

ENCA



Environmental Network *for* Central America

www.enca.org.uk

Issue 84 | March 2022

Palm Oil

Protests against REPSA in
Guatemala

SITRABI

75 years of activism for banana
workers

LAC 2021

Report back from the Latin
America Conference 2021



FREEDOM FOR THE GUAPINOL 8



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 the exploitation of natural resources benefits the many and not just the few and is carried out within sustainable and renewable bounds.

Contact Details

Email: enca.info@gmail.com
Website: www.enca.org.uk

Chair: Doug Specht
doug.specht@outlook.com

Secretary: Sheila Amoo-Gottfried
0208 769 0492
sheila.amoo-gottfried@talktalk.net

Treasurer: Esma Helvacioğlu
finance@enca.org.uk

Postal Address
ENCA, c/o NSC
Durham Road Resource Centre
86 Durham Rd, Finsbury Park,
London N7 7DT

Editors:
Martin Mowforth
Doug Specht

Cover Photo:
The Guapinol 8 – Honduras Solidarity
Network

Honduras: Guapinol 8 finally released

By ENCA member Jill Powis

The eight Honduran water rights defenders, who had been in pre-trial detention for two-and-half years, were finally released in February 2022, after some bizarre legal shenanigans. They had been accused of crimes against the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares (ILP) in a case condemned as politically-motivated by a range of legal and human rights experts.

The Guapinol 8 were arrested after opposing a huge open-cast iron oxide mine which has polluted rivers relied upon by over 42,000 people (see ENCA 75 and 78). The mine is owned by Lenir Pérez, already notorious for human rights abuses related to his mining explorations in La Nueva Esperanza, Atlantida department, and his wife, Ana Facussé, daughter of the late Miguel Facussé, the palm oil baron associated with the murder and intimidation of land rights defenders (see ENCA 56).

The mine is located in the Bajo Aguán region, in the Montaña de los Botaderos Carlos Escaleras National Park, in Tocoa municipality. Despite the Park being protected territory, the state altered the boundaries of the Park's no-development ('nucleus') zone in 2012 to accommodate the mine, which went ahead without any community consultation, in violation of the law.

On 7 September 2018, during a peaceful demonstration against the mine, one of the protesters was seriously wounded by shots fired from a car reportedly belonging to ILP. This was never investigated, but the authorities brought charges against the protesters for the alleged kidnapping of the ILP's chief contractor as well as damage to ILP property. The case was condemned because of its many irregularities, such as the fact that the contractor repeatedly changed his testimony, while independent video evidence

showing that the protest was largely peaceful was ignored.

At their trial, which finally took place on 9 February 2022, six of the Guapinol 8 were found guilty in a verdict described as "outrageous" by Amnesty International. Unexpectedly, the next day, the Supreme Court issued a judgment accepting appeals filed months earlier that challenged the constitutionality of the charges and the pre-trial detention. However, it was only 14 days later, with much foot-dragging (and after an additional ruling by the national Court of Appeal closing the case) that the local courts finally released the remaining six.

Honduras' new president, Xiomara Castro, had called for the Guapinol 8's release at her inauguration in January, and so the delays by the local courts could be seen a means of showing contempt for her regime.

From 2011 to the end of 2013 Jill Powis served as a human rights accompanier with PROAH (Honduras Accompaniment Project) which accompanied a range of threatened organisations in the country including COFADEH and COPINH. <https://hondurasaccompanimentproject.wordpress.com/>



Protests over Palm Oil Sourcing in Guatemala

In December 2021, ENCA joined with other NGOs in signing a letter protesting against the resumption of palm oil sourcing by multinationals such as Nestlé, Cargill, PepsiCo, Proctor and Gamble and others, from REPSA (Reforestadora de Palma S.A.) in Sayaxcha, Guatemala. This followed an inadequate response by the REPSA/HAME Group to the Open Letter sent in June 2021. But the controversy started in 2015 and is explained below by ENCA secretary Sheila Amoo-Gottfried.

