



CCA(R)

Comissió Catalana
d'Ajuda al Refugiat

Internacional Seminar

**“One planet, one refuge:
Environmental rights, gender and covid19.
Land defense and violations of environmental
rights”**



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1. INSTITUTIONAL PRESENTATION

MARTA NIN – Marta Nin, director of the Casa América Catalunya Foundation

The Catalan Refugee Aid Commission and Taula x Mèxic have organised the conference “A single planet, a single refuge.” Both organisations work closely with Casa América, and every year they also count on the support of the City Council and the Barcelona Provincial Council in order to conduct projects like this seminar.

In the context of the central themes of this conference, we remember the Honduran environmentalist Berta Cáceres, who was assassinated on 3rd March 2016. Recently, a sentence classified as historic was released, whereby the executive director of a construction company that wanted to build a hydroelectric power plant in Lenca ancestral lands, was convicted as he was considered to be the intellectual co-author of the crime. Without yet knowing what penalty it will entail, it is a spark of hope for all those who are in any way involved in human and environmental rights in relation to the advancement of justice. Berta Cáceres’ case started a kind of revolution with a great deal of coverage in the international press and many defenders were shocked by how far these fighting voice had reached. Even so, murders of people defending nature happen often and go unnoticed due to the lack of reporting of such events.

Casa Amèrica takes on and supports projects related to change. For instance, the activist and defender of environmental and human rights, Francia Márquez, received the Joan Alsina award in 2019, and said the following: “We are part of nature, we are not its owners”.

Society has been affected by the pandemic, experienced by everyone to a greater or lesser degree. Among the proven causes of the pandemic are deforestation, farming, extensive cattle ranching and the loss of biodiversity. Society must become aware of the notable risk posed to humanity by what is happening in areas such as the Amazon or Greenland. The World Health Organisation points out that environmental problems cause thirteen million deaths per year, a number that probably does not include the deaths of environmental defenders. A total of 250,000 deaths will be due to climate change between 2030 and 2050. These disconcerting figures should lead us to increase information and channel it into different narratives in order to raise awareness, essential for change

The 2020 Joan Alsina Award was given to the Brazilian indigenous communication platform Milla India for disclosing the struggle of the native peoples of the Brazilian Amazon, threatened by the hardships of Covid19 and who condemn environmental violations and the violent, uncontrolled destruction of natural resources, their natural habitat. Under the Bolsonaro government, policies defending human rights have been forgotten, while the indigenous people of the 21st century raise their voices as Brazilian citizens.

Forceful climate change turns people into climate refugees, having been forcibly displaced for environmental reasons. The shared responsibility of Northern Global States, the role of companies and specifically the indigenous communities should all be studied. The 2030 Agenda approved by the UN in favour of sustainable development is being worked on in spheres of influence, bringing together actions that aim to improve the lives of everyone. The Agenda emphasizes: Leave no one behind. A meaningful change would be that everyone believes that no one should be left behind.

ESTEL-LA PAREJA – Director of the Catalan Refugee Aid Commission

The CCAR wants to thank Casa América Catalunya, Taula per Mèxic, the Barcelona Provincial Council and the Barcelona City Council for the funding of the Project and this conference. I’d also like to thank all our peers who conduct a variety of projects related to the defence of Human Rights and the Earth, the fight against climate change and the analysis of its link to forced displacement of people around the world. In addition, thanks to Oriol Esteve together with Eunice Elenes, who are responsible for this event taking place.

The climatic urgency that is beginning to be noticed in The Global North has given rise to talking about issues which should have been spoken about a long time ago. As an organisation that works in the defence of asylum and migrants, the CCAR’s goal is not only to work in humanitarian assistance, but also to have an ideological and political approach in the defence of human rights.



Inequalities are not accepted as irrefutable facts that cannot be changed.

