

ENCA



Environmental Network *for* Central America

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El Gran Canal

Study shows 71% still in favour
of mega project

ENCA Funding

We map where your donations
have been at work in Central
America

Mining

New legislation banning metal
mining in El Salvador



La Puya 5 years of resistance



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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La Puya: Celebrating 5 Years of Peaceful Resistance

*By ENCA member Amy Porter**

On 5 March 2017, members of the Guatemalan community-led, anti-mining movement, *Resistencia Pacífica La Puya* (Peaceful Resistance of La Puya), celebrated five years of maintaining a 24-hour blockade at the entrance of the Progreso VII Derivada gold mine. The mine is operated by EXMINGUA, a subsidiary of the US-based company, Kappes Cassiday & Associates.

While extractive projects in Guatemala are as controversial as ever within the communities they affect, companies have complained of a moratorium on new licences. The number of licences granted has dropped drastically, from 51 new licences in 2007 (33 for exploration and 18 for extraction), to just five in 2015 (3 for exploration and 2 for extraction).¹ Although discussed by government, a moratorium was never officially adopted, and the current Morales administration declared its opposition to such a measure.²

In a report published in January 2017, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) noted that there are currently 24 licences in place for exploration in Guatemala, and 274 for extraction, for mining, oil and natural gas projects.³ The report mentions only once, in passing, the issue of indigenous community resistance to extractive projects, and blames the industry's limited contribution to Guatemalan GDP for the lack of new licences.

Founded in 2002, the EITI is facing a crisis of legitimacy, having failed to lend sufficient weight to social and environmental issues.⁴ Otto Haroldo Cu, president of the *Observatorio Nacional de Transparencia* (National Observatory for Transparency) and an advisory member of

the EITI, stated in 2015: *"the fact that extractives count for less than 2% of the country's GDP should make us stop and think ... 78% of municipalities with active mining licences registered were engaged in some kind of conflict in 2010. Is this an adequate trade-off? Is this the kind of development that we want for our country?"*⁵

The EXMINGUA website boasts that the La Puya mine has brought "development, growth, jobs, progress and wellbeing for hundreds of families residing in San Pedro Ayampuc and San José del Golfo, the bordering municipalities".⁶ Members of the communities, however, feel differently. Responding to the lack of information offered by the local or national authorities, or the mining companies themselves, they established a peaceful blockade in 2012.

The movement's five-year milestone is an opportunity to celebrate their achievements; in 2016, a judicial order brought mining at the site to a temporary halt. It is still in effect. However, it is also a stark reminder of the long and costly struggles that rural communities in Guatemala face to gain control over issues on which they have a legal right to be consulted. Members of the La Puya resistance are determined to maintain their blockade until the mine is closed, for good.

Many of the key activists who have kept the La Puya blockade running are women. Female human rights defenders face particularly great risks of intimidation, threats and harassment. Between 2012-2014, 1,688 attacks on female human rights defenders were reported in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico.⁷ In June 2012, Yolanda Oqueli, an activist at the La Puya site, survived a

1. EITI, 30 December 2016, Informe EITI Guatemala, 2014-2015
2. Central America Data, 9 February 2016, [Good News for Mining Sector in Guatemala](#) [accessed 17.05.2017]
3. EITI, 30 December 2016, Informe EITI Guatemala, 2014-2015
4. Oxfam, 23 February 2016, [Oil, gas and mining transparency initiative facing crisis of relevance and legitimacy](#)
5. EITI, 17 July 2015, [Falling extractives revenues in Guatemala amidst political turmoil](#) [accessed 17.05.2017]
6. <http://exmingua.com/exmingua/corporativo/inversion-y-desarrollo/> [accessed 20.05.2017]
7. http://www.ciel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Deadly_shade_of_green_English_Aug2016.pdf [accessed 20.05.2017]



Photo: Amy Porter

shooting. No-one has been arrested for the attack.

On 5 March, the 5-year celebrations at La Puya got underway with a protest march to the mine led by local youth. Cries of “*Sí a la vida, no a la minería!*” (Yes to life, no to mining!) rang out along the route. Over 300 people joined the day’s celebrations, which included a community lunch, running races, and speeches.

It was against this backdrop of community spirit and fierce resilience that ENCA member, Amy Porter, spoke with Felisa Muralles and Marta Catalán, two of the many women who have formed the backbone of the La Puya Peaceful Resistance movement. Muralles is from the community of San Pedro Ayampuc, and Catalán from San José del Golfo, the two villages which border the mine site. They reiterated their determination to see the mine closed, and shared how the peaceful resistance has been a source of both unison and division within the communities.

What was the objective of setting up the La Puya Peaceful Resistance movement?

FM: The intention was not to let the mining companies work here. We are fighting to get them off this land.

MC: The resistance started on 2 March 2012. For a short time, we had known that they wanted to put a mine here, close to the communities, and that’s when we started the protest site – because they hadn’t informed us about anything. And today we’re here celebrating 5 years. We were motivated to defend the water and the environment for future generations.

Were you surprised when you found out there was going to be a mine?

