

ENCA

Environmental Network *for* Central America

Issue 65. November 2015



www.enca.org.uk

Special Appeals

We launch appeals on behalf of
AEPS and Radio Faluma Bimetu

Fair Trade

Reports from the Fair Trade
Conference & Costa Rica

Interview

Omar Jerónimo, Guatemalan
Human Rights Defender

Indigenous Land Rights Versus Hydroelectric Projects



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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San Marco: Indigenous Land Rights v Hydroelectric Projects

As reported in ENCA 64, ENCA member *James Watson* recently visited Honduras to spend time with COPINH, an important indigenous rights organisation. The following is an extract from his 2nd blog article, found on our website.

A couple of days after arriving in La Esperanza, COPINH invited me on a trip away from their base in the town, to visit one of the communities that serve as their main focus of fighting for indigenous rights in Honduras. San Marco de la Sierra is a mountainous area just south of La Esperanza. Its inhabitants are campesino farmers whose livelihood is primarily subsistence agriculture, working family plots of land on precipitous mountain sides. On this trip, COPINH was returning to San Marco because of a new threat to their land, water and environmental and spiritual heritage.

The Muddy Waters of Hydroelectric Dams and 'Trickle Down' Economic Development

Hydroelectric dams are a difficult issue for environmentalists. At first sight, they represent a good clean source of renewable energy – much needed to avert climate change. However, they are not without a significant negative impact, and need to be seen in their specific socioeconomic context. The proposed San Marco project will put five dams along the stretch of the San Juan River which runs through the region. The companies and Honduran officials involved say the individual dams will be quite small, with minimal physical impact.

But the overall context of regional money and power paints a very different picture. The dams are among hundreds that have been planned throughout Honduras since the current corrupt government passed a law allowing the privatisation of water resources. Water is precious in Central America. It is essential for communities to live on, but it has increasingly become a commodity

to be owned and extracted by and for western companies. Hydroelectricity, mining (which uses vast amounts of water for mineral extraction and contaminates it in the process) and soft drinks production have made it more valuable in the hands of companies than communities. In fact, hydroelectricity is fundamentally connected to mining in Honduras. A significant part of the country's hydroelectricity generation is channelled straight into new mining projects – which the current government has extended to include over 30% of the nation's land area. Water is now just one of the many valuable resources abundant in Central America and sold at rock bottom prices to foreign 'investors'.

Honduras leads the way internationally for opening itself to this sort of 'investment'. But the Honduran oligarchy that negotiates this business has more interest in its own wealth and in importing the trappings of European and United States society, than it does in helping its own country to develop. As such the wealth that should roll into the country in return for its resources is a mere trickle, and goes straight into private bank accounts which are used to buy foreign products. This simple reality is key to understanding why in many 'developing' countries around the world, top-down, investment-led, 'trickle down' economics has completely failed to improve the lives of anyone but the richest elites.

When it comes to indigenous peoples in Honduras, however, the most important perspective is that of local power, land and culture. Although the San Marco project officials say the dams will be small, they will carve out sections of the land and river and surround them in

fences, blocking access for the campesinos. They will impose a new power structure of owner vs owned on their land. The indigenous Lenca live off the land and value and protect it. Traditionally they own it as communities, not individually. The rivers have a deep spiritual significance to them and are part of their identity.

COPINH has fought countless battles against other dam projects. Many times they have faced violence, intimidation and murder, with officials set to profit from projects paying off community members, private security guards and the military to do their dirty work. Hydroelectric dam projects in Honduras are as dirty and destructive as any other grand extractive undertaking in this most exploited of countries.

Information, Mis-information and Violence – The Local Realities of Hydroelectric Projects

I went to San Marco with four COPINH members – Selvin, Marleny, María and Agostín – who were expected at a community meeting to discuss the

damming project. We spent two nights in the community, in a beautiful and remote mountain setting as green as any movie rainforest setting.

San Marco's isolation puts information at a premium. There is no TV and very little radio reception. They are especially vulnerable to promises and mis-information from the companies involved in the dam building, and several community members have already been contacted with promises of money. It is a common tactic across Latin America for companies concerned about potential resistance to their plans to buy out individuals in order to divide and weaken the autonomy of communities. The COPINH meeting was mainly aimed at bringing their experience of the reality of Honduran dam projects to prepare San Marcos for such interference.