The struggle is to understand what forced displacement is and what drives people to leave their homes and travel so far away, crossing continents, seas and oceans in search of a life. Workshops and seminars are organised to analyse the causes of these forced displacements with the aim of trying to reverse them. Knowing the why can help to change the situation. In the case of climate change, raising awareness and bringing it to a stop are sought as well as finding legal solutions to broaden the possibility of defending displaced people's rights.

The gender perspective is fundamental in this analysis and the task that governments have with regards to national and international companies. Thanks to the experts taking part, human and environmental rights defenders, all women. The academic perspective is important in the analysis of the causes of displacements, but so is listening to the voices of those affected, many of whom are in exile and in complicated situations defending the right to life, water and land.

ANTONI MONTSENY – Director of International Relations of the Barcelona Provincial Council

Thanks to the CCAR and Casa América for organising this event. The Barcelona Provincial Council is trying to give a voice to the 2030 Agenda, climate change and the impact of migratory movements, a great challenge internally, above all from the point of view of human rights. There is not enough talk about what is behind the violation of human or environmental rights. Identifying responsibilities and developing defence mechanisms must be revealed to allow the creation of solutions.

Society is increasingly concerned about the environment. Local administrations are committed to local cooperation policies, promoting citizen awareness and responsibility, supporting the defenders fighting against those responsible and injustices. It is key to listen to testimonies at these conferences. Recognising their commitment and task should not only fall on those in this field, but also be more widespread and made more known.

EUNICE ELENES – Head of the Temporary Reception Program for Women Human Rights' Defenders at TAULA X MÈXIC

Taula x Mèxic was born in the spring of 2016 to help build peace and protect human rights in Mexico by serving as a point of connection between institutions, supporters and organisations directly from Barcelona. The seminar is important to deal with the human rights' violations that have been taking place in recent times. There has been a lot of dispossession and forced displacement in the last decade and the resulting struggle mainly affects women. Thus, it is essential to give them a voice, both those participating today and those who are on the ground.

The organisation vindicates the work of our counterparts in Mexico, the organisations that defend, spread the word and support people. The violence being committed is also directly affecting these defence organisations, many of whom have been victims in recent years.

Mexico is seen as a tropical paradise with whom Spain and the European Union share many economic interests. We give thanks to the local and Catalan governments for their courage to support the struggle, as very few governments do so.



2. THE CURRENT CONTEXT OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS.

MIGUEL PAJARES – CCAR President

There has been a level of natural destruction for decades that had never occurred before, at least for sixty-six million years, since the asteroid fell on Mexico and everything was filled with dust, leaving 75% of species extinct. Since then, there has not been a level of destruction like the one we humans are causing. The chemical composition of the oceans is changing. Warming waters are destroying coral reefs, killing many species of fish, and fishing corporations conduct an absolutely unsustainable level of overfishing. In a few decades, fishing will plummet, because large forms of sea life reproduction will have been destroyed

On land, forests are being destroyed at a tremendous rate. According to UN data, between 2015 and 2030, 150 million hectares of forest will have been destroyed, that is the equivalent area of Spain, France and Portugal, comparable to thirty-eight thousand football fields every day.

This destruction means the displacement of people, a consequence of certain businesses, mainly livestock and industrial agriculture, such as palm oil. Those responsible are large corporations that, despite signed agreements, continue with their expansion agenda that not only destroys the forests, but also the soil itself, becoming less and less fertile due to the use of fertilisers. This also causes displacement.

Hydroelectric plants and the oil industry destroy territories and populations. Open pit industrial mining over large areas of land destroys land and pollutes rivers and the seas, where a type of cytoplant has developed as a consequence of the fertilisers used in expansive agriculture. This makes it impossible for other life forms to develop.

In short, an important level of environmental damage causes displacement among people, who are called “environmental migrants” and “people displaced by environmental factors.” Many move to other parts of the country, generally suburban areas and others are forced to cross borders. It is important to mention that most displacements due to environmental factors are internal or occur between neighbouring countries; not all involve long distances.

What is more, we must include climate change, also the result of human activities and greenhouse gases emitted

since the beginning of industrialisation by burning coal, oil and later gas. The development of the capitalist system has led to the accelerated consumption of fossil fuels and gas emissions, intensifying climate change and generating an impact that destroys habitats.