The letter and campaign are promoted by Forest Peoples.org, Friends of the Earth USA, Rainforest Action Network and ActionAid USA.

In 2015, spills from REPSA's crude palm oil plant in Sayaxcha, Petén, led to an ecological disaster along the Pasión River, harming the livelihoods and access to water and food of Indigenous communities and causing lasting damage to the ecosystem. Fish, reptiles and mammals were massively affected along more than 100km section of the river.

Following legal action by civil society against REPSA in 2015, a court order led to the temporary closure of the plant. In the aftermath of this injunction, violence, intimidation and threats were unleashed, with the illegal detention of three human rights defenders from CONDEG (National Council of Displaced People – Guatemala) and the assassination of Rigoberto Lima, a REPSA critic. Although company personnel and security guards associated with REPSA were thought to be implicated, REPSA has denied any involvement and refuses to acknowledge and address the underlying abuses, labour exploitation, escalating violence or environmental damage.

Nothing has yet been resolved and REPSA continues to use delaying tactics and intimidation to avoid further legal action or the formation of an independent third-party verification process to assess REPSA's progress in meeting a set of minimum requirements. These requirements include acknowledging and taking responsibility for the devastating consequences of the contamination of the Pasión River basin on the environment, public health and social fabric of the surrounding communities and establishing effective grievance mechanisms for unresolved past problems and for the future. Meanwhile, many multinationals (Cargill, Nestlé, Unilever, Ferrero, etc) have resumed resourcing palm oil,

failing to reconsider their decisions based on the evidence and recommendations provided in the Open Letter.

The UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights said in a 2020 letter to the Guatemalan government that the contracting and labour practices of REPSA could be "indicators of human trafficking and forced labour and other severe forms of labour exploitation". REPSA and its buyers have not responded to these allegations of human rights violations affecting their largely Indigenous workers. This is a systematic problem across the palm oil cultivating regions of Guatemala. The criminalisation of four Indigenous human rights defenders, given a suspended four-year sentence on 22nd November 2021, along with the violent displacement of the Maya Q'eqchi community 'Palestina' in Chinebal, El Estor on November 16th [2021] are further indications that human rights violations in this sector are ongoing and endemic. In December 2021, numerous national CSOs and international NGOs (including

ENCA) maintained their call on these multinationals to continue the suspension of sourcing palm oil from REPSA until judicial process has reached a satisfactory conclusion regarding the case of ecocide. REPSA also has to accept the undertaking of a thorough, objective and transparent independent investigation into the complaints represented in ongoing reports of human rights violations and environmental damage caused by its operations and supply chain.

Furthermore, taking into account the issues raised in the UN Human Rights Rapporteur's letter, REPSA is required to enter into serious and responsible dialogue with impacted communities and Guatemalan CSOs for verifiable and practical solutions, and to repair and redress the environmental and economic damage done in the affected communities.



Supermarket banana pricing policies

The following item written by Alistair Smith appeared in the Banana Link Newsletter of 7th December 2021. Alistair is Banana Link's International Coordinator and has worked with tropical fruit producer organisations in many parts of the world. We are grateful to him for granting us permission to reproduce this section of the BL Newsletter here. Although the article is a general one making no specific mention of Central America, it clearly has implications for Central America banana producers and the organisations that represent them. Banana Link's website is at: www.bananalink.org.uk

Does the Aldi banana price rise mean we are turning the corner?

For the best part of two decades, German hard discount retailer Aldi, present in thirty countries worldwide, has more or less set the benchmark price for fresh bananas in the European market. On 1st December the long-awaited 'white smoke' on the 2022 contract price finally appeared to have gone up after particularly protracted and controversial negotiations with suppliers. The contract price for next year has risen quite significantly, by 9 euro cents per box compared to 2021; but this was the lowest price ever seen, says Banana Link International Coordinator, Alistair Smith.

