

# ENCA



Environmental Network *for* Central America

[www.enca.org.uk](http://www.enca.org.uk)

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ENCA aims to work directly with people in communities who are seeking to arrest environmental degradation and who are often struggling against the repression and violence of armies and police forces acting under the command of wealthy individuals, transnational corporations and corrupt politicians. We campaign with them to place environmental rights within national constitutions and to ensure that all natural resources are made to benefit the many and not the few.

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# Nicaraguan coffee farmers seek creative solutions to drought and climate change

This story by Zach Dyer was originally published in The Tico Times. It is reproduced here by kind permission of The Tico Times.

The coffee harvest in Central America started in November but many farmers here have little to do. Drought ravaged much of Central America — especially Nicaragua, Guatemala and Honduras — earlier this year, and farmers are feeling its impact now. Fields that should be full of coffee pickers are empty. Mills that should be guzzling red coffee cherries by the basketful sit with their tanks nearly empty. Many farmers say the harvest could be four weeks late, at least.

A late harvest doesn't necessarily augur a small harvest, but it does mean farmers who rely on coffee as their main income will have to stretch their budgets for another month after several years of slim earnings.

This year's drought, attributed to the El Niño weather phenomenon, is the latest hurdle for Central American coffee farmers who have seen their crop yield dwindle because of the devastating leaf rust fungus known as roya.

Francisco Blandon, a coffee farmer in the steep green hills outside Yali, Jinotega, said that two years ago he noticed the rains were no longer reliable. "It was dry when it should've been wet, and wet when it was supposed to be dry," he said. Blandon said that a lack of rainfall and lingering damage from roya cut his harvest by 70 percent, to 53 60-kilogram bags of green coffee during the 2013/2014 season, compared to 184 bags in a normal year.

Blandon isn't alone in his assessment. Drought and increasingly unpredictable rain cycles are among the symptoms of climate change that scientists say are making coffee a risky investment for farmers on the isthmus. Amid these conditions, farmers and other stakeholders in the coffee business have begun to look for ways to reduce the caffeinated crop's environmental impact with a special eye on water management. A series of pilot projects in Nicaragua funded by the Dutch government and the sustainable certification label UTZ Certified have seen positive results in reducing water consumption, treating wastewater and providing farmers with a clean burning fuel as a by-product. Coffee is Nicaragua's most valuable agricultural export and employs thousands in the poor Central American country. Changing the way farmers process their coffee for market could have a significant impact on the quality of life and environment in many coffee-growing communities here.

Regardless if the coffee is organic or not, wastewater from coffee processing plants has been cited as a major source of river pollution in Latin America. The red fruit must be cleaned off the coffee in a process called de-pulping before the beans ferment, dry and are milled for export. Traditional de-pulping wet mills use large amounts of freshwater to transport the fruit through various stages of the milling and fermentation process. After de-pulping, the water is a

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### Waste water from coffee processing plants has been cited as a major source of pollution in Latin America.

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brown frothy sludge. Coffee wastewater has a typical pH of 4 — the same as acid rain— compared to a neutral pH of 7 for pure water, as defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Farmers and processing plants would traditionally dump their coffee wastewater straight into streams without any treatment. The organic matter in the effluent encourages bacterial growth that pulls oxygen out of streams and lakes, suffocating fish and other marine life. A report from the Guatemalan Instituto Centroamericano de Investigación y Tecnología Industrial estimated that the processing of 547,000 tons of coffee during a six-month period in 1988 created the water pollution equivalent of the raw sewage from a city of four million people.

Blandon said that people downstream of his coffee farm would complain of stomach pains and irritated skin after drinking or bathing with water from the stream during the harvest.

Rigoberto Mendoza, another farmer outside Yali, has been farming coffee for 30 years. “Before, I didn’t understand the impact I was having on other people. I was harming them and others were harming me.” Both Blandon and Mendoza were selected among the first 19 UTZ pilot programmes here that

started rolling out in Nicaragua in 2010. Water savings are achieved by recycling water up to three times through the mill before the discharge is sent to a septic tank where the large solids are filtered out and the remaining fluid passes on to a biogas digester. There, the effluent mixes

with manure and bacteria breaks down the organic matter from the coffee, producing methane gas that is captured and stored for use later. Filters in the digester isolate the physical waste from the water, which can be sent to a retention pond after lime and other bases are added to it to reduce its acidity. At this point, the wastewater’s pH and organic concentration levels are safe enough to release back into the environment.

Small farmers benefit from these programmes, but they also have application for large commercial wet mills. In the Pacific town of Diriamba, CISA Exportadora — the largest exporter of coffee in Nicaragua, accounting for 30 percent of the country’s annual crop — has reduced its water consumption by 70 percent at the El Carmen wet mill, according to Tito Sequiera, vice general manager in Nicaragua for Mercon, the mill’s owner. CISA has the largest wet mill in Nicaragua and processes some 2,300 metric tons of

green coffee, consuming up to 3,000 liters of water daily, depending on the volume of coffee processed. Before, CISA used 1,500 liters of water to process 256 kg of coffee fruit; now, the wet



Before and after: Coffee wastewater prior to treatment, left, and once it’s safe to release back into the environment, right, at El Carmen laboratory in Diriamba, Nicaragua. (Zach Dyer/The Tico Times)

mill has reduced its water usage to 400 liters to process the same amount of coffee. Besides using less water, El Carmen’s water management system reduced contamination in the effluent by 80 percent.