At the meeting, Selvin and Marleny talked about other dam projects in general, and then Maria spoke. She is from Rio Blanco where COPINH's indigenous organising has recently stopped the Agua Zarca project – a

success which gained COPINH's general coordinator Berta Cáceres the international Goldman Environmental Prize. But Rio Blanco still faces violence from Agua Zarca's vested interests. Maria has been attacked twice and threatened with death. She told me that she has machete scars on the top of her head from an attempt to kill her. Her right hand is bandaged with half a finger missing – brutally cut off in an assault just a few weeks ago which has forced her to go into hiding in La Esperanza.

I was also honoured to be asked by COPINH to speak to the meeting. In my clumsy Spanish I talked a little about the international context – about the 'trickle down' model of development and how it is used in my country to justify exploitative extractive projects in 'developing' countries, without actually producing any development. Thankfully though, I didn't have to speak long, and as everyone was dropping off we took that opportunity to walk the 30 minutes down to the river itself to swim and enjoy what San Marco was fighting for.



The COPINH group – Marleny, Maria, Agostín and Selvin

Fair Trade



For this edition of the ENCA Newsletter, we present two views of fair trade, both from Central American perspectives. The first is a positive piece about the visit to the UK of Fátima Ismael, general manager of the Nicaraguan Union of Cooperatives, SOPPEXCCA, and in particular her keynote speech at the Global Fairtrade Cities Conference held in Bristol this summer. The second is a brief account of a discussion between Didier Leitón Valverde, coordinator of SITRAP, the Costa Rican plantation workers' union, and ENCA member Martin Mowforth in August this year.

Climate change, fair trade and empowering women

By Helen Yuill (Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign) and Alix Hughes (Bristol Link with Nicaragua)

From 26 June – 6 July, Fátima Ismael, general manager of the Nicaraguan Union of Cooperatives, SOPPEXCCA, visited England and Wales. Fátima spoke at meetings in London and Sheffield, visited Fairtrade activists, a school, a fair trade shop and the Welsh cooperative centre in Cardiff, and met funders and coffee buyers in London. The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC), Wales NSC and Bristol Link with Nicaragua have had a relationship with SOPPEXCCA going back to 2002.

During her presentation at the AGM of the NSC, Fátima commented: 'We have to continue on this path with fair trade activists and fair trade farmers working hand in hand...many thanks for all your work over so many years for Nicaragua. Co-operatives of small scale farmers exist today thanks to the solidarity you have shown us and to Fairtrade.'

The highlight of Fátima's stay was her visit to Bristol as a guest of the Bristol Link with Nicaragua (BLINC) and the Bristol Fairtrade Network (BFTN). Fátima was a keynote speaker at the Global Fairtrade Cities conference where the 240 delegates from 20 countries gave her a standing ovation. Fittingly, as Bristol is European Green Capital 2015, Fátima highlighted the dramatic effects of climate change on SOPPEXCCA cooperatives, drastically reducing coffee growing at lower land levels due to the increase in temperature. She also highlighted the importance of investing the Fairtrade premium in fighting soil erosion caused by torrential rainfall rather than spending it on education and clinics.

Colombian and Argentinian delegates were very keen to discuss linking Fairtrade producers with urban consumers in their own countries. Fátima also talked about the market possibilities for Nicaraguan producers within the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries, especially India where the Fairtrade cities movement is developing.

A more detailed article about the fair trade conference and about Fátima's visit to the UK can be found at:

www.nicaraguasc.org.uk/news/article/146/fairtrade,climate-change,-gender-equality

SITRAP's views on fair trade

In June 2010, Didier Leitón Valverde addressed an ENCA meeting in London and presented ENCA members with a dilemma about purchasing fair trade bananas and pineapples grown in Costa Rica. Didier's presentation at that time was summarised as the main article in ENCA Newsletter No. 51. In August this year ENCA member Martin Mowforth visited the SITRAP headquarters in the town of Siquirres to discuss the current conditions of work in Costa Rican plantations with Didier, along with other SITRAP members Johnny Sterling Alvarado, Isabel Montero Lobo and Mireya Salas Rodríguez.