In the second half of the year, most of the leading Latin American, Caribbean and African producers' and exporters' organisations had denounced with increasing force the hypocrisy of a major

buyer that wants more and more social and environmental standards to be met whilst paying less and less in its annual negotiations. Aldi's buyers were, quite rightly, criticised publicly for not being in tune with their corporate responsibility colleagues.

The rise, which is estimated to be from an average of 11.50 euros per box this year to an average 13.30 in 2022, sounds significant, but as Reefertrends, who reported the move, stated: "While the increase has been broadly welcomed, whether the value at retail can cover the minimum price demanded by governments and producers alike is contingent on by how much trade related supply chain costs have also risen". The Ecuadorian exporters have reported 50 to 60 per cent increases in shipping costs in recent months, and these costs can account for up to 25-30 per cent of the landed price in European ports.

So, the jury is still out, as to whether this increase for 2022 really covers more of the costs of production than the 2021 historical low.

Aldi accepts it has "shared responsibility"

What is significant, though, regardless of the actual figures per supply chain is that the retailer has broken through its image of arrogance, of not listening to producers and of driving a race to the bottom industry-wide through lower and lower contract prices. For the first time, the company is now speaking in public of its support for the concept of "shared responsibility" between producers and sellers and is part of a group of German retailers that is wanting to ensure living wages are paid to all workers in its banana supply chains. From 2023, Banana Link understands that Aldi will follow the UK-based retailer Tesco in rewarding those producers who are paying living wages.

In the case of both Tesco and Aldi, an open question remains about the role of independent trade unions in verifying and negotiating to close living wage gaps and beyond. The living wage benchmarks produced in recent years are just a guide to the lowest wages that anybody should earn to guarantee a basic standard of living. They are not a ceiling, but a floor. The next key step will be to see how the big buyers demonstrate to their customers that living wages are indeed paid. >>



Cont...

A global banana costs and value distribution observatory

The World Banana Forum (WBF), with seed funding from the French government and the FAO of the United Nations, has been working since late 2020 on a methodology to make the costs of sustainable production and the distribution of value along the chain more transparent. The controversy over the Aldi price and retail buyer behaviour in general has hampered the producers' will to be transparent about the detailed costs of production, based on a real fear that powerful buyers will use the figures to squeeze the growers even more.

Now that, for the first time, there is an apparent recognition of the reality of rising costs by Europe's biggest buyer, the Global Banana Observatory should be able to move forward in piloting its methods of making transparent costs, margins and taxes along the chain. The hope is that this can become a real tool for counting in costs like living wages and other 'hidden costs' in pricing along the chain.

Banana Link encourages Aldi to keep moving in the new direction that yesterday's white smoke appears to signal. Other buyers now need to follow the lead of two of the WBF's leading retail members. We could then be shouting from the rooftops that the game is really changing. The joint statement by WBF on the concerted global effort towards living wages for all banana workers will then be seen to have real meaning.

As it stands today, Banana Link gives a cautious welcome to the move. The proof of the pudding will be in whether working conditions, wages, industrial relations and a whole range of very negative environmental impacts change for employees across the global industry.

Alistair Smith, 6 December 2021

A new Costa Rican stamp features the sloth

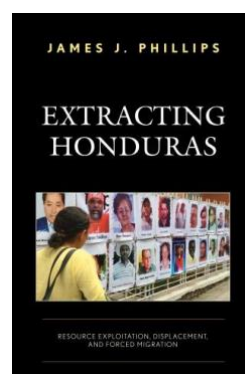


It is of potential interest to ENCA because of our association with the slowness of the turtle (the ENCA logo) that Costa Rica has introduced a commemorative stamp featuring the two toed sloth and the three toed sloth. The sloth became a part of the national symbol of Costa Rica in August 2021.

The move highlights the importance of Hoffmann's two-toed sloth and Brown-throated three-toed sloths, Costa Rica's two native species. It also seeks to improve conservation of the iconic mammals. The ruling tasks the Environment Ministry with ensuring "the proper conservation of sloth species." It also encourages the Tourism Board to use sloths in local and international advertising campaigns.