FM: In 2011, we didn’t know what it was going to be. There was no consultation, no information; they said it would be other things, never a mine. ... They said they had bought the land to cultivate: pineapple, papaya, fruits. They started to build roads in and we still didn’t know it was going to be a mine. Until a group got organised and asked the Ministry [of Energy and Mines] whether there was a licence for extraction here, and finally they gave the information that yes, there was an authorised project here.

What do you feel you have achieved in the last 5 years?

FM: First, we’ve raised awareness with a lot of people, to recognise that mining is truly bad; we’ve shown them the proof. And we have learned how to better look after nature, the trees, the water.

MC: I think we’re the only resistance movement at the national level ... which hasn’t had any deaths. We had some injuries when the [police] crackdowns happened, and we have had people get prison sentences. We have united to help each other. In the most difficult times, there’s always somebody at your side.

What have been the biggest obstacles?

FM: There have been so many obstacles. We’ve been victims of much criticism, and of police violence against us ... they’ve used excessive violence to try to displace us. But they didn’t manage.

MC: At first ... the mining company saw all the people here, and seeing all the women, they said that we had come here to prostitute ourselves, that we had abandoned our children, that we neglected them. A lot of things like that ... They put around names of people, once they even put my Dad’s name, saying that he was seeing another woman; but of course he wasn’t, it was just to try and discredit the resistance movement. It didn’t stop us.

Has the gold that has been extracted here benefitted the local people?

FM: Hardly at all, because the royalties are only 1%. For every Quetzal (Guatemalan currency) that they give, 50 cents go to the

central government and 50 go to the local authorities. Last year, they paid royalties of Q305,000 (\$42,000 USD) for the entire year ... In 2014, they only reported from September to December, and they only gave Q6,000 (\$818) to the municipality for everything they extracted. The benefits for the communities are minimal, there's just contamination, destruction and problems ... even families fighting amongst themselves. They say this is development, that's its improvement, but that's completely false.

Is the community very worried about the water contamination?

MC: Yes, we're very worried ... The levels of arsenic are naturally high here, but in 2015 when [the mine] was working a lot, the levels increased greatly, from 0.052 milligrams to 0.099 milligrams per litre of water ... The Ministry of Health accept that this is because of the [mining] works, and asked [the local authorities] to do something. Supposedly, in San José del Golfo they put in filters, but the contamination levels haven't decreased.⁸

FM: The municipal authorities, at least in San Pedro Ayampuc have not done anything, they say they don't have money. So, the authorities got sanctioned ... then they pay the fine with money that belongs

to the town ... and we're still drinking contaminated water.

I noticed that there's a water park close by, up there on the hill?

MC: Yes, it's the strangest thing ... there's always water up there. In my house, we have water every 48 hours. When there's water, we have to fill up a lot of containers ... It shouldn't be like this. When these companies come, they use millions of litres of water and don't pay for it; we pay to be given water when they want us to have it. This water is ours [it's not for] companies who come to contaminate and destroy.

Could you tell me about the family divisions?

MC: There are many divisions between parents and children, brothers and sisters ... even in mine, I have an aunt who doesn't speak to me ... because as the municipal authorities see us in a bad light, and one of her daughters works there, it bothers her and we don't speak.

What do you want from the Guatemalan government?

FM: What we want is for them to remove the mining projects, that they stop testing for more projects, and that [the

companies] go back to their own countries and destroy them, and let us in Guatemala live here in peace.

MC: Really, I don't expect anything, but what we would like most ... is that they would think about the harm it's doing, and please not give out any more licences.

What types of alternative development would you like to see?

MC: I would like to see sources of employment come from within the community. Because we know ... how to care for Mother Earth, which gives us food. I dream of a Guatemala without mines, monocultures or transnationals.

FM: Better development would perhaps be training us how to look after the land, cultivate organically, and make irrigation systems. That would be good development for these communities.

Do you feel that international solidarity is helpful?

MC: Yes, because we're not the only people feeling this way, there are others outside of Guatemala. If it was only in Guatemala, I think the government would always do what they wanted. So when people from abroad come to know what is happening here, the government distances itself from these things. For us, it's very helpful that people from outside come and take away the information.

FM: Yes, it helps a lot, because I understand that when people come here they take away the message and publicise it, so the companies see that we are not alone, that yes, [people] in other countries very far away have their eyes fixed on Guatemala, on our struggles. I think this helps a lot to raise awareness, and it spreads the news of what's happening here.

** Amy Porter has worked as Amnesty International UK's Country Coordinator for Guatemala and recently with two NGOs in rural Guatemala. She has spent much time accompanying the La Puya Peaceful Resistance.*



Photo: Amy Porter

8. According to the World Health Organisation, the maximum permissible level of arsenic in water should be 0.010 milligrams per litre.