The full discussion was recorded and as this newsletter is being printed. The recording is being transcribed and is still to be translated. When those two tasks have been completed, the transcripts (in English and Spanish) will be uploaded onto 'The Violence of Development' website. For this edition of the ENCA Newsletter, a very brief summary is provided here.

The SITRAP workers were asked specifically about the practice of fair trade cultivation on the plantations, and unanimously they felt that for the plantation workers fair trade products made no difference. As Didier had explained to us in 2010, if there are any benefits to be had from fair trade cultivation they would be felt by the plantation managers and owners rather than the plantation workers. The process of certification through visits from the European

certifying bodies is stage-managed by the large transnational companies to which the producers are contracted to sell their produce. Union membership is actively discouraged by the companies and passively discouraged by the government despite its importance to the notion of fair trade; so visits made by the certifiers are controlled to ensure that the certifiers only meet compliant workers, most if not all of whom are members of the *Solidarismo* organisation. *Solidarismo* is what we understand as 'a bosses' union', set up to appear benevolent and to provide selected benefits for its worker members. In Costa Rica, however, it is used to reduce the power of and delegitimise the trade unions. (More details of the *solidarismo* movement are given in an article in ENCA Newsletter No. 51.)

SITRAP's principal current concern relates to the health issues that their members face, especially those resulting from aerial spraying of toxic pesticides. Despite all the publicity

about the dangers associated with such pesticides and revised codes of conduct over the last decade or two, practices in the plantations seem to have changed very little. Isabel's hands, for example, were damaged as a result of handling fruit coated in pesticides without protective equipment.

This discussion contrasts markedly with the first article presented here about fair trade, and clearly there are major differences between practices in some parts of the world and others. It seems from this discussion with SITRAP, however, that Costa Rica does not provide a good example of how fair trade should be practiced.

Websites:

Banana Link:
www.bananalink.org.uk

Make Fruit Fair:
www.makefruitfair.org.uk
SITRAP: www.sitrap.net



Omar Jerónimo, Guatemalan Human Rights Defender, Visits UK

In June this year, Omar Jerónimo from the Nuevo Día Ch'ortí Indigenous Association (CCCND) in Guatemala visited London as the guest of Peace Brigades International (PBI). The CCCND provide support and legal representation for indigenous Ch'ortí communities in Guatemala's Chiquimula region. They work to strengthen community processes and to oppose the construction of hydroelectric and mining projects on their ancestral land.

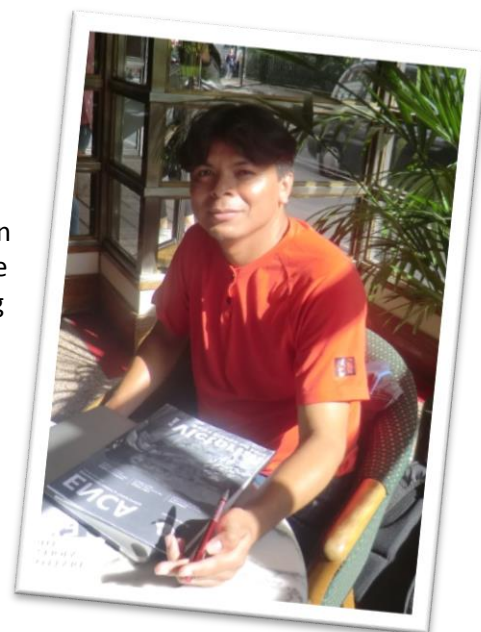
Since 2009, members of the CCCND and their families have received threats and have been harassed. Tension in the region increased last year with CCCND suffering 109 aggressions (threats, attacks, illegal surveillance, defamatory comments, etc.) between March and November 2014. Omar has received numerous death threats.

Whilst in the UK, Omar met with MPs Jeremy Corbyn and Kerry McCarthy, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Amnesty International, the Bar Human Rights Committee, the London Mining Network and the Latin America Mining Monitoring Programme. The Environmental Network for Central America was fortunate enough to be invited by the PBI to interview Omar, and ENCA member Martin Mowforth conducted the interview in London on 21 June 2015.

The following extracts from the interview are only a small sample of the conversation which appears in full, in both Spanish and English, on the website

<http://theviolenceofdevelopment.com/interviews>

Omar: I am a Maya Ch'ortí of the Mayan people in Guatemala. We work in the issue of human rights, especially relating to the collective rights of indigenous peoples and their development; and also the right to food for the Ch'ortí children in the region. These lead us to a concern for justice in the face of violations of territorial rights and to the development of productive economic possibilities in a territory which is deemed to be the driest in Central America.