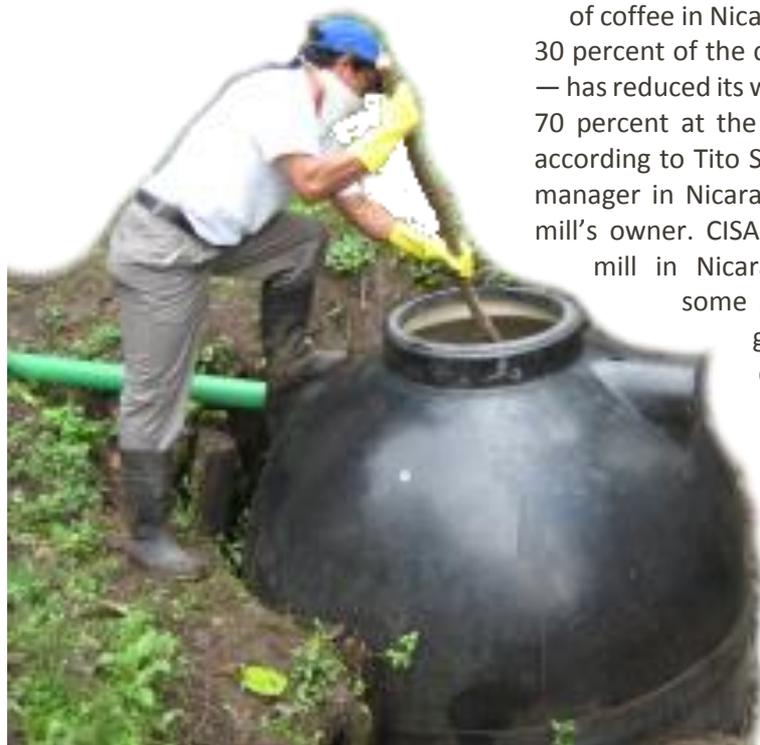
“I’m from this area. For me, this project lifted a weight off my conscience because before I knew we were polluting,” said Gilberto Monterrey, chief of operations for the CISA wet mill. Monterrey said that CISA used to receive complaints from the community about the effluent’s vinegar-like smell. “You’d smell it in the homes and when it rained, the [retention] ponds would overflow. With this project, all that stopped,” he said.

<http://www.ticotimes.net/2014/11/26/nicaraguan-coffee-farmers-seek-creative-solutions-to-drought-climate-change>

Read more on innovative coffee growing in *Stephanie Williamson’s* article

**Growing Coffee without Endosulfan**

in ENCA 62





## Honduran Organisations Demand Support for Farming Not Mining in Protest of World Bank Sponsored Event

By Jennifer Moore of MiningWatch Canada.

In February the Honduran National Coalition of Environmental Networks and Organisations (CONROA by its initials in Spanish) protested against a World Bank-sponsored 'Conference on Sustainable Development of Natural Resources' in Tegucigalpa.

CONROA urged the Bank – and the Honduran government – to support coffee farmers instead of national and transnational mining companies, stating that farming creates more jobs, income and better distribution of wealth without the long-lasting environmental impacts, public health problems and social conflict that mining generates.

They also demanded that community consultation be made binding before any mining activities take place on community territory, meaning before mineral prospection or exploration activities are approved. The current mining law – passed in January 2013 with technical support paid for with Canadian overseas development aid – only makes provisions for non-binding community consultation at a late stage, just before projects get final approval to go into operation. At this stage, if the results of community consultation are taken seriously at all, the Honduran state could be left open to foreign companies suing the country under the provisions of trade pacts, such as the Canada Honduras Free Trade Agreement, if they make a decision that a company doesn't like.

The dirty legacy of Canadian companies such as Goldcorp and its San Martín mine in the Honduran Siria Valley continue to be a reference point for

many municipalities in Honduras that are declaring their territories free of mining, despite the risk they run of being threatened and even killed when they do so.

### Public Declaration

The Honduran National Coalition of Environmental Networks and Organisations makes the following declaration:

According to INHGEOMIN, there are currently 487 mining concessions that have been granted to mining companies, 146 of which are for metallic mining and 114 of these which are for the extraction stage of mining. They are located in 14 of 18 departments around the country, especially in Santa Barbara, Olancho, Francisco Morazán, Comayagua and El Paraíso. Another 140 non-metallic concessions for extraction have been granted, which include iron ore operations, revealing a tremendous paradox: Only in Honduras is iron not a metal!

All of these metallic and non-metallic concessions pose a threat to the environment and public health in hundreds of communities. For this reason, communities are protesting more and more in defense of their human rights, including for the right to health, nutrition, and water, or in other words, life, wanting these to prevail over the business interests of a handful of people and national and international companies.

It has been clearly demonstrated to Hondurans that mining, especially

metallic mining, kills both people and other living things given the toxicity of related contamination and the use of heavy metals like cyanide, arsenic and mercury. Communities in the Siria Valley in the department of Francisco Morazán are witnesses to this hell and as a result, many municipalities are saying no to mining.

As a result of their protests, human rights defenders and those who defend their territories are being pursued, denying them the right to say no in their municipalities. The government of Juan Orlando Hernández (JOH) and complicit municipal corporations continue to rent and sell off Honduran territory come what may and refuse to make community consultations binding.