We await the next commemoration which hopefully might be the ENCA turtle, but as with all of ENCA's promotions, it might proceed a little slowly; so don't hold your breath.

New Book - Extracting Honduras: Exploiting Resources and Forcing People to Flee



With a focus on Honduras, this book explores the deeper causes of the massive emigration of Central Americans to the United States. Going well beyond the frequently given reasons for migration—poverty, violence, state corruption—the author provides a detailed account of how the frenzied extraction of natural resources at the core of both the Honduran political economy and its colonial relationship to the United States created massive community displacement, dependency, poverty and vulnerability, and encouraged, over time, growing official corruption and violence,

gang recruitment, drug trafficking, militarization of Honduran society, and the systematic repression of all popular protest and resistance. These were the proximate conditions that now encourage people to flee the country, a decision that is often a matter of survival for the human spirit as well as the body. The book argues that this situation cannot be divorced from the essentially colonial (or imperial) extractive relationship of Honduras to the United States. Thus the usual policy of development aid and more investment to stem migration only worsens the conditions that create migration. The Central American immigration "crisis" shapes life in the United States as well as in Honduras, but not in the ways that populist politics imagines.

Available from: bit.ly/3IJ0u7U

75 YEARS OF SITRABI IN GUATEMALA

ENCA has been happy to work in collaboration with the UK-based organisation Banana Link for many years and to support its defence and promotion of tropical fruit plantation workers and their unions in Central America and more widely elsewhere in the world. In February, we received the following request for support for the Guatemalan Banana Workers Union, and we are grateful to Banana Link for permission to reproduce their appeal in the ENCA Newsletter.

From Banana Link

1st February 2022

SITRABI: Izabal Banana Workers' Union

In February this year Banana Link wrote to its supporters about its work with trade unions in banana plantations to ask if they could afford a small donation to help the SITRABI union in Guatemala celebrate their 75th anniversary this year. It was the first ever union in the country's private sector and has held strong against all types of pressure and violence

What SITRABI would like to do is to publish a booklet that collects together the history of the union, its struggles and achievements. But to do so, they require some funds.

As you might know, Guatemala has been described as the most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists by the International Trade Union Confederation. Since 2007, a total of 68 trade union leaders and representatives have been murdered, and a high number of attempted murders, kidnappings, break-ins, and death threats have been reported, along with torture. Eleven of the union's leaders were murdered between 2008 and 2012, including the

brother of then General Secretary Noé Ramírez.

That SITRABI has survived and continued their struggle over 75 years is testament to the courage and determination of their members and leadership.

The effectiveness of SITRABI in defending workers on plantations and achieving better pay and working conditions is also highlighted in a recent report - ***What Difference Does a Union Make?: Banana Plantations in the North and South of Guatemala*** – published by the Centre for Global Workers Rights. The report documents the stark comparisons between pay and working conditions on plantations in the unionised north of the country compared to the non-unionised south. This includes:

- Non-unionised workers earn less than half the hourly pay of unionised workers and work 12 hours per week more.
- Non-union workers are 81 percent more likely to face verbal abuse than union workers.
- 58 percent of women in non-union banana packing plants face sexual harassment at work

compared to eight percent of women at unionised packing plants.

You can read the report here:

<https://www.bananalink.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/What-Difference-Does-a-Union-Make-January-2021.pdf>

And listen to a podcast we recorded with the author of the report, Mark Anner, here:

<https://soundcloud.com/bananalink/podcast-what-difference-does-a-trade-union-make>

If you are able to make a donation to support the production of the booklet for the anniversary in March, you can do so online here:

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/help-sitrabi-celebrate-their-75th-anniversary>

The website of Banana Link, which also needs funds, can be found at: www.bananalink.org.uk

Paul Lievens
Policy & Communications Officer
Banana Link

MAKE FRUIT
FAIR!