The Sahara Desert is expanding southwards, taking over areas of the Sahel one metre further south per day. All deserts are expanding. Desertification has doubled its pace in recent decades. Crops and pastures have lower yields because the temperature is no longer ideal, especially in tropical areas where most of the world’s population lives. The average annual temperature had remained around 14° globally, but now it has risen to one degree higher, which is no longer suitable for agriculture. If crops and pastures do not produce enough, populations move to other territories where they can come into conflict with the original communities of that territory.

There are also displacements due to environmental factors that have nothing to do with human activity, such as natural disasters like volcanic eruptions, tsunamis or earthquakes. However, these do not make up the majority of cases.

For all people internally displaced as well as migrating abroad, rights must be established. For now, internationally they have few rights and are not considered to be refugees. I believe that they should have the right to international protection because they are victims, a concept that is linked to the right to international protection. They are victims of some governments who are either personally responsible or who empower large corporations.

After years of mandatory climate agreements and treaties, such as the Kyoto Protocol or the Paris Agreement, the objective to reduce greenhouse emissions to curb climate change has not been met. Emissions have risen by 60% since 1992.

People who flee as a result of this are deserving of international protection and progress must be made in recognition of their rights.



3. **FORCED DISPLACEMENT DUE TO THE VIOLATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE.**

**LÍGIA DE AQUINO BARBOSA - Mexican
Commission for the Defence and Promotion
of Human Rights**

The Mexican Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights has supported people who have suffered the consequences of serious human rights violations, homicides, disappearances and torture for more than thirty years. In 2014, a dedicated work area was established to provide care for internally displaced people, people without any protection nor programs nor regulations nor policies of any kind. The main aim was to make this issue more visible in order to try to generate a centralised information base that did not exist. The Mexican Government recognised the existence of internal displacement in 2019, and since then, our work has focused more on promoting the participation of the displaced population and on finding measures that provide them with real solutions.

Analysis and diffusion of the different types and dynamics of mass displacements is conducted, especially those due to violent events or natural disasters. The media is constantly being checked for such cases. Other lines of work include supporting legal cases and conducting advocacy work to bring about government responsibility.

The lack of information has its own set of challenges, such as identifying the impact from a gender point of view. If it is already difficult to find information about internal displacement, it is even more so for that involving women and the LGBTBI community

There have been dozens of initiatives creating regulations and legislation around internal displacements, recognised internationally by the United Nations. Even so, people displaced due to environmental factors are often called natural disaster “victims” in Mexico. There are programs that provide assistance, but only in areas of housing and basic needs, leaving out the psychosocial impact, health, political participation etc. Without taking into account their protection as a whole, people are left neglected. In order to design and implement appropriate action, it is necessary to have as much infor-

mation as possible.

Two main elements are recognised in determining whether a person is internally displaced: the involuntary nature of the displacement and that no border has been crossed. This implies that the person is not subject to legislation and regulations developed in matters of international protection and the action remains in the hands of the government itself. This results in greater vulnerability for those left out of refugee resources and programs.