As we have said many times before, the current mining law does not serve to regulate mining and its use; rather it puts communities at a disadvantage given that community consultations are not binding before prospection and exploration activities take place - that is before commitments are made between the state and transnational companies.

Far from protecting mining-affected communities, the mining law puts them at a disadvantage compared to the freedom with which companies operate, with protections from the Honduran state to ensure that they can 'invest' in the country.

A recent study demonstrates that the mining industry displaces other productive activities such as coffee farming in Honduras. This study shows that, although coffee farming uses nearly the same surface area in

Honduras (2.17%) as mining (2.85%) that it creates more jobs, income, and distribution of wealth. So then, why would the World Bank and the state not support the more than 120,000 coffee farmers whose crops were seriously affected by a plague and who were abandoned by the state? Instead, they support an industry that has created social conflict as a result of how mining competes for space, water and territorial control, etc.

Mining has not contributed to development in any country, given that the income and few jobs that this activity generates do not compensate for the environmental and social impacts.

For all these reasons, CONROA opposes the event hosted by the World Bank, INGEOMIN and the government of JOH to promote an activity that has not only provoked environmental damage, but also social conflict and displacement of Honduran communities from their legitimate territory.

We cannot continue supporting the government's complicity with mining companies. We cannot continue supporting the security companies who serve the mining companies and attack those who think differently, even pursuing environmental and human rights defenders until they are dead.

We demand that the Honduran state fulfil its responsibility and that Honduras' natural commons, including the territory, is debated in inclusive spaces where communities themselves can express their point of view, given that at the end of the day it is they who will suffer the consequences of extractivism that state administrators are promoting as if it were a great panacea for national development at the cost of the impoverishment and death of Hondurans.

**Yes to community consultation  
No to mining in Honduras**

Original Spanish version: [tinyurl.com/npw839z](http://tinyurl.com/npw839z)

## Goldman Prize Winner, Jorge Varela Márquez, Denounces Destruction of Mangroves

Taken from an article by *Jorge Varela* (winner of the Goldman Environmental Prize, 1999), with extra material provided by *Doug Specht* and *Voz*.

In July 1999 Honduras designated the wetlands of the Gulf of Fonseca as a Ramsar site, assigning to it the number 1000 in the world's wetland sites protected under the Ramsar Convention (formally known as the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance). Further to this in January 2000 the National Congress by Decree 5-99 E placed these areas, along with 3 others, within the national system of protected areas of southern Honduras.

Despite these national and international designations there have been a number of violations of the protection orders. The first violation was at the hands of transnational group Jaime Soriano, under the direction of General Manager Antonio Cano. The company

expanded their El Faro shrimp farm operations illegally into the La Berbería sector of the Ramsar designated site. The impunity with which they did this encouraged other companies including Emar, Excasur, Camarsur, and Biomar to follow suit. The encroachment of these companies has drastically reduced the size of the protected site whose winter lagoon sustains coastal biodiversity and fishing communities. This final tract of lagoon is itself threatened by the arrival of companies and persons who present dubious deeds that suggest they are owners of parts of the wetlands.

President Juan O. Hernández has previously promised to support aquaculture but his policies have led to widespread destruction of wetlands all over the Gulf of Fonseca. Many of the people and companies who have already taken swathes of the La Berbería wetlands enjoy impunity and are now seeking to acquire a further 4,000 hectares of protected mangroves and

shrimp farms which belonged to the Ibermar Group. The area currently under threat is under the ownership of the Honduran people following a \$50 million deal with the creditors of previous owner, Ibermar, in Punta Ratón, yet this has not stopped attempts to acquire the area through the use of dubious deeds, including one supposedly granted by the 'Kingdom of Spain'.

President of Congress Mauricio Oliva and current Secretary of Agriculture and Livestock Jacobo Paz are both implicated in the sale of these lands, with the latter having financial interests in the shrimp farming company Granjas Marinas San Bernardo (GMSB). It has been reported

### Farmers and fishermen are manipulated to destroy their ecosystems and set up shrimp farms

that GMSB have been involved in the destruction of the Garcero area of the Gulf of Fonseca. Colonel Amilcar Hernández, brother of

President Hernández is also involved in the shrimp farming.

Farmers and fishermen have been manipulated into destroying the mangroves in order to establish shrimp farms, which then end up in the hands of the 'big players'.

Through a complex network of corruption and secret government at all levels the Ramsar reserve in the Gulf of Fonseca, along with many other protected areas, are disappearing. The area is being transformed into shrimp farms to feed Europe, USA, and Japan and to enrich an insatiable, greedy and pernicious group that has turned the Gulf into their private enclave.

We call for an immediate investigation to stop the destruction, punish the guilty and a return of these ecosystems to the people.

# Drilling the Caribbean: Indigenous communities speak out against oil and gas exploration in Honduras

In 2013, the Honduran government granted BG Group oil and gas exploration rights in a 35,000 square kilometer block off the coast of the Moskitia. *Sandra Cuffe*, in an article originally published on *Beacon Reader*, discusses how Miskitu and Garífuna community leaders are speaking out to defend their territories from oil and gas activity. In contrast to Belize and Costa Rica, where environmental NGOs, scientists, and others formed powerful national alliances to fight oil exploration, in Honduras, indigenous opposition is as of yet largely unheard and unsupported.