ENCA's recent support in Central America

In 2016/17, ENCA gave the following project support:

In 2016, ENCA submitted an application to the Unicorn Grocery (Manchester) on behalf of COPINH (Honduras). They were awarded **\$1,386**

\$50 to Rights and Ecology, a new group formed within the Centre for Political Ecology, California, to document and defend against land rights and human rights abuses, especially in Honduras and Guatemala

\$280 to Radio Faluma Bimetu. Triunfo de la Cruz, Honduras, for radio station repair

\$650 (individual donation within ENCA) for the purchase of Javier Espinal's mural – to COPINH (Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Peoples of Honduras)

\$485 to COPINH in support of the Javier Espinal mural project

\$473 to PASE (Professionals for Social and Business Auditing), Chinandega, Nicaragua, to maintain the office of this group working to support sugar cane workers suffering from chronic kidney disease (CKDnT) and their families

\$500 to the Ecological Association of Permaculturalists of Suchitoto, El Salvador, to cover some of the theft of funds used to support an earlier ENCA-supported project

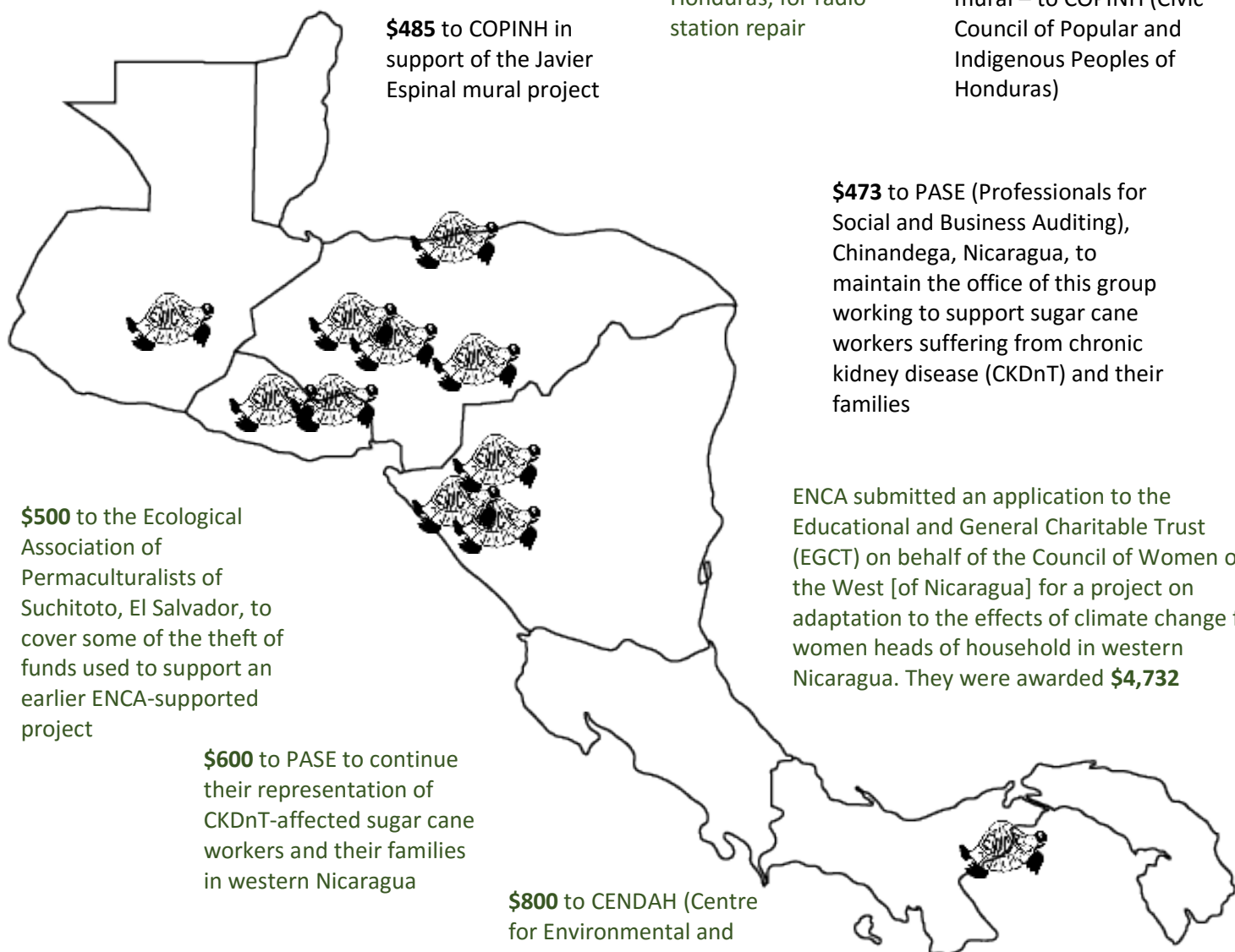
\$600 to PASE to continue their representation of CKDnT-affected sugar cane workers and their families in western Nicaragua

\$473 to MUFRAS-32, Cabañas, El Salvador, to maintain the office of this local group in their campaign against metal mining in Cabañas

\$800 to CENDAH (Centre for Environmental and Human Development), San Blas Comarca, Panamá, for a project designed to rescue and re-evaluate native and creole seeds

ENCA submitted an application to the Educational and General Charitable Trust (EGCT) on behalf of the Council of Women of the West [of Nicaragua] for a project on adaptation to the effects of climate change for women heads of household in western Nicaragua. They were awarded **\$4,732**

A full listing of all ENCA's financial support for projects and organisations in Central America up to and including 2015 is given in ENCA's website at: <https://enca.org.uk/blog/category/our-work/projects/>



Palm Oil Legacy in Guatemala

On 8th May the organisation SumOfUs circulated a petition concerning a toxic legacy left in Guatemala by the palm oil industry and in particular by the corporation REPSA. We include it below as an illustration of the behaviour of transnational corporations towards local communities and environments.

