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WoW — We Are All Part of the Solution



Photo

By: Helle Damgaard Nielsen, ITUC & Nancy Knickerbocker, Education International

UNFCCC, COP, REDD, LCA, KP, SBSTA, FAB – the abbreviations are many during the negotiations in Copenhagen and for the coming two days, WoW will be part of the vocabulary. The World of Work pavilion opened yesterday with extensive discussions and debates, not only by trade union leaders and climate officers, but also participants from civil society, international organizations, journalists and researchers engaged in the beginning of the largest ever trade union event on finding solutions to climate change.

Overlooking Copenhagen harbour, an area that is clean enough to swim in, despite factories and recycling waste areas in the vicinity, partnerships are being built across sectors, regions and political interests because we are all in this together – workers, indigenous

peoples, women, children and political leaders need to find a common way to put our societies on the pathway to sustainable development.

“Wow! To see so many colleagues from all around the world here is really very moving,” said Anabella Roseberg, sustainable development officer for the International Trade Union Confederation during the opening session at the headquarters of the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions that brought close to 200 people together amidst a mounting sense of urgency as time is running out for the COP15.

The WoW events underlines the necessity of consulting trade unions and their workers in the transition towards new low-carbon,

Continued on page 2...

climate-resilient economies. Workers have valuable knowledge of their environment and workplaces and are eager to take upon themselves part of the responsibility, if and when they are consulted at national and local level but sadly this is far from certain in many countries. Yet most workers are aware of their collective responsibility and are willing to act quickly to stop climate change from destroying their livelihoods.

Trade unions from the transport and energy sectors, forestry, construction, agriculture as well as the public sector and the informal economy have been eager to showcase their ideas to green their workplaces, on how to reach low-carbon industrial policies and link climate change impacts to social justice through employment. In the WoW and

inside the Bella Center, they are all united in the efforts to push world leaders towards an ambitious climate agreement that incorporates provisions for a just transition to a sustainable world with more green, decent jobs.

The coming days will include visits to Danish workplaces to witness the level of employee-driven actions to save energy and water; it will be possible to hear country-specific experiences from Korea, Japan, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavia, the Americas and Africa on mitigation and adaptation to climate change but climate justice, equity and equality are also part of the agenda.

Unions have solutions! Lets make it real, all of us. Lets make it a just transition. ❖



ILO side event, 15 December 18.00-19.30, WoW

Tomorrow in the World of Work pavilion, the ILO will be conducting a side-event on Economic recovery and Green Jobs: win-win for development, climate and labour?

Join Guy Ryder, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation and Pavan Sukhdev, Project Leader for UNEP's "Green Economy" initiative and other high level officials for a debate.



BiggerPicture.dk/petri

S.O.S.: Save Our Samoa

Samoaan Ambassador Aliioaiga Feturi Elisaia is keenly aware of his country's vulnerability to climate change. Samoa has experienced three catastrophic cyclones in the last two decades, and the IPCC has concluded that climate change will "likely" cause an increase in the intensity of tropical cyclones. Ambassador Feturi is Samoa's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and the country's ambassador to the United States and Canada. In Copenhagen, he is working to secure a strong climate agreement that will help prevent even more frequent and destructive extreme weather events in the future. "We will never walk out of negotiations," he says of Samoa's delegation, "even if we are the last ones there. This is about our survival."

By: Christie Kneteman, Islands First

Despite what the World Bank called "a less than a one-in-a-hundred-years probability", Samoa was consecutively hit by Cyclone Ofa in 1990 and Cyclone Val in 1991. The extreme winds, in excess of 200 kilometers per hour, and waves of the two storms caused over US\$500 million in damage - the equivalent of nearly one-quarter annual GDP. Critical infrastructure was destroyed, the capital city was flooded, and whole villages were swept out to sea. Eighty percent of crops were lost, and approximately 60 percent of the islands' coral reefs and coastal fishing grounds were severely harmed.

In 2004, Samoa was still working to recover when it was hit by another Category Five storm. Cyclone Heta inflicted damage equivalent to 15 percent of GDP to the country's infrastructure and resources.

Most recently, on September 29, 2009, Samoa experienced a large tsunami that killed 143 people, including approximately 60 children between the ages of 2 months and 5 years old. The damage was estimated at US\$147 million, which is equivalent to approximately 27 percent of Samoa's GDP. For comparison, the 2005 South Asian Tsunami inflicted damage to Thailand and Indonesia equivalent to 1.2 and 1.6 percent of their respective GDPs.