Inez Eduardo Arzú finds a patch of shade and sits next to the wall of a small wooden home in the coral reef cay community of Chachahuate. The clear, turquoise Caribbean waters surrounding the archipelago sparkle in the midday sun. The Afro-Indigenous Garífuna residents of the Cayos Cochinos off the coast of Honduras and their mainland sister communities have fought long and hard for their rights to live and fish in the cays.

Arzú is worried. He and other local subsistence fishermen have heard about the devastating impacts of the 2010 BP oil spill on the environment and fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. Offshore oil and gas exploration is underway in Honduran waters, but no one consulted the Garífuna communities in the cays spread out along the Caribbean coast. “No one has approached to consult us about oil,” says Arzú. Now 50, he has lived in Chachahuate since he was 12 years old. He’s concerned about the impact offshore industrial activity could have on the sea and its fish, and he’s not the only one.

Indigenous Miskitu and Garífuna communities are speaking out to defend their territories from oil and gas activity. Honduras signed a contract with BG Group in April 2013, granting the British multinational rights for the exploration of oil and gas in a 35,000 square kilometer block off the coast of the

Moskitia, a remote area primarily inhabited by Miskitu, Tawahka, Garífuna and Pech indigenous peoples.

The contract was presented to Miskitu communities six months after it was signed, but the so-called consultations were not without incident. Many residents denounced that the process billed as consultation was merely socialization of the contract after the fact. In the community of Barra Patuca, more than two hundred local residents walked out of a session to protest the process, maintaining their opposition to any and all oil and gas activity in the region.

Edgardo Nelson Escoto speaks about his community with pride. Located at the mouth of the Patuca River, the second longest river in Central America, Barra Patuca is one of the largest communities in the Moskitia. The vast majority of its several thousand inhabitants are Miskitu. The community has a policy of not selling lands to outsiders, says Escoto, a member of the Barra Patuca community council. Some communities further inland in the Moskitia are in favour of oil and gas activity, but in Barra Patuca, there is fierce community opposition.

“On the coast, we are opposed because the problem will most impact those of us living closest to the sea,” says Escoto. “In

Barra Patuca, the majority of the people don’t want it.”

Escoto was out fishing in cays off the coast of the Moskitia for a few months when a community assembly was held in the fall of 2013 to discuss the BG Group contract. But there was opposition nearly across the board. “The people of Barra Patuca didn’t want it. The teachers, the church priests and pastors, almost everybody – they were against it,” says Escoto.

BG Group’s current exploration activities aren’t the first time oil companies have taken a crack at Honduras. Concessions have been issued for nearly one hundred years, and the first well was drilled in 1920, but there has never been any significant production. Offshore drilling off the coast of the Moskitia yielded several barrels in a 1973 well drilled by Union Oil. Shell and Mobil also drilled in the area. The most recent wells were drilled in the Moskitia in the early 1990s by True Cambria Oil. The Honduran government has sought to promote oil and gas activity during several recent administrations, and has contracted exploration projects as recently as 2008, during the presidency of Manuel Zelaya, which was cut short by a June 2009 coup d’état.

Escoto remembers the last time onshore oil exploration activities were carried out near Barra Patuca. The seismic lines went right through community lands, close to where he farms rice and tilapia. “They came through that whole area, up and down all over Barra Patuca, doing tests. From there they went to the Ahuas area, where they were based,” says Escoto. “In Patuca, they just came through with their workers and laid cables all over the mountains, all .

through the plains, and all through the marshes, testing the land with dynamite.”

Along with oil and gas interests, the Moskitia is home to increasing militarization by Honduran and US forces. In September 2014, Miskitu communities and organisations denounced a slew of abuses and human rights violations by security forces, ranging from illegal raids and death threats to torture and threats of sexual violence. A Southern Command forward operating base is located in Mocerón, a site previously used by the US to support the CIA-trained Contra forces in their attempts to overthrow the Sandinista government in neighbouring Nicaragua in the 1980s.

In May 2012, four Indigenous civilians were killed and several more wounded when drug war operation agents opened fire on a passenger boat near Ahuas. DEA agents advised the raid, the Honduran police officers involved were vetted by the DEA, and the helicopters used belonged to the US State Department. Escoto's son, 22 years old at the time, was one of the passengers on the Patuca River that night. He was shot in the back and arm, but survived. Now disabled, he struggles to provide for his young children.

Remnants of past oil and gas exploration have been left behind in the area, says Escoto. “They took their machinery out by boat, but the tubing, scraps of metal, that kind of thing, were left strewn on the ground,” he says. “As far as Barra Patuca goes, we don't want any of these kinds of projects.”

BG Group recently concluded an aerial exploration phase, and will continue exploring through 2015. In October 2014, the Honduran Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment said that the results of the exploration are expected at the end of 2015. If commercial quantities are found, there will be a 20-year exploitation contract and Honduras will receive 15 % of the extracted oil or gas while BG Group recuperates its investment costs.

A new law regulating oil and gas activity has been on the government's agenda for a while. In fact, a one-year moratorium on concessions was put into place in 2011 to allow time for a new hydrocarbon law to be passed. Legislative reform is still pending, but the BG Group contract went forward regardless. The Hydrocarbon Law still currently in effect is from 1984.