Martin: And what are the most common problems that face this area?

Omar: Well, we are an organisation of indigenous communities, more than 70 communities. Of these only 7 are recognised by the state. We are in the process of getting recognition by the state, but what we face is a dispute with the companies which want to establish hydroelectric and mining projects, the two big economic strategies associated with national and international capital. But these are far from being possible developments for the communities; in fact they are a tragedy for the communities. They even offer money to assassinate us. So this development for our people is a great tragedy; but it's not how often they attack us, rather it's the fact that even after 500 years they still see the Maya people just as beasts of burden, incapable of thought, who can be manipulated and who don't know what is good and what is bad. And it's the companies and the rich of the country who decide how we should live and what is good for us. That is the tragedy of five centuries of racism.

Martin: Are there also problems with the food manufacturing companies and the farmers?

Omar: This region is one of the agriculturally least productive areas. It suffers from constant droughts, and we are suffering another drought right now. These lands have two major assets: a river and precious minerals. After the economic crisis of 2007, those advantages have become a tragedy for the people because it brought in the companies whose eyes were on exploiting the hydraulic energy and the metal mining. We are absolutely clear that this territory belongs to the Ch'ortí Maya, but there is one conflict with a company named Tres Niñas S.A. which belongs to the Pos Gutiérrez family, one of the most powerful families in the country which has over 100 companies and is keen to develop two hydroelectric projects covering 15 km of the river. They need to take the water, the only source of water that this area has. And another conflict involves mining exploration licenses. The constant discrediting and physical attacks came along with the Tres Niñas S.A. company, from people who say they work for them and often with the local mayor's support; and they even criminalise people who work for the Public Ministry.

Martin: Are any foreign-owned transnational companies involved?

Omar: It's very difficult to say if there are foreign investments and where they come from, but the Pos Gutiérrez family have investment relations with Spanish and English people. In Guatemala there is a very close relationship between the distributor and the producer – many times they are the same. A good example is Unión Fenosa which had investments in commercialisation and distribution but was also investing in construction.

So in Guatemala banks create certain structures in such a way that access to information about who is investing is very difficult for us. There exists a famous law in Guatemala, the 'secret bank'. Nobody in Guatemala can find out who has made or who is making bank transactions. Yet you have European governments demanding transparency and not accepting violence towards the people.

The conversation continued, covering issues relating to:

- *the registration of lands under World Bank funding which promotes individual registration rather than collective registration;*
- *the timber industry;*
- *the palm oil industry;*
- *the role of local mayors in supporting the rights of companies over those of local residents.*

And thence to the threats and aggression faced by community members and their human rights defenders.

Omar: Every day they're under attack. Fifteen days ago a son of the indigenous Ch'ortí mayor of Cuarecuche was assassinated in his own home at night. Who was it? People who work with the mayors who are in league with the companies. Why did they kill him? Because, essentially, they disagreed with him. But when the community made the first denunciation about the assassination to the judges, the Public Ministry made the accusation against the assassin for only minor offences. A minor offence is when someone treats me badly or strikes me, and you can get off with a fine. However, in Guatemala a minor offence is murder!

Firstly it needs to be said that dialogue is not perhaps the most appropriate word in Guatemala to describe the moments I have tried to talk about concerning the problems between the State, the companies and the communities. Since 2004 I have participated in hundreds of committees where I have established conversations by addressing each theme, agriculture, mining, hydroelectricity, monocultures in the country. And always we finish with the feeling that these committees serve only to delay discussions, to identify those who are the leaders of the community and to be able to know

what are the needs of these leaders and how they can be manipulated. It's about being able to identify those who can be threatened later, imprisoned and criminalised. ... So, there has never been a process of dialogue in Guatemala. It's exactly because the communities are considered not to have any rights, they don't have claims and it's not necessary to have a dialogue with them. All our life we have believed that dialogue is the fundamental tool to construct democracy – it is our approach; and even after all the times we have been disillusioned after finishing talking, we have returned to the table. Not naively, not because we don't know how the process will finish, but because we believe it is a fundamental tool we have to use.