While the Samoan tsunami was not caused by climate change, its devastating aftermath demonstrates the vulnerability of small islands developing states relative to larger nations. Adaptation funding is desperately needed by



these small nations to prepare for the worsening effects of climate change. However, in addition to having sufficient quantity of funds, the funding must be easily accessible to vulnerable developing nations.

Ambassador Feturi was among Samoan officials who personally signed loans from the World Bank to finance the country's recovery in the wake of Cyclone Heta. He has joined many small island developing states in urging country representatives to adopt some form of insurance mechanism in the climate agreement. While adaptation funding helps to limit the damage caused by climate change, insurance funding is also needed to rebuild in the wake of extreme weather events.

In small island states, climate change also leads to erosion, inundation and potentially migration. Samoans, Ambassador Feturi explains, have a deep connection to their land. "Land is part of

our culture and our identity. We do not want to abandon our land and to have our loved ones buried there to go under the sea." An agreement in Copenhagen must work to prevent the creation of millions of climate refugees all over the world. It is unacceptable, he says, for "people to be uprooted for something preventable, that we lacked the foresight to do something about."

Despite all the challenges of the climate negotiations, Ambassador Feturi remains committed and hopeful. "We are negotiating in good faith and hope," he says, "and hopefully reason will prevail." He points out that the effects of climate change are now being felt in all corners of the world. "Our problems will be their problems - they are inextricably linked." All "members of the global family" need to come together and reach agreement before it is too late. ❖

Green Jobs: Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century

By: International Labour Organization

The 21st century faces multiple challenges: the first is to avert dangerous climate change and a deterioration of natural resources which are jeopardizing the quality of life of present and future generations. Prices of grain and oil are increasing and leading the most vulnerable to food insecurity and making their access to energy more and more difficult.

The various social challenges can be summarized by the need to deliver social development and decent work for all. This includes lifting over 1.3 billion people above the poverty line and providing decent work opportunities for 500 million young people entering the labour market over the next 10 years. It also means access to modern energy for 1.6 billion people, who still do not have any, and decent housing and sanitation for over 1 billion slum dwellers.

Furthermore, the current financial and economic crisis is worsening the above situation and diminishing the achievements accomplished during the last decades on poverty reduction and unemployment, creating massive losses of jobs and incomes.

These challenges are intimately linked and cannot be addressed separately any more if the world wants to follow the path to real sustainable economy.

Climate change @ work

The new climate change agreement will shift criteria for decision makers introducing new elements such as emission reduction, climate proofing investments and clean technologies. However, a green and low-carbon economy needs to be also



Photo: ILO

A green and low-carbon economy needs to be also sustainable in social terms and poverty eradication, decent work creation and employment generation should be also pursued.

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Many countries have already proved that this is possible. Green Jobs and the promotion of a green economy have become key drivers for achieving economic and social development that is also environmentally sustainable. These countries have undertaken measures to reduce the demand for energy through the promotion of energy efficient buildings, public transport, and diversifying the supply of clean and renewable energy. And millions of green jobs have

been created and many more can be further created.

The notion of green jobs summarizes the transformation of economies, enterprises, workplaces and labour markets into a sustainable, low-carbon economy providing decent work opportunities for all, adequate incomes, social protection and respect for workers' rights.

Realizing the potential of the world of work

The new agreement on climate change can build a legacy for present and future generations of energy-efficient infrastructure, rehabilitated ecosystems, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy resources, and enterprises and workplaces more resilient and adapted to climate change. By enhancing the social and labour dimension of the climate change agreement, the new accord will lay the foundations for a greener future which is environmentally sound, economically productive and socially sustainable. ❖

SIDE EVENT

Pollutant registers as a tool for strengthening GHG reporting and raising public awareness to promote GHG emission cuts.

An Official COP 15 Side Event Sponsored by the Government of the Republic of Armenia organized in collaboration with the International Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers Coordinating Group

Date and time: Tuesday, 15 December 2009, from 20.00 to 21.30. Victor Borg, Bella Center, Copenhagen.

COP-15: A Circus or a Committee of the Parties?

By: Emily Benson, Stakeholder Forum

The first week of the climate change negotiations in Copenhagen proved to be a colourful, noisy and raucous affair. We've watched aliens walking the corridors demanding to be taken to the world's climate leaders; we've seen polar bears prowling around the cafes reminding diners of the melting ice-caps; we've watched youth delegates prostrate themselves on the floor of the conference centre to demonstrate the detrimental impacts of climate change. Having strolled through the numerous stalls of the NGO section, or participated in any of the high quality side events, you can expect to leave the Bella Centre at the end of each day with a whole goody-bag of climate change souvenirs, including scarves, posters, gloves, badges, books, bags and hats. In light of all these festivities you would be forgiven for thinking that you were attending a carnival rather than a COP. I, for one, wouldn't be altogether surprised if a set of burlesque dancers shimmied their way past me or a circus ring-master with a couple of tigers in tow loped across the corridor in the next couple of days.