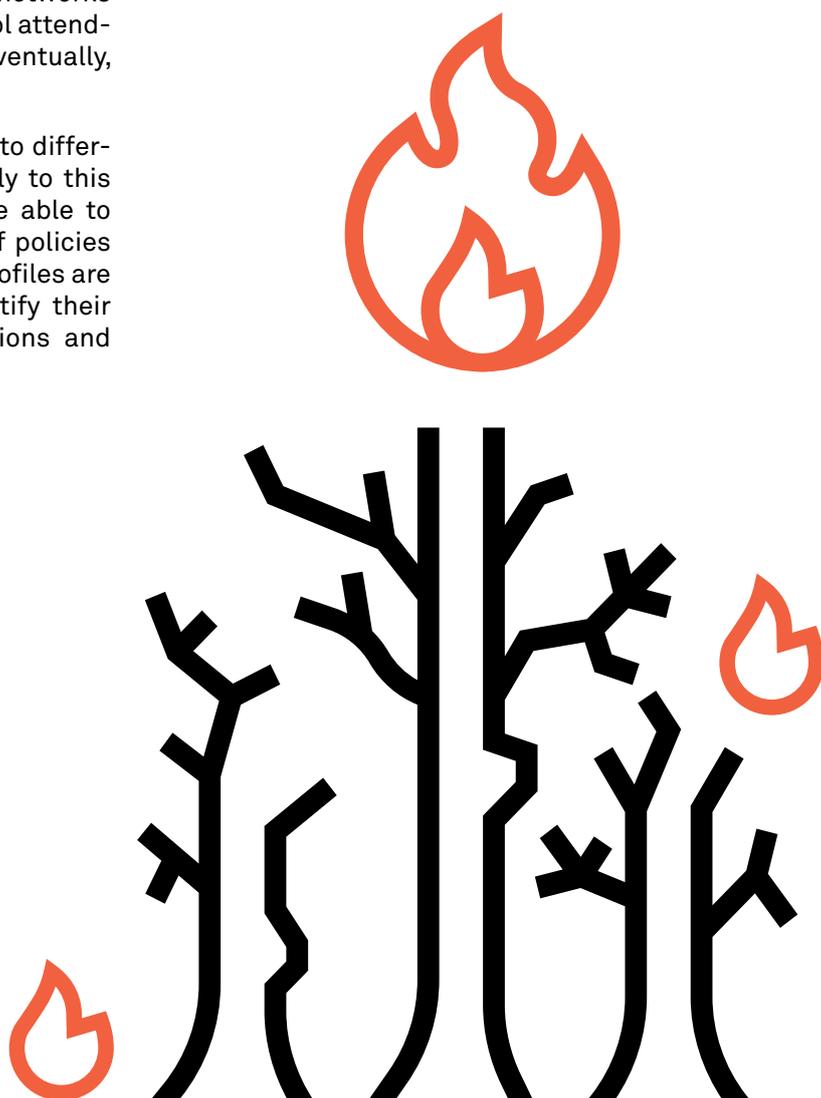
Migratory movements are caused by multiple factors, and it is increasingly difficult to explain the reasons. Several factors acting together, causes and combined phenomena that are exceedingly difficult to separate, end up driving population displacement. Structural inequalities have to be taken into account: the same cause may not force a population to move if they have the resources to resist, adapt and avoid it. But the most vulnerable population does not have them. This lack of resources, together with the lack of support, can lead to conflict as they are displaced to unsafe areas where they may have to leave once again.

Forced displacement constitutes in itself an infringement of human rights: it does not respect the right to the freedom of movement and to choose the place of residence. Other rights come into play and are in danger, such as the right to food or adequate housing, infringements with a humanitarian impact both in the short and long term. To determine whether a person has overcome the situation of their displacement, the following criteria were developed: an adequate standard of living, personal and public safety, access to employment, housing and subsistence, free information, and effective remedies for justice and reparation, among others. The consequences of displacement are linked to the aforementioned structural inequalities, aggravating displacement according to pre-existing vulnerabilities.

There is a lack of specialised and representative information to analyse internal displacement from a gender perspective. In some studied contexts, there is a higher proportion of unemployment among displaced women. The migratory event disrupts routine and social organisation and, responding to gender roles, many women will have to dedicate themselves to housework without being able to return to their jobs. With greater difficulty in accessing the formal labour market, they engage in other informal jobs subject to exploitation, thus generating an impact on their safety. On many occasions, family and community ties are lost. Women, girls and the LGBTI population are more exposed to general violence as well as gender violence, labour and sexual exploitation, and crime, possibly without any support networks to report such incidences.

Health care services are insufficient and more so if it is specialised care. Many do not have access to information, there is a higher level of unwanted pregnancies among the displaced population and mental health problems abound. School attendance is affected, and girls dropping out of school is disproportional. It must be remembered that many depend on schooling for access to health care and food. Their support networks can also be found at school and a drop in school attendance can determine their life projects and, eventually, their mental health.