In the last three years of General Otto Pérez Molina's government, dialogue has suffered a deep setback in which the companies have become involved in these conversations. We believe that when we are talking about the future of these communities, the companies should not be involved; it should be the government and the communities. That is to say, it should be the government and the townspeople, not the companies and the townspeople. The government ought to be the guarantor of rights, and not the mediator of rights. ... And very often a mediator favours the side of the companies. A state cannot take a stance in favour of a company, instead it should be a stance in favour of the wellbeing of the population, which is a substantial difference.

Secondly, a State ought to guarantee the human rights of the population before the rights of whatever company. This hasn't been the fundamental principle of conversations in Guatemala. Instead, the principles that the processes of dialogue always consider as the fundamental premise are that the communities don't understand, don't listen, don't need to be informed, because they are not going to understand, that they are manipulated by leaders, by foreigners sometimes, by communists. ... And in that way, the companies have the solution to the problem of the communities. And so the dialogues are not to see what sort of dreams, objectives, aspirations, plans the communities have, rather it is to inform them that they are going to be evicted and prosecuted. There isn't and there hasn't been perhaps in Guatemala since the Peace Treaty, a single committee meeting which we have considered as a listening dialogue, for both parties to listen to each other and come to understand each other's position. Instead they are essentially spaces where the companies can, with impunity, threaten the people.

Readers are referred to the PBI website for more details of their work; and for more details of Omar's visit to the UK, go to:
<http://www.peacebrigades.org.uk/country-groups/pbi-uk/events/omar-jeronimo-guatemalan-human-rights-defender-visits-the-uk/?L=0>

Too much wind in Panama?

Following numerous investments in wind farms in Panama in early 2014 (with a predicted capacity of over 200 MW), in October 2014, the Panamanian National Authority of Public Services (ASEP) granted a provisional license to the company Energía Verde (Green Energy) to build and operate a 20 MW wind farm in the district of Gualaca in the province of Chiriquí.

Two months later in December 2014, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), an arm of the World Bank, approved a loan of \$300 million for the construction of the second and third stages of the Penonomé Wind Farm which will have a capacity of 215 MW. When all four phases are finished, Penonomé is forecast to have 448 MW of capacity.

Then in July of this year (2015), the UEP Penonomé II company announced that it planned to invest \$130 million in the construction of the fourth stage of the wind farm. The announcement suggested that the fourth stage would add 25 new turbines of a size greater than those already constructed in the farm. Construction on the fourth stage is expected to begin in January 2016.

Three days after that announcement, ASEP temporarily suspended the granting of new licenses in order to carry out a study to determine how the system will integrate the new plants. The total number of licenses to build solar and wind power plants being processed by the Public Services Authority is equivalent to more than twice the current demand for energy in the country.

In October this year, the beginning of studies was announced for the development of a natural gas terminal and a wind farm in areas under the responsibility of the Panama Canal Authority. An article on Prensa.com reported that "... The Panama Canal Authority (ACP) is preparing a study for what will be a Natural Gas terminal in the areas adjacent to the waterway ... Canal Administrator Jorge Quijano told the News Agency of Panama (ANPanamá) that they already have a contribution given by a US government department to finance the study, the figure is around US \$800,000."

It is worth remembering that one of the causes of the 1980s and 1990s debt crisis that was foisted on many Third

World countries was the persuasion by First World banks, governments and transnational corporations that in order to escape from under-development Third World countries must develop – or let First World companies develop – their infrastructure, especially their energy supply infrastructure. The persuasion was accompanied by forecasts of energy consumption that far out-reached realistic levels. Are we seeing the same again?

Additionally, it is worth noting that all the projects and investments listed above are designed to satisfy large-scale industrial energy demand. Community energy projects designed to satisfy small-scale household and community energy demands seem to be few.

Report compiled by Martin Mowforth from the following sources:
Tico Times (6-12 July 2012) 'Panama begins construction on region's largest wind farm', San José, Costa Rica.
Greentech Lead (11 January 2015) 'Panama wind project receives \$300m World Bank aid', www.greentechlead.com/wind/panama-wind-project-receives-300m-world-bank-aid
CentralAmericaData.com (9 November 2015) 'Wind turbines in Panama', www.centralamericadata.com/en/search?q1=content_en_le%3A%22wind+turbines
See also John Perkins (2005) 'Confessions of an Economic Hitman', London: Ebury Press.