The level of dedication, enthusiasm and ingenuity of civil society participation at COP-15 is to be celebrated and applauded. Thousands of representatives have travelled from around the world to make their voice heard in the context of the climate change negotiations. As such, COP-15 has come to signify a platform for a global public interest about climate change across a staggering range of issues, sectors and communities. Furthermore, the meeting has become a valuable platform for networking, capacity building and information sharing amongst different organisations, and will no doubt result in new partnerships and initiatives amongst civil society actors. But, amidst the carnivalesque atmosphere of the Bella Centre, I can't help but wonder

how much lobbying is really taking place? And what, if any, opportunities are there for civil society to inform the final outcome?

In fact, relative to a number of other United Nations processes, the UNFCCC offers only limited formal opportunities for civil society to engage in the decision-making process. This means that all interaction with the climate change negotiating process is largely ad-hoc and

The lack of a formal engagement process means that the UNFCCC COPs are in danger of become an all encompassing stage for anyone with a cause but that few of those inputs are heard by the negotiators.

impromptu. The UNFCCC does recognise a number of generic observer constituencies including BINGOs, RINGOs, ENGOs, IPOs and TUNGOs but such groups are offered limited access or speaking rights in the context of the negotiations themselves. The lack of a formal engagement process means that the UNFCCC COPs are in danger of become an all encompassing stage for anyone with a cause but that few of those inputs are heard by the negotiators. The risk is that amidst all the clamour no voices are being heard.

The lack of a formal civil society engagement process in the context of the UNFCCC has a number of worrying implications that extend far beyond COP-15. Ad hoc processes tend to favour those groups and sectors that have the financial and human resources to conduct prominent and ongoing advo-

cacy campaigns. Those NGOs able to send over 100 delegates to the conference or those business groups able to gain access to national delegations are afforded a significant advantage through access to information, draft texts, and decision-makers.

As we all know, COP-15 is not the final call on climate change. After the circus in Copenhagen has packed up the stalls, rolled up the posters, and boxed the animal suits, the UNFCCC process will continue. If we are to ensure more democratic forms of international decision-making on climate change it is essential that formal mechanisms by which civil society actors can engage with the process be strengthened and maintained. Lessons can be learnt from any number of other processes, including the multi-stakeholder dialogues held at the Commission on Sustainable Development; the roundtable format held at UNEP Governing Council meetings in which a number of civil society representatives are allowed to attend on the same basis as ministers; or the formal rights that NGOs have in the context of the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision making and Access to justice in Environmental Matters. The advantage of a coherent civil society engagement process is that it provides regular, expected routes by which stakeholder groups can directly inform the process. Such formal mechanisms cannot and should not replace the surge of civil society activities here at COP-15, but they can help to direct the energy into coherent, policy-orientated inputs that can generate more informed and progressive global decision-making on climate change. ❖

Other Worlds are Possible: Human Progress in an Age of Climate Change

By: Dr Victoria Johnson, senior researcher and Andrew Simms director of policy and head of the climate change and energy programme, nef (new economics foundation)

By the time a family in the UK sit down for their evening meal on 3 January, they will already have generated the equivalent in greenhouse gases that it would take a similar family in a sub-Saharan African country like Tanzania the entire year to produce. To add to this inequality, the impacts of climate change are unevenly distributed.

The continuing development crisis and stressed environmental conditions in much of the global South means that many people are more vulnerable to increased climatic variability and long-term climate change. This means that the nature of development is key to whether or not vulnerable people will be able to adapt to global warming.

‘Development’ should mean different things in different places and cultural settings. It should describe a plurality of ways of seeing and interacting with a complex and varied world, itself shaped by diverse values, and political and economic agendas. It should be a difficult word to define because its meaning changes across time and space. Unfortunately, however, ‘development’ has come to mean something uniform – a one-path-fits-all trajectory for societies, regardless of place, culture and circumstance.

Other worlds are Possible, the sixth report from the Working Group on Climate Change and Development, launched here in Copenhagen, with forewords from Rajendra Pachauri chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and world leading ecological economist Prof. Herman Daly, critiques current models of development. It includes four short

essays from leading international thinkers, and draws from the practical experience of the members of the Working Group.