*Offshore oil activity worries Reinaldo Colón. Photo courtesy of OFRANEH*

New law or not, Garífuna communities in the Cayos Cochinos are worried any kind of offshore oil or gas activities could impact the coral reefs that provide the fish and seafood on which they survive. Many residents share Chachahuate community council president Reinaldo Colón's concerns about the fishing areas in and around the cays. “Just beyond here is our fishing area,” says Colón, gesturing to the edge of the archipelago of cays at the southern end of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef. The cays are not within BG Group's offshore exploration block, but seas and oceans aren't known for their clean-cut borders, he says. “If those wells are drilled and there were an accident, you would think the spill wouldn't just stay there.”

No one came to let Chachahuate or other Garífuna communities know about the exploration contract, let alone seek their free, prior and informed consent as affected indigenous people. The Garífuna came about when shipwrecked Africans being trafficked in the colonial slave trade mixed with local indigenous Arawak and Carib people on the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent in the early seventeenth century. They

were evicted from Saint Vincent by the British in 1797, dropped off on an island off the Honduran coast, and spread out along the Caribbean coast from Belize down to Nicaragua.

The Honduran state continues to fight a losing battle in the Inter-American human rights system, attempting to deny the internationally recognised indigenous identity of the Garífuna. Honduras routinely violates international treaties regarding consultation with indigenous peoples, Garífuna or not, and the contract with BG Group was no exception. “The government didn't even send anyone here,” says Colón. “I'll put it this way: we basically don't matter to the government.”

Unlike in Belize and Costa Rica, environmental NGOs in Honduras have largely remained silent on the issue. Many of the coastal and marine protected areas home to important coral reef, mangrove, wetland and rainforest ecosystems are co-managed by foundations with funding from international conservation organisations, foreign aid, and international financial institutions. Opposition to oil and gas activity that threatens these areas, however, has been predominantly voiced at the grassroots level.

Back in Chachahuate, Colón says it's time for more communities to speak out. “It's important that we take a stand as Garífuna, and not just here in Cayos Cochinos. The whole Garífuna corridor, all the way out to the very last community, needs to become aware of this,” he says. “We're all responsible for this coast, not just us here in Chachahuate,” says Colón. “We need to reach out. If we work together, we'll be stronger.”



This article was first published on Beacon Reader the Crowdfunding Journalism platform

[www.beaconreader.com](http://www.beaconreader.com)

## UN approved hydroelectric dam Barro Blanco suspended over community rights violations

By Andrew Coiley Of Carbon Market Watch | 10 Feb 2015

carbonmarketwatch.org

*Following community protests by the indigenous Ngobe communities, Panama's environment agency ANAM suspended the Barro Blanco hydroelectric yesterday. The decision was taken because of breaches of the national environmental impact assessment requirements, including shortcomings in the agreement with the locally affected indigenous communities.*

The suspension is celebrated by environmental groups around the world after years of efforts to support the indigenous population in the Ngobe comarca that have faced oppression and violations of their rights. Without the suspension they would have ultimately been displaced by the flooding of Barro Blanco hydro reservoir.

The decision to suspend the project comes timely as countries are discussing a future climate treaty in Geneva, Switzerland. A key proposal made was to ensure that measures to combat climate change need to respect, protect,

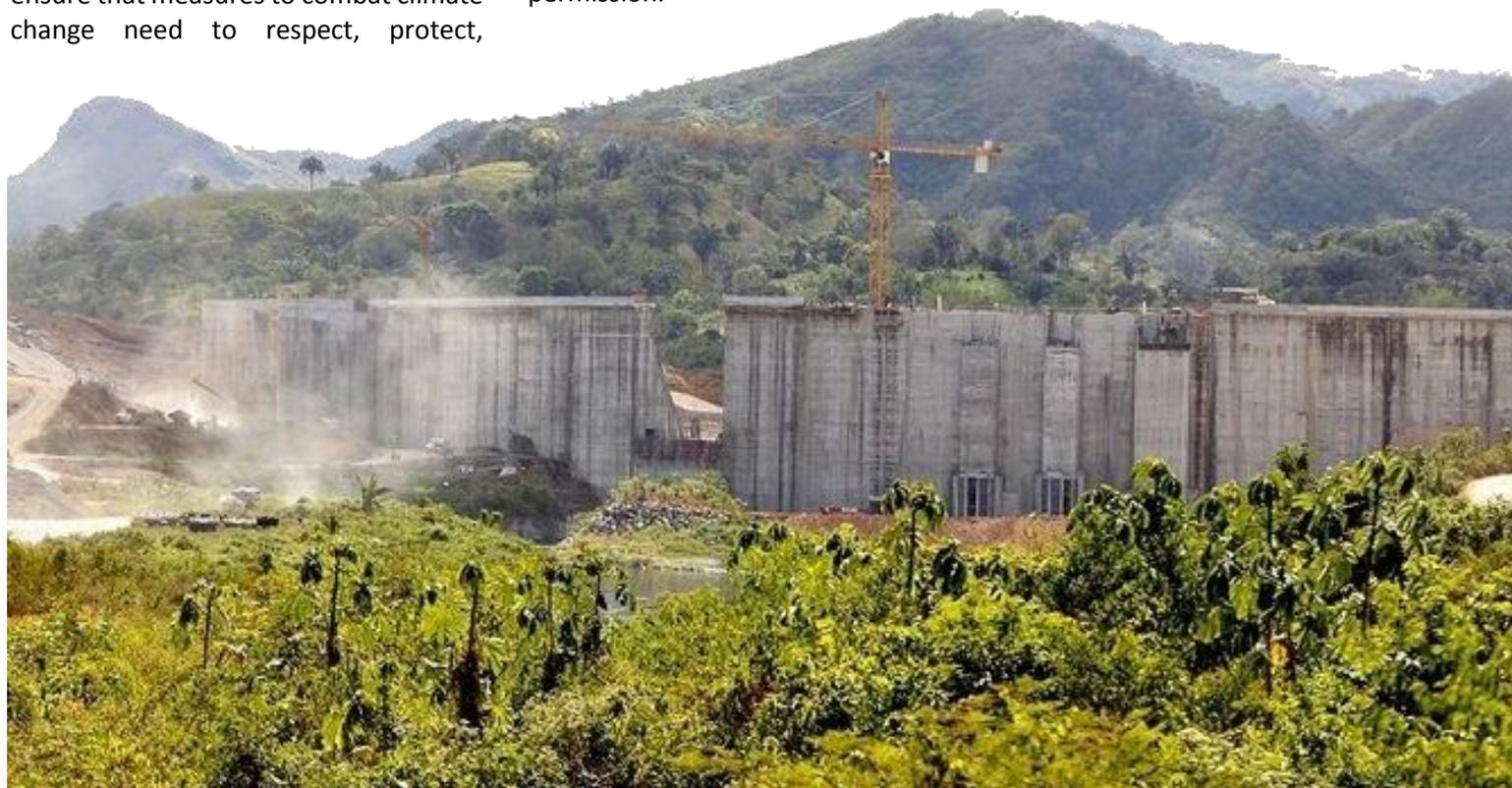
promote, and fulfil human rights for all. However, UN mechanisms, such as the Clean Development Mechanism neither provide incentives for project developers to ensure a sustainable implementation, nor offer any recourse mechanism for affected local communities in case of adverse impacts. The suspension of the Barro Blanco project is a landmark decision that adds to the pressure of governments around the world to establish procedures, such as grievance mechanisms, that protect those most affected by climate change.

