement establishes the bases for initiating a carbon credit scheme incorporating REDD+ and other forest carbon schemes into the regulatory frameworks of these municipalities. However, immediately outside the area designated for the sale of carbon credits, there is a continued promotion for the expansion of agroindustry, tourism development, industrial plantations of oil palm, and other activities that lead to deforestation.[26]

Another example of how these NGOs are counter-acting real environmental and social struggles is to take a closer look into their partners. CI's corporate partners include several polluting industries such as ArcelorMittal, Barrick Gold, BP Foundation, Cargill, Chevron, Coca-Cola, Kimberly-Clark, Kraft Foods, McDonald's, Monsanto, Newmont Mining Corporation, Rio Tinto, Shell, Toyota Motor Corporation, Walmart, among many others. Despite the ghastly record of human rights violation and environmental destruction of these climate criminals, CI blatantly states: "We believe that corporations are a major ally in our conservation efforts... We've always taken pride in our relationships with our creative corporate partners. Many have been making a difference for decades; others are just getting started."[27] In May this year, the magazine *Don't Panic* secretly filmed a senior employee discussing with undercover reporters ways in which the organisation could help an arms company boost its green credentials. The film shows the CI employee suggesting North African birds of prey as a possible endangered species mascot for the arms company because of the "link to aviation".[28]

These corporate partnerships are not only allowing these industries to greenwash their destructive activities, but also by paying CI or any other green group, they are buying the silence of "recognized" conservation groups about the environmental and social impacts that these activities entail.

VOLUNTARY CARBON MARKETS

Voluntary markets allow companies, organisations and individuals to trade REDD+ offset credits to theoretically compensate for individual or corporate-based emissions. Being a voluntary scheme, there is no authority nor regulating standards for projects generating offset credits. Certification standards like the Voluntary Carbon Standard (VCS) and the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) legitimise such schemes. Certifier companies such as SmartWood, SGS and TÜV Süd, and carbon traders such as EcoSecurities and Caisse des Depots, earn money by selling their "expertise" for REDD+.

The **Verified Carbon Standard (VCS)**, formerly called Voluntary Carbon Standard, was founded in 2005 by "business and environmental leaders who identified a need for greater quality assurance in voluntary markets". As their mission sates, they have some "freedom" to create their own rules of the game, by claiming, "to pioneer innovative rules and tools that open new avenues for carbon crediting and allow businesses, non-profits and government entities to engage in on-the-ground climate action"[29]

VCS created a "REDD+ Methodology Framework" to assist in the creation of REDD+ methodologies for project activities in the voluntary market. Each approved methodology has been developed by different consultancy companies such as InfiniteEARTH, Winrock International, Wildlife Works Carbon and Face the Future, to name a few.

The first REDD+ methodology approved under the VCS for example, was developed by InfiniteEARTH, written by Winrock International and funded by Shell, Gazprom Market and Trading and the Clinton Foundation. The Rimba Raya conservation project, which covers nearly 100,000 hectares of peat swamp forest in the province of Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, received furious responses from local and environmental groups since polluters like Shell and Gazprom will be allowed to greenwash and expand their activities with REDD+.[30]

VCS has also developed methodologies for crediting AFOLU activities (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use or REDD++), expanding the possibilities to agricultural, peat and pastoral lands. By involving more and more groups interested in profiting from REDD+, the VCS presents itself as an easy way forward without the "hassle" of official regulatory frameworks. This is more than problematic as the official REDD+ text within the UNFCCC is still being hotly debated and REDD+ pilot projects already presenting so many social and environmental violations.

There are many more players that are pushing for legitimizing and expanding REDD+. For example, key funders that are promoting REDD+ are the Climate and Land Use Alliance (Ford Foundation, Packard Foundation, Climate Works, Betty and Gordon Moore Foundation), the Clinton Foundation, the Norwegian Agency for Development and Cooperation (NORAD), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ, Germany), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) to name a few.

Moreover networks such as the "Avoided Deforestation Partners" is dedicated to advancing US and international climate policies along with business solutions to "protect" tropical forests.[31] In 2009, an agreement to recommend US policymakers to incorporate "principles" into federal climate legislation was signed by groups such as the American Electric Power, Conservation International, Duke Energy, Marriott International, Sierra Club, Starbucks Coffee Company, The Nature Conservancy, The Walt Disney Company, Wildlife Conservation Society, the Woods Hole Research Center, and others. According to their principles, companies would be eligible to receive credits for reducing climate pollution by financing "conservation" of tropical forests: REDD+.[32]

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