Prof. Jayati Ghosh, one of the world’s leading female economists from India makes the case that without new, less materialist and aspiration role models for human development that can be realistically be pursued in the light of climate change and resource scarcity, poor countries are being set up to fail. And, of course if they fail, by environmental implication, so does everyone else. She writes that the way wealthy nations like the United States have developed has left them vulnerable, and is not the path for others to follow.

The nature of development is key to whether or not vulnerable people will be able to adapt to global warming.

Nobel Laureate and founder of the Greenbelt Movement, Prof. Wangari Maathai argues for a revolution in democratic participation and inclusion in the way that important economic decisions are made. Both to adapt to climate change and to leap-frog dirty development, significant new financial resources will be needed, along with appropriate technology transfer. She writes that equity and the maintenance of the environment as the basis for people’s livelihoods, must take centre stage in policy decisions.

Chilean development economist Prof. Manfred Max-Neef sets out conclusively to demystify and dispense with the notion that the global economy has no alternative directions it can take. He identifies a series of new fundamental principle upon which he believes we can build. He argues that the shame of the

future is one of far greater regionalisation and localisation of markets.

And David Woodward, with direct experience ranging from the international financial institutions to the United Nations, argues that systemic change is unavoidable, possible and desirable given the challenges ahead. He believes that a clear outline of a new, flexible development model is visible, one that can both eradicate poverty and address climate change and resource scarcity. Its first steps look much like a global ‘Green New Deal’.

Overall the report argues that current models of development heavily rely upon conventional economic growth. But, economic growth as a means of ending poverty has been failing on its own terms, with a shrinking share of benefits reaching those who need it most, and generating the paradox that the already-rich now have to consume ever more, to deliver a shrinking share of benefits to the poorest.

Abandoning the economic growth model of development does not, of course, mean giving up on ways to improve the world. The report makes the simple point that we are surrounded by a sleeping architecture of alternatives, some further evolved than others, but all indicative that we have more choice about economic future than we have often been led to believe. ❖

The report ‘Other worlds are possible: Human progress in an age of climate change’ can be downloaded from the nef website at:

<http://www.neweconomics.org>

Climate Treaty Will Not Work Without Women

By: Tina Nyfors, Journalist, Finland

Climate Change affects women and men differently, and women and men often have different possibilities to reduce emissions

To be effective, the new climate treaty must take this into account, says Aira Kalela who works at the foreign ministry of Finland and is a special representative on gender and climate change in the Finnish delegation.

Women most affected

Climate change affects poor the most and according to UN, 60-70 per cent of the poor in the world are women.

However, speaking about climate change and gender is not only about women. It is about women and men being affected differently due to different kinds of work tasks and roles in society. Most clearly this can be seen in poor countries, Kalela says.

According to FAO, women are responsible for up to 80 per cent of the food production in Africa. In a warmer and dryer climate the harvest can diminish by half at the same time as collecting water and firewood becomes more difficult. This directly affects women and girls, especially the poor.

When possibilities for earning a livelihood on the countryside decrease, men move into towns to find work while women and children stay in the villages. This is perhaps the clearest example on how climate change affects women and men differently.

Facts such as these must be integrated in adaptation strategies.

Women must be involved in planning adaptation measures at all levels, from decision making in the villages to

decision making at the national level. At the end of the day, women are often the ones solving the problems on the ground.

However, inequality between women and men is an obstacle to women's participation; cultural restrictions might limit women's access to information, education and decision making.

Gender aspects of climate change also in rich countries

In poor countries climate change can be a matter of survival. In rich countries the gender aspects of climate change can be found in e.g. consumption and in the energy use of the households. In OECD countries 80 per cent of the investment decisions are made by women.

We must change direction towards a more sustainable society. We need knowledge to make informed decisions, Kalela says.

It can include buying energy efficient household technology and simple things such as what families have for dinner makes a difference. Women can take the lead and be key agents of change.

Kalela would also like to see more discussions about lifestyle and life quality.

In the climate negotiations several unsolved issues remain, such as financing as well as the scope of emission reductions. In this context, what is the importance of gender?

Gender awareness is something we simply cannot afford to leave out. It is a matter about effectivity and efficiency, involving all gives better results since the ones affected can be part of the decision making. The new climate treaty will not work without women.



Aira Kalela

About the article above:

This is a shortened version of an article published 4.12 2009 in several newspapers/magazines in Finland: Vasabladet, Österbottens tidning, Åbo Underrättelser, Borgåbladet, Ny tid, Astra Nova.