It has been two years since a deadly spill contaminated La Pasión River and destroyed the livelihoods of communities in Guatemala's Sayaxché region. The corporation responsible, REPSA, has yet to take real steps to address the environmental and social damages it caused.

A new Oxfam investigation reveals that despite lofty commitments to address community needs in the region, REPSA has silenced critics and failed to compensate those most impacted by the spill.

REPSA's inaction has left community members waiting for justice, while a culture of violence and intimidation targeting environmental activists runs rampant. Now, armed with Oxfam's

damning new investigation, it's time to come together once again to hold REPSA to account through demanding real action from its customers Cargill, Wilmar and major brands like Nestlé.

Demand full transparency from REPSA repairing the Guatemalan communities it destroyed and implementing a sustainable palm oil policy.

After a court found REPSA guilty of ecocide for the damages caused by the spill, Rigoberto Lima Choc, a schoolteacher and plaintiff in the case, was shot and killed. But in spite of REPSA's "zero tolerance" stance on violence, local activists report new cases of alleged intimidation.

Despite being charged with ecocide, REPSA has yet to implement a plan to compensate community members like hundreds of out-of-work fisherman whose livelihoods were destroyed along with La Pasión River's aquatic life. Instead of taking action, REPSA has stalled official investigations with new legal appeals that are further escalating the tensions causing violence and

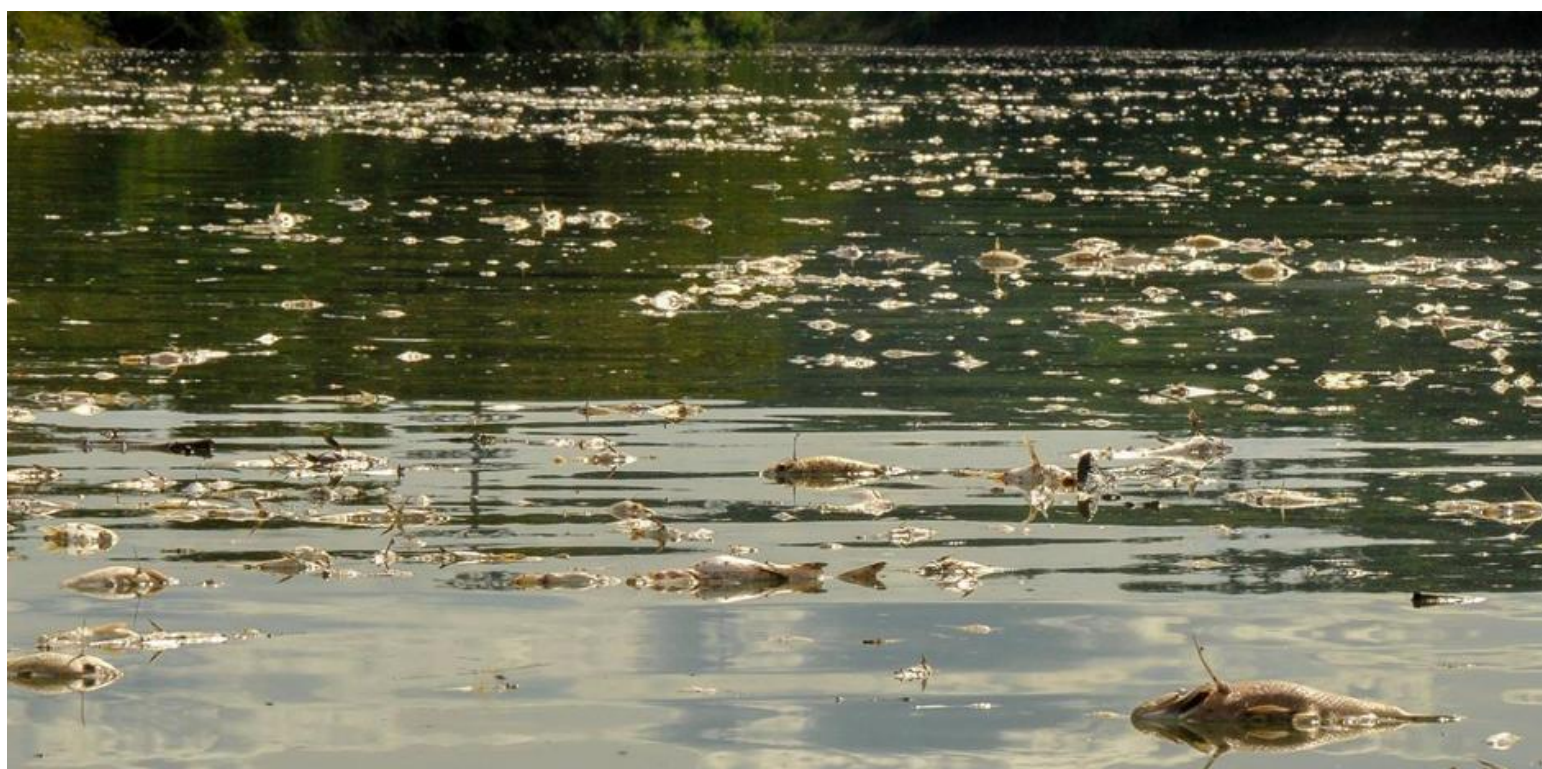
threats to environmental activists in the region.