Fair Supply Chains.
Decent Conditions.
Sustainable Development.

BananaLink 



New football stadium in San Salvador: Possible environmental damage?

By ENCA member Martin Mowforth



On 30 December 2021 Salvadoran president Nayib Bukele announced on Twitter that a new national stadium would be built in Antiguo Cuscatlán on land currently used by the Military School. He said the construction project would be with the direct collaboration of the president of China, Xi Jinping, although no mention was made of the costs involved.

Bukele indicated that the new stadium would have a seated capacity of 50,000 compared with the old Cuscatlán stadium's capacity of 34,000. President Bukele did not mention anything about the costs of the stadium construction, but it is expected to amount to \$500 million (USD).

The Salvadoran Ecological Unit (UNES), however, has expressed concerns about the project. Prime among these are:

- The production of a meaningful environmental impact assessment which would ensure that the project was not simply imposed on the people.
- The possible implications for water supply and the recharging of the water table – a covered stadium

surrounded by a concrete car park will reduce retention and diminish groundwater supplies

- The micro-climatic changes of temperature brought about in this area as a result of the building.
- Possible drainage and flooding problems in the low-lying area of the affected zone.

Luis González of UNES explained that this type of project has often given rise to environmental abuse in the areas affected by these 'developments', at a time when the country has so many other problems that should be prioritised. But he said: "We have a State that is incapable of responding to these needs, but which instead approves laws that privatise the provision of water in El Salvador."

Additionally the stadium will be built in a protected natural area, described as "the last important forest" of the metropolitan area of San Salvador. According to the Salvadoran media, Julio César Acosta, an expert in wildlife observation, says that the El Espino forest is characterized by a great diversity of flora and fauna,

including over 150 species of birds, two of which are seriously threatened with extinction: the yellow-headed parrot and the white-fronted parrot.

Construction is scheduled to start during 2022, but that seems especially optimistic given that there has not yet been a feasibility study or environmental impact study.

Sources

Karla Ramírez, 30.12.21, 'Anuncian la construcción de un nuevo estadio con donación de China en terreno de Escuela Militar', *La Prensa Gráfica*.

Verónica Martínez, 31.12.21, 'Ambientalistas temen daño medioambiental por construcción de nuevo estadio de fútbol', *La Prensa Gráfica*.

Rafal Zagrobelny, 15.01.22, 'El Salvador: Construction of the national stadium will start soon?' *StadiumDB.com*

A Glimpse of the Latin America Conference 2021

ENCA member Rita Drobner attended the annual Latin America Conference in London in December and we are grateful to her for providing us with a snapshot of at least one of the workshops at the conference – as below.

By ENCA member Rita Drobner

On Saturday 4th December the Latin America Conference 'Adelante' took place as a 'real conference' in London with several hundred participants. This was smaller than in previous years with notably fewer visiting speakers from Latin America and the Caribbean.

However, some distant speakers attended via video link, and Latin Americans already in country made up for the lack of travelling speakers. UK solidarity organisations and the Alborada Film Fest generated a rich programme of information and discussion.

Here is a summary of one workshop:

Workshop: After Cop26 – Climate Catastrophe and Radical Solutions

Excellent chaired by Jayne Fisher, an introduction on climate justice was provided by Jamie Peters from Friends of the Earth, which has groups in several Latin American countries.

In Copenhagen the target of global warming should have been adjusted to 1°C. Whilst global warming is moving towards a 2.7°C temperature increase, COP26 settles on a carbon trading let-off. Money being pledged in mitigation is unlikely to be delivered, whilst nations continue investments into fossil fuels into the future.

Brazil

Speaker Elda Cardoso was delayed in her arrival at the conference after being stopped by police who were looking for someone else, apparently looking like her – she pondered why cases of mistaken identity often occurred when involving black women like her As a speaker for the Brazilian Workers Party she stated that the international help that was pledged had not been delivered, and most urgently

help was required to remove President Bolsonaro from office. The indigenous people of the Amazon are trying to protect their land, of which they have already lost 30 per cent under Bolsonaro's presidency of land grabbing and deforestation.