Other reasons for the suspension of Barro Blanco listed by ANAM include deficiencies in the negotiation processes, absence of an archaeological management plan approved to protect the petroglyphs and other archaeological findings, repeated failures to manage sedimentation and erosion, poor management of solid and hazardous waste and logging without permission.

Despite grave concerns about the violation of local community rights, the project was approved under the UN's Clean Development Mechanism in 2011, a mechanism supposedly designed to reduce emissions while contributing to sustainable development.

Eyes are now on the reactions by the banks involved in financing the Barro Blanco project. These include the German development bank DEG and the Dutch development bank FMO, where a complaint was filed by the M-10 movement representing the indigenous communities.

Image credit: LA PRENSA/Gabriel Rodríguez;  
Barro Blanco is 44 metre high with a capacity of 124.83 GW/year. The plan was to initiate the dam in April and connect to the electricity grid in June 2015.



# Factors Affecting Turtle Conservation in Nicaragua

In 2014 *Justine Nathan* spent three months working on a turtle conservation project run by ICAPO (Iniciativa Carey del Pacífico Oriental) in the Cosigüina Peninsula of Nicaragua.

When ICAPO (Eastern Pacific Hawksbill Initiative) set up their turtle hatchery in Padre Ramos, Nicaragua, it was to protect the most scientifically significant nesting area for hawksbill turtles along the Eastern Pacific coast of Central America. The aim of the hatchery and local initiative programme is to protect the precious eggs during the incubation period and benefit the local community. If only this was the only battle that the critically endangered species had to contest with. Since the start of the project in 2011 it has become apparent that not only are sea turtles being threatened by direct human impacts such as poaching, but also by the indirect impacts of climate change and anthropogenic disturbances.

ICAPO works in conjunction with Fauna and Flora International (FFI) to involve volunteers and tourists in the protection of hawksbill turtles. Local hatchery workers and international volunteers work side by side to relocate turtle eggs laid on the beach to a secure hatchery facility. Nests are constantly monitored and protected until hatchlings emerge.

With help from volunteers and hatchery staff the turtle hatchlings are then released into the waters of the Padre Ramos estuary. The work of ICAPO and FFI improves the turtles' chances of survival by reducing risks from poaching and predation. They are responsible for protecting 95% of the nests laid in the estuary and releasing over 50,000 hatchlings.

Even if hatchlings survive long enough to make it to the sea, they face threats that are outside of hatchery workers' control. Blast fishing is the illegal practice of using dynamite to kill and catch fish. Despite Estero Padre Ramos being a Nature Reserve, the bombs of this activity can frequently be heard coming from the estuary. This unselective method of fishing is used by locals to catch juvenile fish that are taking refuge in the estuary from the open ocean. These fish are then used as bait whilst on the rough waters of the Pacific. The bombs also kill other marine animals including both juvenile and adult sea turtles as a by-product.

The Pacific coast of Central America has experienced increased effects from El Niño events over the past few years. This has brought more severe weather conditions to the nesting areas of turtles. The nesting season of 2014 started with the worst droughts in Nicaragua in 32 years. Sea turtle nests are very susceptible to extreme weather, as the eggs require a certain level of rainfall to survive. Towards the end of the season in 2014, floods hit. Yet again, hatcheries along the Pacific coast had a battle on their hands to safeguard the future of turtle species. Extremes in temperature also disrupt the male to female ratio of hatchlings. Although scientists try to keep conditions in hatcheries at a constant, close to the pivotal temperature, climate change is pushing the limits of their resources.