We need to have proven information, adapted to different contexts in order to respond appropriately to this phenomenon. Displaced populations must be able to get involved and participate in the creation of policies related to their situation so that all affected profiles are represented. They themselves can best identify their needs based on experience and offer solutions and build just alternatives.





4. THE CASE OF THE PHILIPPINES: FORCED DISPLACEMENT DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLATIONS.

CZARINA MUSNI - Lawyer and Human Rights Defender

NUPL (National Union of People's Lawyers), an association of lawyers, law students, paralegals and human rights activists, works in the defence and promotion of people in the field of civic, political, social, economic and cultural rights. It provides free legal aid to marginalised, oppressed and vulnerable sectors, to people who have less in life and should have more in the law. Indigenous populations, fishermen, farmers, youth, women, people without resources and also defenders of the environment.

Environmental defenders are those individuals and organizations who, in their personal or professional lives, fight for the protection and promotion of rights related to the environment, including land, air, water, flora and fauna. Our line of work is always committed to them. Although the right to a clean and healthy environment is recognised throughout the world in international instruments, its application is a challenge and its defence is a long-suffering struggle throughout The Global South, especially by indigenous populations.

In the Philippines, the indigenous population is facing so-called "development aggression," a term that refers to "development" projects, such as extractive mining, the construction of dams on rivers or the implementation of ecotourism projects; industries that destroy their territories and social structures. For example, abusive fishing dangerously hinders the subsistence of the fishing population, not only in the Philippines but in many other corners of the globe, where fishermen have been deprived of access to marine resources. Farmers, on the other hand, fight for an agrarian reform against the excessive exploitation of their soils and the distribution of land.

In the Philippines, there is the phenomenon called "red-tagging." The government administration flags people if it considers them to be insurgents. When indigenous people, fishermen or farmers demand more rights, they are automatically flagged. This means that there will be more attacks on freedom and safety. Surveillance, violence and the risk of being charged with criminal charges has intensified, such as illegal possession of weapons, theft, in addition to being kidnapped or murdered. In 2019, forty-six murders were reported, and the Philippines was declared the most dangerous area for environmental defenders. At

least 157 cases have been counted since 2016, of which fifty-seven have been executed by the police, military and paramilitary units. The security forces have been financed to assassinate people who defend some 540,625 hectares of fertile land and about 650,000 hectares of forest areas.

According to Joan Carling, a Filipino indigenous activist, the pandemic has allowed for easy monitoring and targeting of the environmental defenders, because they cannot move, meet or continue their work. They are in greater danger than before. This situation leads to a choice of poisons: to die because of the planetary crisis, the pandemic or the government. But this situation will not stop the fight, rather it will provide strength to continue on.

Is it a crime to defend and protect ancestral territories and natural resources? Is it a crime to fight to house people without resources? Is it a crime to back education? The regressive mechanisms that we suffer are reasons to organise, mobilise and fight against adversity. We have seen positive results from global actions and movements in the defence of human and environmental rights and improvements in legislative mechanisms, but we have much more to do.

To have justice and peace, responsibility is necessary so that future generations learn that if there is a crime, there will be a consequence; that there will be no place for impunity. No one is against progress or development, but rather the change that happens at the expense of rights, the land and future generations.

The fight for human rights and the land must continue because we fight for people and for what is fair.

5. THE CASE OF MEXICO: FORCED DISPLACEMENT DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLATIONS.

KAREN TAXILAGA - Defender of the Environment and the Rights of Indigenous People

Having been forced to leave her community, Karen Taxilaga is part of a program that protects defenders and journalists. Her family's life and hers are at risk. In Mexico, justice unfortunately does not exist for defenders. She has been fighting in the defence of 1,890 hectares of communal lands for fifteen years, where the largest water table in the central area of the country is located. A fight against the irrigation of sewage from Mexico City on this water table that is already in the most contaminated area. The wastewater from Mexico City goes to the crops, which ironically return to the city to be consumed.