We've come together in the past to take on the human rights and environmental abuses of the palm oil industry. Thanks to mass pressure from our movement partners, Cargill and Wilmar, two of REPSA's biggest palm oil buyers, demanded REPSA move towards responsible palm oil production. Now, we need to go straight to REPSA and demand justice for the countless Sayaxché residents still reeling from REPSA's deadly spill.

Call on Cargill, Wilmar and Nestle to hold REPSA to account for the social and environmental impacts of its reckless palm oil production in Guatemala.

More information:

[The toxic legacy of palm oil in Guatemala](https://blogs.oxfam.org/en/blogs/17-04-05-toxic-legacy-palm-oil-guatemala)
<https://blogs.oxfam.org/en/blogs/17-04-05-toxic-legacy-palm-oil-guatemala>
<https://www.sumofus.org/>
Oxfam. 5 April 2017.



TOURISM TAKES OVER AS NICARAGUA'S TOP GDP ITEM



Figures from the Nicaraguan Institute for Tourism (INTUR) show that for both 2015 and 2016 earnings from the tourism sector exceeded those from any other sector in the country. The two graphs below illustrate these statistics.

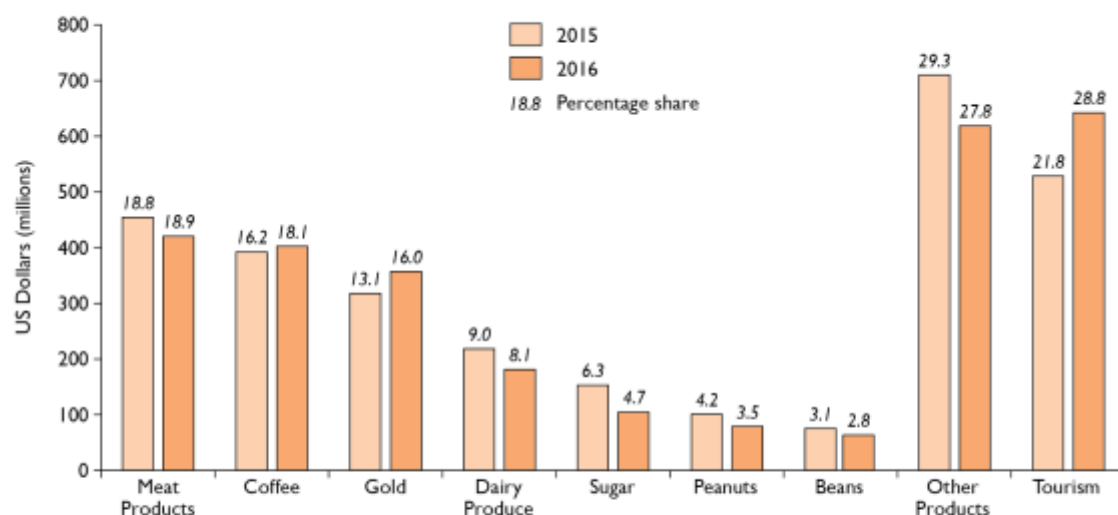
Whether this is a good sign for Nicaragua's economy or a bad sign depends on how tourism is conducted and managed within the country. Small-scale, community-based tourism is likely

to be less environmentally damaging, less socially divisive and more economically beneficial for local communities than the large-scale, megaproject type of tourist activity.

This debate is active in many countries, and in future issues we hope to include case studies of various tourist projects in Nicaragua along with opinion pieces about the effects of tourism on countries in the South. We invite all our