Wendy Emmett from Cuba Solidarity Campaign reported on Cuba's climate mitigation programme. **Cuba** produces 0.008 per cent of the world's carbon emissions, but as an island nation has 50 per cent of its population at risk.

Cuba has already suffered from climate change to the extent that the island has been re-classified from 'wet tropical' to 'dry tropical'. The rainfall pattern has changed to low frequency, but high volume of rainfall. Inland the crops that can now be cultivated are changing from wet tropical to arid tropical.

Current sea level rises have led to salination of drinking water and loss of agricultural land.

The Cuban national climate mitigation programme is called 'Tarea Vida' (Project Life) and has been implemented since 2017.

The planting of mangroves serves as a hurricane barrier by protecting roads and other land infrastructure and also prevents the salination of coastal lowlands. The mangrove areas have markedly increased the coastal biodiversity. It has

been proven possible that planting and protecting the mangrove can co-exist with small scale commercial shrimp farming.

Coastal communities are being consulted and moved further inland where appropriate. After the last extreme hurricane season, coastal communities understand 'at risk'.

The economic blockade has a negative effect on Cuba's manufacture and use of green technology. For example, the blockade impacts on Cuba's ability to import and trade solar panels and other technology that cannot be fabricated in country.

Javier Sánchez reported from **Bolivia**, a country which is particularly rich in biodiversity. From tropical lowlands to the peaks of the Andes, Bolivia comprises >>



Cont...

12 different biological systems. All areas suffer from extreme weather events. Winds of 100 mph, hailstorms in tropical areas, floods and droughts are becoming ever more frequent.

Bolivia's glaciers have shrunk, and the world's highest ski resort (in Chacaltaya, 5300 metres above sea level) melted down in 2009.

Under president Evo Morales Bolivia developed alternatives to the market-based environmental policy. Oxfam applauded Bolivia's vision for sustainable development. Bolivia recognised Earth rights in law, as most Bolivians consider Pacha Mama (Mother Earth) as living, therefore being granted full rights for protection.

Bolivians continue their sustainable way of life and plan for an increased energy sovereignty through biofuels and energy generation from urban and agricultural waste.

By contrast to the Bolivian position, COP26 promoted a neo-colonial environmental policy. Bolivia rejects the capitalist climate trading and market-based carbon off-set schemes.

Asad Rehman from War on Want summed up on COP26:

"COP26 is a catastrophe in betraying the past COP conferences"

COP26 is a betrayal of a vision for the future and of the movements which have programmes to mitigate against climate change and have alternatives to unjust capitalist approaches.

In Glasgow the UK sought to sacrifice the Global South for self-interest, continuing extractivism through running and profiting from mining companies in the South.



Join the ATC's 2nd Agri-Cultural Work Brigade in Nicaragua. This brigade will make contributions in two significant areas of the Sandinista Revolution: culture and agriculture. In addition to studying the history of art, theatre, music, agrarian reform, and farming, all grounded in the Sandinista Popular Revolution, delegates will get to work. There will be opportunities to contribute to ATC agroecological farms, and work on a collective art project to be announced. Come make music, art, and grow food with us!

Applications due: Sunday, April 10th, 2022 (email info.friendsatc@gmail.com for application)



This delegation is an introduction into Nicaragua's efforts to achieve food sovereignty through the experiences of the ATC. The delegation will visit local agroecological farms and rural communities growing food for the nation. Delegates will also have a chance to exchange with different popular sectors of society in order to understand Nicaragua's current context and struggle against US imperialism. This delegation will conclude celebrating the 43rd anniversary of the Sandinista Popular Revolution.