Finland has taken the lead

Finland is at the forefront in bringing up the gender aspects of climate change. Within the negotiations Finland has paid attention to the positive role women can play. Last Thursday at Bella Center the government of Finland received the first Gender Champion Award.

Finland has put their money where their mouth is, and contributed 500 000 Euros this year to the participation of women and building their capacity in this process, said Minu Hemmati from GenderCC who gave the award on behalf of the Women and Gender Constituency.

At COP15 Finland financially supports the participation of 21 women from developing countries. During the past year Finland has also financially supported a number of events on gender and climate change. ❖

Hunger for Land—Thirst for Water: How to Feed the World

**By: Dr Mohamed Ait Kadi,
Chair of the Technical Committee,
Global Water Partnership**

The rising awareness, though late, of the serious impacts of climate change on our planet has challenged our optimistic vision of continuing progress and the relevance of the current world economic model. We have not only come to realize that the earth's resources cannot, in the long run, meet the demand of a world population following the model of developed societies, but we became, at the same time, conscious of the immense risks associated with the negative impacts of climate change on the sustainability of the world's natural resources. The issue of the economic model and of natural resources degradation are converging in a way that a new ecological order becomes a corollary of a new economic order.

Progress in enhancing food security has been slow and seriously undermined by the drastic rise in world prices from 2007 to mid-2008 and the global financial crunch which unfolded in the second half of 2008. The number of hungry people in the world rose by more than 115 million, bringing the total number of people suffering from chronic hunger to more than one billion people or 15% of the world population. Social unrest occurred in a number of countries and cities around the world. This is an early warning sign of what is to come, possibly on much larger scale, in the event of future food shortages.

Feeding the world's growing population and finding the land and water to grow the food continues to be a basic and sizeable challenge. By the middle of this century, the world's population is projected to reach 9.1 billion, 34 percent higher than today. Nearly all of this increase will occur in developing countries. In order to respond to the ex-

pected demand of this larger, more urban and, on average, richer population, food production must increase by about 70% as estimated by the FAO.

It is an enormous task because the required increase in food production to meet future needs should be achieved with fewer land and water resources. Some regions face severe and increasing resource scarcity. South Asia and the Near East/North Africa regions have exhausted much of their rain-fed land potentials and depleted a significant share of their renewable waters. More than 1.2 billion people today live in river basins where absolute water scarcity and the trend of increasing shortages are serious concerns. Expanding land under cultivation is possible in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America but will require adequate farming practices, increased investments and sustainable management of natural resources.

Distrust in markets, pressure on natural resources, and the reexamination of the "merits" of self-sufficiency have led many countries to start rebuilding their national stocks and investing in agriculture in other countries to secure supplies. Large-scale acquisitions of farmland in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia and South East Asia have made headlines in a flurry of media reports across the world. For people in recipient countries, this new context may create opportunities for economic development and livelihood improvement in rural areas. But, in the absence of a code of conduct, it may also result in local people losing access to resources on which they depend for their food security.

In addition to this "hunger for land" and "thirst for water," global agriculture will have to cope with the burden of climate change whose likely impacts have been documented in great detail in many

reports. Most of them conclude that the global food production potential is expected to contract severely and yields of major crops like wheat and maize may fall globally. The declines will be particularly pronounced in lower-latitude regions. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, for instance, yields could decline by 20-40 percent. In addition, severe weather occurrences such as droughts and floods are likely to intensify and cause greater crop and livestock losses. Recent IFPRI analyses suggest that calorie availability will not only be lower than in the no-climate-change scenario, it will actually decline relative to 2000 levels throughout the developing world. Climate change will also result in additional price increases for the most important crops—rice wheat, maize and soybeans.

The implications are that food security for the chronically poor will deteriorate in all its four dimensions

- (1) availability of food will decrease due to scarcity arising from declining water resources, global population increase, worsening climatic conditions, changing food demands and shift from food to biofuel production;
- (2) poor people's access to food will decline due to worsening terms of trade between wages and food costs;
- (3) stability of supply is threatened due to increasing prevalence of disasters, uncertainty regarding food prices, and national protectionism and
- (4) safe and healthy use of food will deteriorate as the poor switch to diets lacking essential micronutrients increasing child malnutrition. Increasing food insecurity might lead to more competition over water resources, migration, difficulties of supplying cities and ulti-

mately state failures and international conflicts.