TRAVEL to El Salvador | LEARN Spanish, History and Culture GROW as an activist, as a person



The CIS in El Salvador is an NGO with projects supporting access to clean water, small women's businesses, scholarship and youth formation, human rights projects and others. They accept Spanish students who also want to discuss human rights and social justice. Stay for one week or as long as you like. CIS also needs volunteers for our English school (training provided). Stay for a full cycle and receive great discounts on Spanish Classes. We can provide the whole package, classes, a volunteer experience and homestays.

More info at: www.cis-elsalvador.org info@cis-elsalvador.org

Skype classes also available! \$15.00/hour

ENCA FUNDING, 2015

In 2014, ENCA received two applications for funding that required funds considerably greater than were available to us. We were able, however, to pass these applications on to the Educational and General Charitable Trust (EGCT) which is based in Spain. The two applications were received from the Council of Women of the West [of Nicaragua] (CMO) and from the Permaculture Institute of El Salvador (IPES).

Council of Women of the West [of Nicaragua] (CMO)

\$4,392 (£3,000) was awarded by the EGCT to the CMO for a programme of improved stoves that would benefit 27 small businesswomen who are contracted to make tortillas and other food products for local factories and offices. The EGCT asked the ENCA to monitor progress and report back to it on progress with the project.

In March 2015, a group of three ENCA members (Amy Haworth Johns, Russell Hawe and Martin Mowforth) met with several members of the CMO (María Castillo [Presidenta], Danelia Rivera, María Nicomedes and Petrona Pérez) in the CMO office in Chinandega. They talked about the programme as a successor to previous smaller and successful programmes. Although they were only able to spend a morning with the CMO, they visited a number of the programme's beneficiaries, including Juanita Socorro shown here. The ENCA members were unanimous in their judgement that the programme had been a great success.



Juanita Socorro in Chinandega

The Permaculture Institute of El Salvador (IPES) / The Permaculture Association of Suchitoto (AEPS)

In 2014, the IPES was awarded \$6,351 for a programme of permaculture training for small-scale farmers from a number of communities with the idea that they would pass on the skills learnt through the training to other farmers in their communities. The award was made by the EGCT through the ENCA. Before the money had been transferred to El Salvador, we learnt that the IPES had split itself into two different organisations after an internal rift. The money remained in ENCA's bank account until the small ENCA election observer delegation visited El Salvador in February and March this year when they made visits to both sides of the rift.

Their conclusion was that the ability to conduct the training programme lay with the AEPS, and after approval of their findings by the EGCT, the money was transferred to the newly-formed AEPS. A further visit was made in September this year to assess progress with the training programme. It was concluded from this visit that the decision to trust the AEPS with the funding was correct and the programme was running successfully.

Sadly we must report that shortly after this visit members of AEPS were robbed at gun point with a sizable amount of funds being stolen. More information and a special appeal can be found on page 10.

More on AEPS:

<http://theviolenceofdevelopment.com/video-the-ecological-association-of-permaculturalists-of-suchitoto-aeps/>

In the June (2015) ENCA meeting, members made three awards in response to applications for project funding made by the Centre for Environmental and Human Development (CENDAH) in Panama, the MUFRA-32 organisation in El Salvador and the Association for Community Development in the Cosigüina Peninsula (AIDEPC) in Nicaragua.

The Centre for Environmental and Human Development (CENDAH), Panama

CENDAH's application to the ENCA was for \$2,000 to cover some of the costs of a programme of monitoring of the catch of spiny lobsters (locally known as the *dulub*) in the San Blas Islands of Panama, home to the Guna Peoples (formerly known as the Kuna). Sale of the *dulub* is the major item that sustains Guna families. The catch has declined in the last few years due to habitat degradation, over-fishing and the absence of any form of sustainable management. The degradation of their natural habitat has left few natural refuges for juvenile lobsters among the roots of mangroves, marine grasses and coral reefs, where levels of predation are high.

Earlier work has introduced artificial refuges (known as 'Cuban casitas') that are of an appropriate size to allow juvenile *dulub* to hide from predators and fishermen. The ENCA-funded programme will monitor the population of *dulub* and the catch in two major areas where the Cuban casitas are stationed. It also includes a programme of environmental education and training for the lobster catchers and the Guna

Guna communities in the selected refuge areas.