The diverse factors that are affecting the survival of sea turtles further motivate ICAPO to continue fighting for their existence. For more information, to volunteer or to donate, visit: [www.hawksbill.org](http://www.hawksbill.org).

Photo by Justine Nathan



# A Blow Dealt by Ballot Box

In October the community of Totonicapan in Guatemala ran a self-organised referendum over a proposed mine. Photo Journalist James Rodríguez tells the story.

Large scale mining projects are being opposed across the length and breadth of Latin America, with local, often indigenous, communities all too aware of the devastating social and environmental impacts associated with them. The means of resistance range from direct action to political lobbying, but in Guatemala, indigenous K'iche' communities have been using radical democracy to halt the advance of large-scale mining.

In October 2014, following a request from the national government to grant a mining licence in a nearby mountain, community organisers held a popular referendum. Inhabitants of the highland town in Totonicapan overwhelmingly voted against the mining development – 39,198 voted no, while 300 voted yes.

The ballots read “Are you in favour of metal mining exploration, the installation of geothermal energy generators, construction of hydro-electric projects, installations of energy distribution and telecommunication towers within the territory of the municipality of Santa Maria Chiquimula?”

Juan Carlos Carrillo, secretary for the Permanent Council for the Defence of Life and Territory at Santa Maria Chiquimula, declared “We are convinced that extractive activities and the imposition of mega projects by the government are a cause of numerous social ills. The government, working together with national and transnational capital, is attempting to forcibly impose



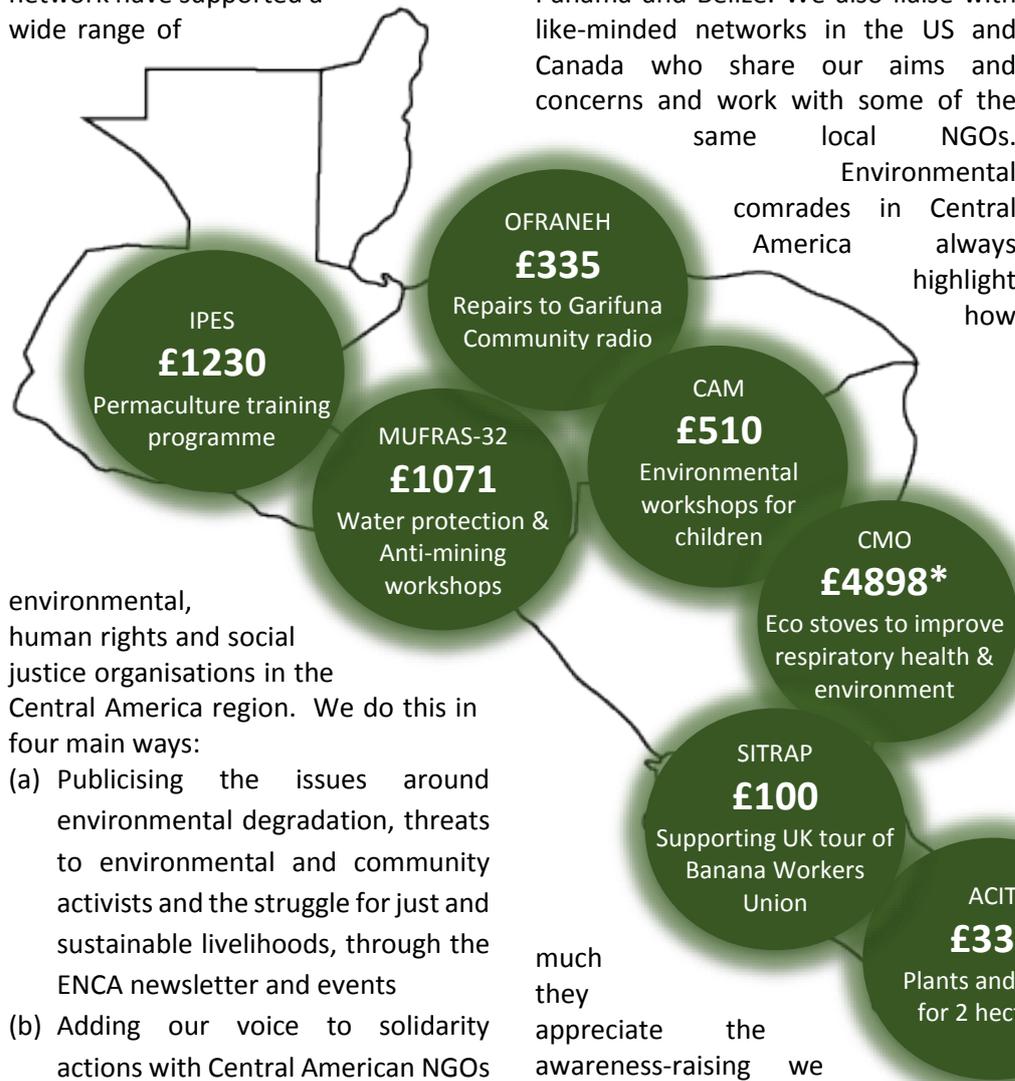
projects that try to plunder our territories, generate division amongst our people and further increase social and economic inequalities. These extractive projects do not bring development here to our communities.”