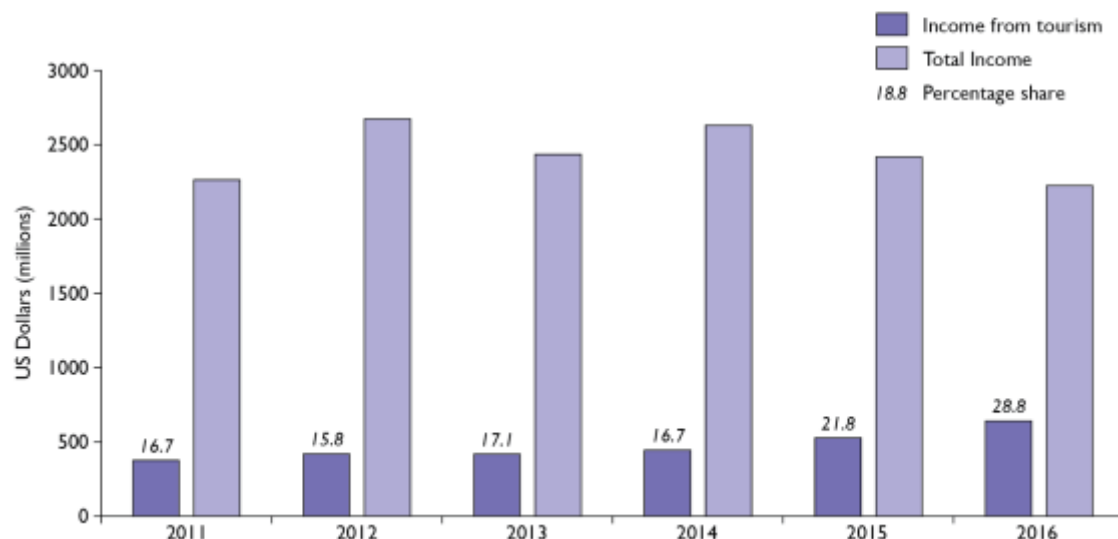
readers to participate in this debate by sending us examples of tourism types from around the whole of Central America and to offer their views on the tourism industry. Is it really smoke-free? Is it really beneficial to local people? Do you have examples of tourism practiced well? And tourism's ill effects?

Nicaragua: Income earned by tourism compared with other sectors, 2015 and 2016



SOURCE: Instituto Nicaragüense de Turismo (Intur).

Nicaragua: Tourism as a percentage of total export earnings



M&R poll: 71% still support the Canal

ENCA Newsletter readers will be aware that news of the proposed Gran Canal has gone quiet over the last few months. It is open for debate and speculation whether this might be due to:

- The decline in the fortune of Wang Jing, owner of the HKND company which has the canal concession; or
- The Sandinista government's stated policy that all the environmental impact analyses have to be finished before work can begin; or
- The Chinese government putting the project on hold as a reward to Panama for cutting off its links with Taiwan; or
- The current lack of attraction to international financial investment, made especially precarious because of Trump's commitment to protectionism.

Which of these 'theories' holds any degree of truth we do not know, but later this year when more of the second series of environmental impact analyses are reported, we may gain a better understanding of the issues.

In the meantime, in April this year La

Prensa (Managua) reported on an M&R poll of Nicaraguan attitudes to the canal project. Our translation of the La Prensa article follows.

Approval of the Interoceanic Canal project has fallen since the project was announced in 2013, according to the results of a survey of 1,600 Nicaraguans, by M & R Consultants. The survey corresponds to the first quarter of this year. It was carried out face to face between the 17th of February and the 24th of April of this year, in the 15 departments and two autonomous regions of the country. It has an error margin of more or less 2.5 percent and a confidence level of 95 percent.

Since December 2013, when the pollster, led by Raúl Obregón, began to ask about the Canal project, disapproval has grown by 16.3 percent. In December 2013, disapproval was at 12.1 percent; in December 2014, 17.1; in June 2015, 21.4 percent; in December 2015, 17.4 percent; in March 2016 26.4 percent; in December 2016, 19.4 and in April 2017, 28.4 percent.

In the most recent poll, 63.4 percent of interviewees said they believed

that the Canal project would go ahead if studies determined it to be feasible, while 31.9 percent responded that it was 'unrealistic' and that there would be no canal. Some 4.8 percent said they didn't know or didn't respond.

On the 22nd of April, *campesinos* mobilised against the Bill for the Interoceanic Canal (Law 840) called for a national march in Juigalpa, Chontales, that was obstructed by the National Police.

According to official information, the construction of the Canal would involve the investment of 50,000 million dollars to be completed in five years. Canal critics have pointed out that this would affect the natural reserves that stand in the way of the canal route and have also made the analysis that the concession law hands sovereignty over to the Chinese businessman.

From: La Prensa (Managua)

By: Leonor Álvarez

24/04/2017

Translated by ENCA supporter Theodora Bradford



Results of the study by M & R Consultants about the Interoceanic Canal project.



NICARAGUA AND THE PARIS CLIMATE CHANGE AGREEMENT

Over recent weeks numerous articles in the US and British media have referred to the US joining Syria and Nicaragua in rejecting the Paris Agreement. Central America watchers and ENCA supporters may have wondered why Nicaragua was being cast in such a bad light. Rarely have these articles and reports given an explanation of the different reasons behind the Nicaraguan and US decisions. In June The Guardian published a letter by Helen Yuill, Campaigns Officer of the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (and also an ENCA member), to explain the difference in the US and Nicaraguan perspectives. We reproduce the letter below.

We welcome your excellent coverage of President Trump's decision to pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement (2 May). However, in your articles there are references to the US joining Syria and Nicaragua in rejecting the Agreement. Presented out of context, this

condescending comparison is fundamentally flawed.

Syria didn't sign because of the catastrophic civil war. Nicaragua refused to sign because they believe the Agreement is too weak to address the enormity of the consequences of climate change particularly in vulnerable, developing countries.

Paul Oquist, Nicaraguan representative to the Paris talks, pointed out that the Paris carbon reduction targets are non-binding and even if fully met would lead to a 'catastrophic three degree temperature rise'.