ENCA was able to provide only \$900 of the amount requested, but we have already heard from the monitoring team of its usefulness in initiating the programme and of its progress.

The Francisco Sánchez 1932 Unified Movement (MUFRAS-32), El Salvador

MUFRAS-32 which is based in the department of Cabañas in El Salvador applied to ENCA for \$1,400 for costs incurred in their programme entitled 'Political Impact for the Prohibition of Metal Mining in the Northern Triangle of Central America'. The Northern Triangle of Central America is composed of the three countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, and this programme was essentially an attempt to coordinate resistance to large-scale mining projects in all three countries. In particular, there exist mining projects in Guatemala which contaminate the fluvial waters of the River Lempa which provides two-thirds of the Salvadoran population with its main supply of water. The programme involved the lobbying of all three governments to take measures to protect the water

resources of the trans-border zones of all three countries.

The ENCA was able to provide \$800 to this programme which is still ongoing.

The Intercommunity Association for the Strategic Development of the Cosigüina Peninsula (AIDEPC), Nicaragua

At the end of 2014 AIDEPC had applied to ENCA for \$2,428 to cover partial costs of a programme of reforestation of the buffer zone of the Cosigüina Peninsula of Nicaragua and for protection of the biological corridor that runs through the area. Several communities in the area have been experiencing difficulties with access to their water supply because of the constant tree-felling. Their environment has deteriorated and the communities are characterised by severe poverty.

ENCA was able to award \$1,000 to the project after our June meeting, and in September we received from AIDEPC a positive interim report on progress with the project.

Appeal On Behalf Of The Permaculture Association Of Suchitoto, El Salvador

In 2015 the AEPS received \$6,351 from the Educational and General Trust Fund for a programme of training of small-scale farmers from numerous communities in El Salvador. The programme involved a series of two and three day residential workshops held at the demonstration plot of the AEPS.



Just before one of these workshops during October, two members of the AEPS (Efraín Acosta Peraza and Lucía Casco Díaz) went into Suchitoto to withdraw money to cover the costs of the planned workshop. They were followed from the bank back to the demonstration plot where they and Reina Mejia, the AEPS coordinator, were held up at gunpoint and robbed not just of the \$1,200 that they had withdrawn, but also their mobile phones, a laptop and personal money.

This appeal by members of the ENCA (Environmental Network for Central America) is intended to recoup just some of the funds that the AEPS lost in the robbery. It will be transferred to their account in December. The next newsletter of the ENCA (due out in March 2016) will report back on the amount raised.

Donations can be made directly through our website at: www.enca.org.uk

Thank you.



Spiny lobster peering out from one of the Cuban casitas. (Photo credit: Enzo Pérez)

Environmental Kiosks Programme

Skills and knowledge sharing is at the heart of the *Kioscos Ambientales* programme which seeks to alter the course of development in Costa Rica's rural communities. *Nick Langridge* reports on how they promote strength through difference.

In the quest for economic development Costa Rica has found itself facing a myriad of problems. The levels of production and consumption associated with the current model of development cause enormous pressures to both natural ecosystems and local communities. Rural societies pay the greatest price for the resulting socio-environmental conflicts due to the already high levels of inequality and social exclusion typically found in such areas.

Kioscos Ambientales is a programme which seeks to prevent and reverse some of these conflicts. The programme began in 2007 and is run through the University of Costa Rica (UCR) with the aim of constructing alternative methods of development through the strengthening of rural community organisations and incentivising collective working. The alternative model values local knowledge alongside scientific expertise and creates opportunities for horizontal learning,

participation and dialogue through breaking away from traditionally enforced top-down development.

The partnership between the UCR and the local communities is really at the heart of the programme. Students provide assistance in some of the more technical

aspects including communication, legal advice and methods for protecting communities' natural resources from the effects of unsustainable farming practices, property construction and tourism. In return, communities provide the local knowledge and social structures vital for developing a cohesive and sustainable programme.

To date, *Kioscos Ambientales* has involved itself in discussions on the impacts of NAFTA, the expansion of

monocultures, the installation of metal mining in the country and real estate development in the Pacific coastlands. The programme is currently working with community organisations in a number of regions including Talamanca, Sixaola Atlantic region, Caño Black, Guatuso, Palmar North, South Palmar and Guanacaste.