Applications due: Wednesday, May 12th, 2022 (email info.friendsatc@gmail.com for application)

SEED PRODUCTION IN GUNA YALA – A CHALLENGE WITH COVID

ENCA has helped support the Centre for Environmental and Human Development (CENDAH) in their work with indigenous Gunadule communities in Panama's Atlantic coast for several years. In 2020 ENCA provided funding for a 12 month project to raise awareness of climate change and biodiversity issues in the community of Mandi Ubgigandub (see summary of Final Report in ENCA 83). CENDAH's aim was to help community members understand the links between these environmental challenges and how they can better manage natural resources for healthy and sustainable livelihoods. In his [blog](#), Geodisio Castillo, CENDAH's director, reflects on the vital importance of indigenous seed production in this process, both in the short term, and in the longer term as a means for the Gunadule communities to achieve true food sovereignty, and looks at the various initiatives that have so far been taken (including ENCA's support), and what more can be done. Below is a summary of his blog, translated by ENCA member Jill Powis

Geodisio Castillo

Gubiler Blog

Translated by ENCA member Jill Powis

26 December 2021

Knowledge about native seeds is assuming increasing importance for the Gunadule communities. It is vital for ensuring agrobiodiversity in family farming. Produced by the farmers themselves, the aim should be to obtain seeds of native species, guaranteed in quality, which should have a high chance of success because they are adapted to their agroecosystems. Local and resilient seed systems are of great importance, because they lay the foundations for food sovereignty and security.

There is still a lot of work to be done to achieve this. Gunadule communities have been encouraged to increase food production during the COVID pandemic as these communities went into self-imposed lockdown. Producers made great efforts in the *nainugan* [traditional agroforestry plots], and there was strong intercommunity cooperation, for example, in exchanging seeds. Despite this, they found that the chief obstacle was the availability of seeds – there were simply not enough to continue sowing and growing crops. Nonetheless, their efforts showed that it was possible to increase production if there were greater support from the government.

It is true that there has been a government initiative, the Agro Vida programme, funded by MIDA (Ministry for Agricultural Development), which specifically targets family farmers in the poorest districts of Panama as part of a government anti-poverty drive. Agro Vida has been supporting the agriculture of the Gunadule people by providing tools and, vitally, a range of seeds to farmers, so they can produce their own, good quality food. Although this support is appreciated, it is also obvious that it has been inadequate to cover all 3,206 km² of the Comarca and its 51 communities.

To address the lack of seeds, the Gunadules themselves as small entrepreneurs contributed through Gunayala's two General Congresses. Support has also come from Gunadule NGOs, including CENDAH, which gave assistance to the communities of Yandub-Nargana and west Gardi, in collaboration with the IPCPG (Institute of the Guna People's Cultural Heritage) of the Onmaggeddummad Namaggaed (Guna Congress of Culture). This 'Breath of Life' initiative was sponsored by Cultural Survival, the international indigenous organisation, and finished at the end of December [2021].

CENDAH's other initiative, in collaboration with ENCA, was with

Olonagdiginya, the young farmers' organisation, based on the western edge of the Comarca, bordering the province of Colón, Santa Isabel district. Its focus was environmental conservation and education.

While the Gunadule have been struggling to cope with the impacts of COVID, both in Panama and elsewhere the pandemic has exposed and further entrenched inequalities between rich and poor and between the developed and developing worlds. This has given rise to calls for an inclusive and equitable green COVID recovery programme that puts climate, nature and development at its heart, to ensure that decades of development gains are not wiped out. The recovery process presents a crucial opportunity to focus global efforts on supporting communities to become more resilient and adaptable so they can respond to a variety of urgent threats today and in the future.

Nature-based food solutions are increasingly seen as a credible means of addressing this three-pronged agenda of climate, nature and development. Organisations such as the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation acknowledge that indigenous peoples are already prime practitioners in this, respecting and protecting Nabgwana – Mother Earth - as a living and sacred entity, >>



applying their ancestral knowledge and agroecology.

It is vital for Gunadule communities to devise their own strategies, not only to cope with the immediate impacts of the COVID pandemic, but to ensure food security and sovereignty on a permanent and sustainable basis. In 2020, COONAPIP (National Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Panama), which represents all seven of Panama's indigenous peoples, launched the "Agricultural Development Plan of Indigenous Peoples of Panama".