Oquist also highlighted the lack of political will and ambition on the part of the largest polluters, their failure to accept historical responsibility for global warming, and the lack of financial resources for technological transfer, adaptation, and compensation for losses and damages. He went on to state: 'The

Paris Agreement will not solve global warming problems but merely postpone them.'

Meanwhile Nicaragua, a country only responsible for 0.3% of global emissions, has a renewable energy target of 90% by 2020. This programme has been praised by the Inter-America Development Bank 'as a model for the world on the shift to green energy'.

It is very misleading to report, out of context, that the US joins Syria and Nicaragua on rejecting the Paris Climate Agreement: on this and an increasingly long list of other issues the US stands alone.

Helen Yuill
Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign
07957 293 792

ELECTION MONITORING IN EL SALVADOR, 2018



March 4th 2018 is the date of the elections for the Legislative Assembly and Municipalities in El Salvador, and as usual the Centre for Exchange and Solidarity (Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad – CIS) in San Salvador will be running an election monitoring delegation. Over the past few years during previous Salvadoran elections, ENCA has organised a mini-British delegation to form part of the CIS delegation, the majority of whose participants are North American and Salvadoran. It is always a fascinating experience from various standpoints.

The CIS will again be organising a delegation from 26th February to March 6th, and an advertisement for this main delegation will appear in the next ENCA Newsletter (No. 71). But at the moment the CIS is searching for longer term volunteers who are needed from January 2nd to March 24th to work on preparation for the larger delegation.

You can find out more about the CIS election delegations by going to: <http://cis-elsalvador.org/index.php/en/volunteer/election-observation-volunteer> from which site you will be able to download the application form to join the delegation. If you wish to discuss the possibility with someone who has been a participant in the mini-British delegations in the past, feel free to ring Martin Mowforth on 01822 617504 or to email him on mmowforth@plymouth.ac.uk

One Year Later: Berta Lives, COPINH Continues On

On March 2, 2016, Berta Cáceres was assassinated in an attempt to silence her voice, bring an end to her important leadership and destroy the political project and struggle of a people acting in defence of their territory. The aim was not only to do away with her, but the organisation of which she was a part for over 20 years, the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras (COPINH).

But this crime did not succeed to stop this movement. Rather, Berta Cáceres, the legacy of her commitment, resistance and clarity continue to live on in peoples around the world who are confronting the threats of savage capitalism, patriarchy and of a predatory, racist and colonial system.

To date, eight people have been detained in connection with Berta's assassination and the attempted murder of Gustavo Castro, who was in Berta's house at the time of the attack. Among those arrested are members of the Honduran military and retired military officials, as well as people who worked for the Energy Development Company S.A. (DESA), the company responsible for the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project that COPINH has long opposed and that has become one of their most well-known struggles. However, despite having detained the suspected material authors of the crime, the assassination

of Berta will remain in impunity until the intellectual authors have been identified and brought to justice.

Berta's family, COPINH and the only witness and survivor of the attack, Gustavo Castro, continue to denounce the many irregularities and lack of transparency in this investigation that remains secret, leading to suspicions that this is taking place in order to protect those in the upper echelons of Honduran society who are truly responsible.

Less than a month ago, Global Witness released a report about environment defenders in Honduras, identifying conflicts over extractive projects linked to the political and economic elite in Honduras as behind the murder of more than 120 environmental activists since the 2009 coup. According to the report, Honduras is the most dangerous country in which to be an environment defender, where people put their lives on the line and face threats, attacks, dispossession and criminalization on a daily basis.

The below-signed organisations and individuals hold the Honduran state responsible for the assassination of this Lenca Indigenous leader as a result of having failed to ensure the protection measures issued for her by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). We also express our support for

the complaint brought by Gustavo Castro against Honduras to the IACHR for the human rights violations he suffered as a result of the Honduran state detaining him during March 2016.

Further, we condemn the

smear campaigns in the press and from the Honduran government against the work of COPINH and other organisations in Honduras – national and international – and the constant criminalization of human rights defenders in this Central American country.

In this repressive context, in which there are tremendous levels of corruption and impunity within various parts of the Honduran state, it is unacceptable that the Canadian government is contributing financial, technical and political support to the Attorney Generals' Office, including specifically to the investigation into the assassination of Berta Cáceres and the attempted murder of Gustavo Castro through the Technical Agency for Criminal Investigations (ATIC by its initials in Spanish). There are at least two high ranking officials in the Attorney Generals' office with links to the approval of the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project that Berta and COPINH have been resisting, for which reason the political will of this state body to carry out a full and impartial investigation has been seriously questioned.

One year since Berta was buried, we express our support for COPINH, the people of Honduras and Gustavo Castro, and unite our voices to demand:

- An independent investigation of Berta Cáceres' assassination by impartial international experts under the auspices of the IACHR that will get to the bottom of this crime and reveal the truth.
- The immediate cancellation of the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project and more than fifty concessions that have been granted on Lenca territory without respect for their processes of self-determination and their free, prior and informed consent.