In March of this year, the programme was working with the community of

Chachaguita in the organisation of a structured opposition to the proposed damming of the river in the San Ramón province of Alajuela, a proposal which intends to redirect the flow of the river by 3 kilometres in order to provide power for electricity turbines. The results of such a feat would hugely affect local cultivation in an area 70% of which has protected status. Through the help of *Kioscos Ambientales*, a protest was staged at one of the bridges along the river and was attended by representatives from a number of the communities affected.

The *Kioscos Ambientales* programme provides the opportunity for a two-way exchange of skills between local communities and the UCR. Through combining academic expertise and local knowledge, rural communities in Costa Rica have an opportunity to not only put the brakes on the various unsustainable development programmes imposed on their areas, but they are also developing the skills, networks and experience to be able to take control of their own development in an environmentally and socially sustainable way.

Visit the *Kioscos Ambientales* website:
<http://kioscosambientales.ucr.ac.cr/>





Alfredo López broadcasting on Radio Faluma Bimetu

An Appeal from Radio Faluma Bimetu

Alfredo López, director of Radio Faluma Bimetu ('Sweet Coconut' in the Garífuna language) is making an appeal on behalf of the radio station which is in desperate need of repairs and new parts. Radio Faluma Bimetu, which began transmitting in 1997 from Triunfo de la Cruz, on the coast, is one of the pioneers of community radio in Honduras, and the first Garífuna radio station in the country. It was set up to promote and preserve Garífuna language and culture, and to mobilise the community of Triunfo de la Cruz against powerful economic interests which, through bribery, intimidation, and persecution, are trying to take over their ancestral land for tourist schemes.

Since the radio was established, both it and Alfredo, who is also Vice-President of OFRANEH, the national organisation of the Garífuna people of Honduras, have faced many challenges.¹ In 1997, the same year that it was founded, Alfredo was wrongfully convicted of drug-trafficking, believed to be due to his leadership in the defence of Garífuna territory. He spent 7 years in prison before he was finally acquitted. In January 2010, the radio station was burnt down following its strong condemnation of the 2009 coup;

and a year later Alfredo's house shared the same fate. Despite these challenges, the radio has carried on transmitting with only a short break due to the damage from the fire, and there are now five other Garífuna radio stations in Honduras, acting as rallying points for the defence of territory and the environment.

Radio Faluma Bimetu's most recent problems are due to constant power cuts, with the resulting surges in electricity burning out the equipment. Alfredo is at the moment trying to raise funds to repair the transmitter and replace the channel mixers.

If you can help, please send donations to Janet Bye, ENCA treasurer, 5 St. Edmunds Place, Ipswich IP1 3RA, and mark the donation clearly as intended for Radio Faluma Bimetu. Please make cheques payable to ENCA."

By Jill Powis

1 See also, for more information, <https://www.beaconreader.com/sandra-cuffe/garifuna-community-radio-stations-under-threat-in-honduras>

Defending Garífuna Territories and Way of Life, OFRANEH Wins 2015 U.S. Food Sovereignty Prize

ENCA congratulates OFRANEH (Garífuna and Black Fraternal Organisation of Honduras) on receiving the award of 2015 US Food Sovereignty Prize. We reproduce here notification of the Prize by *Beverly Bell* for Rights Action.

In 2015, the US Food Sovereignty Prize honours the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH by its Spanish acronym), Afro-indigenous farmers and fisherpeople who are defending their lands, waters, agriculture and way of life. The Federation of Southern Cooperatives, primarily African-American farmers across 13 states in the deep South, shares the prize, which was presented in Des Moines on October 14, 2015.

The prize is given by the US Food Sovereignty Alliance, which is comprised of groups of advocates, activists, and farmers and other food producers. Food sovereignty asserts that people everywhere must reclaim their control over food systems. The US Food Sovereignty Alliance upholds the right to food as a basic human right, and connects local, national, and international movements for systems change.

US Food Sovereignty Prize
<http://foodsovereigntyprize.org/>

More information:
www.rightsaction.org

enca.org.uk
@ENCA_News

Meeting Dates 2016

Sunday 28th Feb; Sunday 26th Jun; Sunday 23rd Oct

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.