However, in contrast with this pessimistic vision, adaptation to climate change creates unprecedented opportunities for fundamental changes (economic, institutional, technological, social and political) that have been for a long time differed. In this context, Integrated Wa-

ter Resources Management – IWRM – offers a glimmer of hope. IWRM calls for integration of actions affecting drinking water and sanitation supply, agriculture and irrigation, hydropower and other energy production, and maintenance of environmental water flows to protect habitats and sustain groundwater supplies. The approach recognizes the interconnectedness of water resources is-

ues, from promoting wise uses of water that preserve long-term sustainability to arranging for fair and economical sharing of scarce resources among competing users. IWRM leads toward the recognition that water policy is bound together with government policies on security, economic development, food security, public health and other essential governance missions. ❖

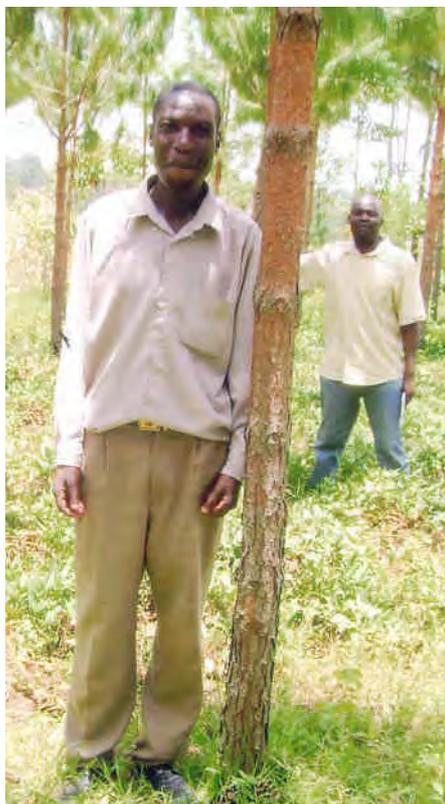
Climate Change Strategies in the Forestry and Wood Sectors

**By: Helle Damgaard Nielsen,
International Trade Union Confederation**

Preserving our forests is fundamental to us all – to nature, to ecosystems and to people. Deforestation is the second largest source of carbon in the atmosphere but climate change is also a contributor to deforestation. The combination of rainfall changes, temperature increases and extreme weather events aggravates biological stress on forests. But by saving forests, emissions of green house gases from deforestation and forest degradation can be reduced but we need serious and effective commitments from parties in the UNFCCC under the REDD and REDD-plus mechanisms.

Talking to the newly elected general secretary of the Building and Wood Workers International (BWI), Ambet Yuson from the Philippines, it quickly becomes clear just how much is at stake for workers in the forestry sector. They are losing their livelihood fast and it is still unclear whether the benefits of REDD will be distributed in a just, equitable and sensible manner to the people needing it the most in local communities, i.e. indigenous and forest workers. Certainly, the implementation scheme of REDD will be the deciding factor and truly show whether the process can also tackle the social and cultural drivers of deforestation.

Tired of waiting for governments to decide on how to take action and



change policies, forest sector unions initiated their own reforestation programmes in countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Mali and Kenya after they were allowed stewardship of the land. Their efforts have been the inspiration to new government-led initiatives, also in Brazil, and been an influential factor in preserving vital environmental resources and attacking the problem of illegal logging in the Borneo Island. Here forest workers are monitoring large areas of forests to stop illegal harvesting

because not only do such activities contribute to environmental damages, but it also place workers in hazardous situations and without decent salaries and social protection.

Approximately 13 million people are employed in wood and forestry sectors, many of them in developing countries, and climate change impacts will alter their industry forever. According to Ambet Yuson (BWI), the question is not only one of planting more trees, but also having skilled workers to maintain forestry areas – they are part of the climate change problem and but part of the solutions. BWI is calling for green and decent jobs, skilled workers in sustainable forest management as well as in health and safety, to be included in the future UNFCCC agreement to benefit the majority of forestry workers that today live in poverty, without access to many basic services.

But it does not stop here. One of the first priorities for Ambet Yuson is to make forest preservation a personal cause to all affiliates members of the BWI and mobilising them around the joint ground form where our trees and wood grow. ❖

To hear more, on Wednesday 16 December from 16.00 to 17.30, the BWI will be having a side-event in the WoW pavilion, LO-Denmark building on Climate Change Challenges: Social Standards and Sustainable Forestry as Trade Union Agenda.

Traditional Knowledge: Modern Times

Interview with Fabiola Quishpe, a community mobiliser from rural Ecuador, by Brie O’Keefe Progressio

Indigenous activist Fabiola Quishpe shares her thoughts and experiences after her participation during the first week of UN climate change negotiations in Copenhagen.