- The demilitarization and departure of the police forces from Lenca territory.
- An end to the criminalization and attacks against COPINH and its members.
- An end to the technical, financial and political support from the Canadian government to the state of Honduras, including to state security forces and investigative bodies of the Attorney General's Office such as ATIC.
- A halt to Canadian diplomacy oriented to promote the interests of Canadian investors in Honduras, which have a strong presence in the mining, energy, telecommunications and tourism sectors, to the detriment of democracy and respect for fundamental human rights and Indigenous territories in Honduras.
- An end to bilateral funding to the Honduran state through International Financial Institutions (IFIs).
- Annulment of the Canada Honduras Free Trade Agreement that was negotiated months after the fraudulent elections of November 2009 and signed with Honduran officials who were consolidating the coup in the country and have demonstrated disdain for the human rights of the population.

In March, we will not only remember the pain of this terrible crime, above all we will celebrate life. The life of Berta Cáceres who was born on March 4th and the work of COPINH that was founded 24 years ago on March 27th. Today, we celebrate life and demonstrate our solidarity with the people, communities and social movements of Honduras who are defending human rights, the environment and life in the context of a grave crisis in their democracy following the 2009 coup and who are confronting growing threats against communities and territories in the country.

Berta lives, COPINH continues on!

Legislation Against Mining In El Salvador

In previous ENCA newsletters we have reported extensively on the struggle of Salvadoran people against resource extraction by transnational mining companies, and in particular of the long battle by the National Roundtable Against Metal Mining and the Cabañas organisation MUFRA-32 against mining exploration and exploitation by the Canadian company Pacific Rim (later taken over by the Australian company OceanaGold).

In ENCA Newsletter No. 68 we reported on the seven-year case and final judgement of the World Bank's International Court for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) against the Pacific Rim Mining Corporation and in favour of the government of El Salvador. Now we can report on one important further development of relevance in El Salvador and we do so through extracts from the notification sent by the Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL) in April this year.

Last week, the government of El Salvador voted to ban outright all metal mining in the country. The decision makes the small Central American country the first to halt a modern day gold rush, effectively stopping all mining projects in the pipeline.

When the National Roundtable Against Metallic Mining first proposed this legislation almost ten years ago, many thought the idea was preposterous, unwinable, and a non-starter. But the Salvadoran social movement never wavered in its resolve. Years of organising, educating, and mobilizing – led by courageous activists on the frontlines in the northern province of Cabañas, led to the vote which declared unequivocally that water is worth more than gold and that life is more valuable than corporate profits.

The final vote tally mirrored the results of a national consultation process in which more than 70% of Salvadorans voted against mining in their territories.

In the mid-2000s, Commerce Group failed to mitigate contamination from its San Sebastian mine into a local river, which now has eleven times the healthy limit for cyanide and one thousand times the limit for lead. In the case of Pacific Rim Mining (now OceanaGold), El Salvador defended itself for seven years against a \$250 million lawsuit after it denied the company an extraction license for environmental reasons.

[El Salvador won the case in October 2016](#)

– see ENCA 68 – though OceanaGold has still not paid the \$8 million awarded to El Salvador, nor has the company left the country. After this historic vote, OceanaGold can no longer harbour any aspirations of mining in El Salvador. The entire country has united under a single slogan: “Yes to life. No to mining.”

For all of us at CIEL, it is a great honour and privilege to have played a small part in supporting the National Roundtable and its network of allies in this struggle for nearly a decade. Their win is a win for us all. Their perseverance against enormous odds is an inspiration for our movement. As Cristina Starr from Radio Victoria said: “Today water won over gold.”

ENCA has also played a small part in supporting these Salvadoran movements and we echo the sentiments expressed by CIEL and congratulate the National Roundtable Against Metal Mining and MUFRA-32 on the results of their hard work.

Washington-based CIEL's website: www.ciel.org/



DEFENDING RIGHTS DEFENDERS

25 SEPTEMBER at 6:30 on The TATTERSHALL CASTLE, a boat moored in central London (Opposite the London Eye)

In the northern triangle of Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras) life for human rights, land rights and environmental rights defenders is particularly dangerous. Research by **Global Witness** reveals that since the 2009 military coup d'état in Honduras, 123 land and environmental activists have been murdered in that country with countless others threatened, attacked or imprisoned. The situation for rights defenders in El Salvador and Guatemala can hardly be described as any better than for Hondurans.

Most of the violence and threats of violence arise from so-called 'developments' of activities such as mining, hydroelectricity generation, logging, agribusiness plantations and tourist resorts. They involve land grabs and resource extraction and exploitation, especially by transnational corporations and national businesses, and affect particularly indigenous peoples and rural communities.

ENCA's '**Defending Rights Defenders**' event on September 25th 2017 in Tattershall Castle, London will feature

short talks from **Martin Mowforth**, author of *The Violence of Development*. **Doug Specht**, Director of Voz, **Adam Lunn** from Peace Brigades International and a speaker from the Guatemala Solidarity Network.

Talks will be followed a Q&A, a chance for discussion and by live music by the **Pengenista samba-reggae drum band** and the opportunity to continue the discussions over a drink in the bar.

More information and booking:
ENCA.org.uk/defending

enca.org.uk
@ENCA_News

Meeting Dates 2017

Sunday 15th October 2017

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.