Gunayala has also developed its own 10-year strategy covering 2015 to 2025. Unfortunately, for various reasons, this has yet to be implemented. It is essential for the Gunadule to devise a specific strategy on seed production

and sovereign food security, with a vision to generate income for the family, through local marketing and, eventually, at the national level. Specific measures should include innovating agricultural techniques, storage

methods, savings plans, and access to markets: these are all strategies that farmers must learn to overcome crises, whether natural disasters, wars or pandemics. As part of this, local seed production systems should be strengthened and decentralized, in the drive towards natural food, free of agrochemicals.

It is hoped that this strategy will provide the foundation on which to build a framework for a range of public policies capable of adapting to changes and firmly rooted in the knowledge, culture and customs of the Gunadule nation. This is a task for all Gunadule, not just their General Congresses.

References

Geodisio Castillo. Rescatando semillas y plantas nativas en Gunayala
<http://gubiler.blogspot.com/2015/12/r>

[escatando-semillas-y-plantas-nativas.html](https://www.iied.org/green-recovery-covid-19-not-without-climate-nature-development-solutions)

International Institute for Environment and Development
<https://www.iied.org/green-recovery-covid-19-not-without-climate-nature-development-solutions>

Global Forest Coalition
<https://globalforestcoalition.org/forest-cover-61/>

FAO, Fondo Indígena, 2015. Sistemas alimentarios tradicionales de los pueblos indígenas de Abya Yala. [miskiyu, garífuna, mayangna, telpaneca]. Volumen II. La Paz, Bolivia. 216 p. [

NACLA (North American Congress on Latin America). Semillas de Esperanza en Tiempos Inciertos, <https://nacla.org/produccion-semillas-coronavirus>

PEGY, 2015. Gunayala 2025. Plan Estratégico de Gunayala - 2015-2025. "Hacia una gestión territorial". Congreso General Guna, Comarca Gunayala, Panamá. 112 p. + Anexo A: Programa PAC (InfoIDKY/Rev. 7)

Renewing your membership

Over the last year PayPal updated their account settings to meet new banking regulations. This meant that many individuals and organisations were required to provide additional identification and verification to keep their account active. While ENCA has updated our account, we have noticed that many of our members have not. Where a member's PayPal account has not been updated we have not been able to receive your membership funds.

The small membership we charge helps to cover the cost of this newsletter, but more importantly all the small fees add up quickly enabling us to support community and environmental work such as that carried out by CENDAH. We would be grateful if could check your PayPal account and ensure it is updated so that we are able to take your membership fee. Alternatively you may like to change to paying your donation by standing order.

Option 1

Login to PayPal.com and ensure you have added all the required proof of identity. If your payments have stopped already you may need to set them up again via enca.org.uk/join

Option 2

Pay your membership by standing order to the following account:
 Name: ENCA, Number: 29849897 sort code: 05-02-00
 Membership costs and more information is listed at enca.org.uk/join



The Dream Lives On! Victor Jara Festival

5 - 7 AUGUST 2022
Y PLAS, MACHYNLLETH, WALES, SY20 8ER



"Political and cultural solidarity at its very best"
Dr. Francisco Dominguez, Chilean academic and activist
Camping / B&B etc.



LATIN AMERICAN

**MUSIC, POLITICS, POETRY,
DANCE, SONG, FOOD & DRINK,
ART, FAMILY ACTIVITIES,
INSPIRATION!**

**MAIN THEMES : EL SALVADOR &
PEACE AND CLIMATE JUSTICE**

Details, Volunteering and tickets:
www.elsuenoexiste.com

enca.org.uk

 **@ENCA_News**

Meeting Dates 2022

Feb 27th | July 17th | October 16th

ENCA meetings are usually 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.

In light of COVID-19 meetings may have to be held online or in a hybrid format