Fabiola lives in the Andean village of Apahua at an altitude of over 4,000m where she is the community promoter for the ALLPA-YAKU-KAWSAY project that works to promote the reintroduction of local seeds amongst women in rural Ecuador. The project is being carried out by the Institute for Ecuadorian Studies (IEE) with the help of Progressio.

Fabiola, like many people living in rural areas of developing countries, is already noticing changes in weather patterns, rain and temperatures that are in line with the predicted effects of climate change. She shared her experiences with Outreach before returning to Ecuador.

How is your community experiencing climate change at the moment?

We are seeing changes in the rain and this is affecting our farms. Before we knew when we could plant and harvest – we had traditional dates for all of these things, but now we don’t know when the rains will come or how much rain will come. This makes it difficult for us to plan, and it affects how much food we can grow. It makes things more difficult. All of these changes are affecting our food and our water. We have some community projects to try and fix this – we are reintroducing ancestral varieties of potatoes and we are working to fix the degraded soils in the páramos (sensitive Andean grasslands), this will help our access to water and our food.

What are your general impressions of the negotiations?

I’m not sure I like how the negotiations work here. The people negotiating are country to country – one person speaks for each nation and the people speaking are only the very high level bosses. They are not the people who take decisions in



Fabiola Quishpe

the villages, or who know about the villages and the life that we need for where we are. They are not accountable to us. They are just people who work in offices with documents, they don’t think about the people living in poor countries.

Do you think the concerns of women are being represented at the negotiations?

Decision-makers sometimes forget to keep women in their minds, to take them into account when they are making their policies. We have such an important role in all sectors of society – in education and study, in work, in providing food for our families. They don’t realise this and sometimes they don’t respect the work that women do and the abilities we have.

They are not accountable to us. They are just people who work in offices with documents, they don’t think about the people living in poor countries

They don’t help us to participate in what they are doing – but we have the right to be there and to be part of the discussions. We know what it is that needs to be done, but they are missing this information.

What is your final message to decision-makers as you leave COP15?

My message would be for negotiations to stay positive and keep away from negative thoughts and actions. They need to stop thinking so negatively, that things are already too late or that time is money and its all a waste of time etc. etc. When you are thinking positively trips like this is are never a waste of time. We are discussing important things for the future, and this is not a waste of time.

I hope that they come to an agreement and that we, as developing countries, get to keep the rights that we deserve or that we, the people, are losing at this moment. Hopefully all governments, not just those from one country, but from many will listen to us, and will understand what it is that we are asking for. ❖

United for Survival

“Climate Change is a Human Issue. Our lives have already been altered by the impacts of the climate crisis. Climate change has affected our health, our food security and our cultural identities.”

(Excerpt from the Declaration of the Young Leaders’ Summit on Northern Climate Change, August 2009, www.climateleaders.ca)

By: Kari Hergott, Fort Providence Métis

I am not an Activist, nor am I an Environmentalist. I am an Indigenous person whose culture and livelihood is distinctly and completely connected to the land, environment and animals around me. I am Métis, and I belong to one of the three constitutionally recognized Canadian Aboriginal groups. I live on the banks of the Mackenzie River in the Northwest Territories, Canada. The river, North America’s longest river, is an intricate part of Aboriginal culture and livelihood.

How did a small town Métis girl from a community of 800 people end up in Copenhagen? And on the front lines of the December 12th march to the Bella Centre? Why am I here? I am Aboriginal, Indigenous to Canada and extremely proud of this so it is my responsibility to ensure my voice is heard. My ancestors have fought long and hard to allow me to live my life the way I do today. In many ways, my involvement at the COP15 and Climate Change discussions allows me to honour their hard work, and ensure that there is a bright future for my own unborn children.

The tar sands are becoming one of the loudest and strongest concerns by Canadian youth, Indigenous peoples of the world and activists alike. Canada has a long and cruel history of condemning the fate of our Aboriginal people, the Tar Sands and their support of it is another item to add to the list. I am concerned about the Tar Sands, not only because of the environmental damage it is, and will continue to cause but also because of the direct impact it has on human lives. Fort Chipewyan, Alberta is a community directly impacted; their people, their animals and their cultures are at stake.