See more of James' work at: <http://www.mimundo.org>



# Supporting ENCA's environmental partners in the region

Since we started out as the Environmental Network for Nicaragua (ENN) back in 1988, and following the first 'Earth Summit' in Rio de Janeiro, the many individuals that make up our network have supported a wide range of



environmental, human rights and social justice organisations in the Central America region. We do this in four main ways:

- Publicising the issues around environmental degradation, threats to environmental and community activists and the struggle for just and sustainable livelihoods, through the ENCA newsletter and events
- Adding our voice to solidarity actions with Central American NGOs campaigning for the environment and defending human rights
- Linking ENCA members with opportunities to visit the region and carry out research or volunteer with key partners
- Providing modest funding to partners for small projects, training events, publications or minor equipment expenses

Over the years we have developed close relations with more than a dozen NGOs, mainly in Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica, and made links with several more in Guatemala, Panama and Belize. We also liaise with like-minded networks in the US and Canada who share our aims and concerns and work with some of the same local NGOs.

Environmental comrades in Central America always highlight how much they appreciate the awareness-raising we do in the UK about their struggles and achievements, the links we help them to extend and, in particular, the solidarity and moral support ENCA shares with them in difficult times.

They also welcome the small donations we are sometimes able to send out to help them in their activities. ENCA does not enjoy charitable status, nor do we intend to pursue that path, and we are an entirely voluntary network, with no

paid staff. This limits the amount of funding we are able to raise. Nevertheless, over the last two decades or so, ENCA has donated almost £40,000 to Central American organisations.

Details of donations made are given on the ENCA webpage so that people can see the type of activities and amounts funded and to which organisations. Our funding criteria on the website explain how we agree donations and for which types of activities. For larger projects requested by partners, we can only afford to make a contribution towards the costs, while mini-projects of £500 or less we can often fund fully. All requests for funding are discussed by ENCA members at our three meetings per year, after prior circulation by email of proposals received. We then agree donations according to our financial resources available and an assessment of whether project requests meet our funding criteria.

Most of the money donated comes from ENCA members' annual subscriptions, with some additional one-off donations from individuals.

Of course, we would like to support more of our NGO partners, more generously and more often, in response to the increased number of funding requests we now receive.



However, we can only do this if more ENCA members or supporters pay their annual sub! So please join or renew your subscription – it costs just £8.00 per year for waged, £4.00 for concessions. For details on how to pay, view the 'Join' webpage at

<http://enca.org.uk/join-enca/>

**YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A REAL DIFFERENCE!**

This is not an exhaustive list of donations made. A full list can be found at [enca.org.uk](http://enca.org.uk)  
 \* This funding includes £3000 kindly donated by the Educational and General Charitable Trust.



Javier Espinal, in front of recent work in Italy



Collective Mural Painting in Irlam, England

## The Violence of Development

On the 9th February 2015 The Environmental Network for Central America (ENCA) presented 'The Violence of Development' an evening of talks around the theme of resource depletion, environmental crisis and human rights abuses in Central America, and what might be done to reverse this trend.

Held at the University of Westminster, ENCA was joined by around 100 guests to enjoy talks from Martin Mowforth and Doug Specht.

The evening began with Martin examining the failure of 'development' in Central America, where despite billions of dollars of development funding and positive indicators of economic growth, poverty remains entrenched and violence endemic. His discussion drew upon many development project case studies and over sixty interviews with a range of people in Central America, including nuns, politicians, NGO representatives, trade unionists, indigenous leaders and human rights defenders.

This was followed by a short presentation by Doug Specht on the role of Geo Spatial technology in helping to understand and combat the systematic violence discussed in Martin's talk.

The evening was a great success and not only did it help ENCA to reach a new audience, but also to reach out to new and old members alike to remind them of the importance of solidarity with Central America.

**More at: [enca.org.uk](http://enca.org.uk)**

## Protesting Honduran Violence through Community Art

The last ENCA meeting was joined by Honduran Mural painter Javier Espinal. Javier is travelling throughout Europe producing collective art works to increase awareness of Central American indigenous rights, and the violence and repression in Honduras since the 2009 coup.

Javier told us how important the indigenous voice is in Central America, where Western views of the world are being imposed on the people and environment to devastating effect, with the indigenous reduced to objects of study. His art reflects his indigenous Lenca roots, while at the same time acting as a form of subversive resistance. By expressing cultural and political messages in art, they are "hidden in plain sight" of the Honduran authorities, and can serve as a rallying point for the struggle.

Javier has focused on collective art works that involve the public in their design and creation. They act as a space for education and sharing of ideas, and engage young people in Honduras,

empowering them against the increasing gang and state violence they face. Javier confirmed other reports that these two forms of violence are intrinsically linked. He described how the Honduran authorities support criminal gangs in areas that the military want to control, and then use their presence to terrorise the people and justify militarisation.

In the UK, Javier's work focuses on art to bring together different cultures and worldviews. He has just finished a beautiful collective art project involving the community and children of Irlam, near Manchester, and is currently planning more work in London.

Javier is looking for more partnerships for art projects in Europe. He can be contacted through ENCA or through his website, which has much more of his art: <http://javierespinal.blogspot.co.uk/>

### Meeting Dates

*Sun 14<sup>th</sup> Jun 2015; Sun 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2015*

ENCA meetings are held at the NSC's office at the Durham Road Centre, London, N7 7DT. Meetings are held on Sundays from 12:30 pm to 5 pm and we start with lunch which is made up of whatever people attending choose to bring to share.