The deadly chemicals in the air and water are horrific and stealing lives. Not only are the Aboriginals of the affected communities, friends and relatives, they are fellow Canadians who deserve all the help in the world to ensure they survive. Cancer is an awful disease, I am sure we all know someone who has been affected by this horrible disease. The residents of North-



Photo: ECO Singapore

Youth demands on tar sands: (From the Canadian Youth Delegation to Copenhagen)

- Shut the tar sands down - we call for an immediate moratorium on all tar sands development
- A just transition for workers must be assured - all tar sands workers must be retrained and given support to thrive in a new, green economy
- Respect indigenous rights - respect and protect traditional territory
- Acknowledge the health concerns of impacted communities and take immediate action to address them

ern Alberta, around the tar sands development and those lives downstream are suffering from alarming cancer rates. No one deserves that fate, no one!

My small community though is starting to show alarming rates of stomach cancer. In the past year we have had 6 Aboriginal community members diagnosed, and sadly 3 of our Elders have passed on and now watch us from above. It is such a tragedy that a highly respected elder from my community at 95, was diagnosed and passed on within a month of diagnosis. Where is the logic that people who have survived some of the biggest hardships in life (Residential School, Flu Pandemics, Colonization to name a few) end their lives not peacefully but in pain? Why are my Elders, our Elders becoming so ill?

My community and region is at this weird “middle” state. To our south and to our North our fate is being lived out in front of us. The horrific realities our friends in Northern Alberta are facing, are terrifying

me that if our country does not move forward and change its policy and their reliance on the Tar Sands, my community will be the next to suffer that fate. Not only mine, but the entire Mackenzie River watershed that in turn will affect all of our communities. Our neighbours to the North in the Arctic have been dealing with the changing environment and face the daily effects of climate change. Traditional practices are being affected, for example if the ice is not freezing the way it has for hundreds of years, the ability to travel is limited and can become dangerous. There are so many factors affecting human lives, and cultures. It has been an honour to be surrounded by people who share the vision of protecting human lives, and cultures before non-renewable resource development. Let us hope that our efforts will be heard throughout the walls of the Bella Centre, and into the hearts and consciousness of our leaders! ❖

Food for Thought...

Felix Dodds, Stakeholder Forum

Planet 51

I am a sucker for cartoons – I love to buy them for my kids, just so I have a small excuse for watching them. I just had the pleasure of watching Planet 51. It is premised on a wonderful idea: what it would be like if “we” were the aliens arriving on what we believed was an uninhabited planet. Add to that the tasty ingredient that the planet seems to be full of of green men, woman and children living in what is reminiscent 1950s America... A period when life was easier and everyone had white picket fences....well not everybody.

I watched the film just after I had received an email from the Global Footprint Network, through on the excellent Climate L list server, managed by IISD. They were saying that there is a widening gap between the human demand on ecological services and what nature is able to produce. They suggested that it would now take “nearly one and a half Earths to generate all the resources humanity consumes and absorb all our Carbon emissions,”

It now takes approximately 18 months for the Earth to regenerate what we use in one year. Of course the challenges we face are not only climate change, but also: “biodiversity loss, shrinking forests, declining fisheries and freshwater stress.”

Only last month in Nature, a group of scientists looked at nine areas where they feel we need to recognise limits. These are interconnected, what happens in one impacts on the others.

The nine areas that were investigated were: climate change, stratospheric ozone, land use change, freshwater use, biological diversity, ocean acidification, nitrogen and phosphorus inputs to the biosphere and oceans, aerosol loading, and chemical pollution.

The scientists have placed numbers that biophysical boundaries should not be pushed beyond. Of course the thresholds can be disputed but they suggest that the three that have already been exceeded are:

- Climate change - Atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations not to exceed 350 parts per million; the current concentration is 387 ppm;
- Biodiversity loss - Biodiversity loss should be no more than ten times the background rates of extinction; currently species loss is between 100 and 1,000 times the natural rate; and,
- Nitrogen concentration – Reduce the flow of new reactive nitrogen into watercourses and oceans to 25 percent of its current value, or about 35 million tonnes of nitrogen per year.

It was Barbara Ward and René Dubos who told us in 1972 in ‘Only One Earth’ that there are limits, as did the Club of Rome in “Limits to Growth” in 1972. Sometimes it seems that no matter what information the scientists tell us we are unable to take the action until we have reached and exceeded thresholds.

At Rio+20 in 2012 or rather Stockholm+40 we will need to ask what have we done to work within the limits of our planet.

Life in the 1950s was so much simpler but underlying it was the same possibility that we had in our hands the possibility of destroying our planet. For years we lived under the threat of: “Mutually Assured Destruction (M.A.D.). We are now living under a new M.A.D. – what will be the response of this generation of political leaders? ❖

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