After being forced to leave the country, Taula x Mèxic provided her with assistance in Barcelona, but she had to return to Mexico where there is increasing violence. Many acquaintances have been killed or their whereabouts is unknown. It is a dreadful situation. They hoped that with the new government things would change, but they have not shown any interest yet, not even in climate change, which is ultimately what moves the population to fight. Without taking care of the water tables, within a short time there will be no more resources. In addition, pollution has aggravated the health of the community, with diseases and cancer. We are losing hope. In demonstrations, the participants end up under arrest, the petitions go nowhere and if there is a trial, it is null and void. Today it is impossible to defend values and principles.





6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION.

CAROLINE ZICKGRAF - Hugo Observatory

The broad umbrella that is human mobility covers both voluntary and forced migration, and it is essential to understand that climate change does not act alone. It is a threat multiplier that depends on vulnerabilities and inequalities.

When relating climate change to migration, we have to take into account its impacts, such as desertification, rising temperatures or sea levels. Climate variability does not sound like something dramatic, but it has a significant impact on people's migration decisions: you will have to move to another place if your lands are not sustainable, predictable or do not provide resources.

When it comes to migration and climate change, many figures are shared, the numbers are omnipresent. It is known that, due to natural disasters, there have been 318 million internal displacements. The main cause: flooding. In the case of conflicts, in 2020 alone there were forty-five million internally displaced persons. The migratory consequences of disasters are greater. The numbers that have an impact in The Global North are high and create a sense of invasion, but most movements are actually internal. These figures that speak of climate refugees are normally used to scare people and not to motivate in the fight against climate change. There will be more borders, more security and more problems for migrants.

The numbers do not reflect cases such as the fishing community of Saint-Louis in Senegal. What impact does migration have on them? It is a multi-risk area that faces flooding, rising sea levels, salinisation of soils and coastal degradation. This causes fish to migrate, leaving the population unable to continue living from their livelihood.

It is necessary to think about habitability in future scenarios that could arise with respect to climate change. Not such future scenarios. It is about preparing for tomorrow because today is already happening. Instead of being focused on how much the sea level will rise, we should focus on what will happen in our societies, how it will affect us and how we will react. People often talk about places that will be uninhabitable and will lead to mass migrations, but what does this really mean? Will it

be irreversible? How will it affect us socially?

Research should be done from the point of view of people's experiences, without forgetting those who are invisible. The belief that if all is well, you do not move is not true. People move for several reasons, but the most marginalized sectors suffer the greatest consequences, they do not have the choice to flee.

Migration is not the result of a failure to adapt, but it can be a form of adaptation, it can be a good thing. Cities play a significant role and are often left out of the debate. They are key places for migration and sustainability. There must be a system to reduce the vulnerability of migrants, who should be involved and allowed to share their experience and knowledge. It would be beneficial to everyone. Instead of waiting for something to be done from above, the population must speak out and take action. Climate change is unfair, but our response does not have to be.



7. THE CO-RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GLOBAL NORTH STATES IN ERADICATING THE CAUSES OF FORCED DISPLACEMENTS DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS.

**MARIA JULIETA LAMBERTI - Head of
Research, PODER**

The Project on Organisation, Development, Education and Research (PODER) works for the transparency and accountability of companies from a human rights perspective, collaborating with affected communities and organisations.

The states and companies of The Global North bear a great deal of responsibility for forced displacement due to environmental factors, caused by mega-projects, such as the construction of thermoelectric plants, the extraction of hydrocarbons or invasive fishing.

In the south-eastern region of Mexico, there is a particular case that PODER has studied and monitored for the last two years. It is the Mayan Train, a megaproject financed with public money and whose construction involves various companies from The Global North.

The project was proposed before López Obrador became the president. In March 2019, the companies that would start the project began to be hired. In the process of consultation with indigenous communities who could be potentially affected, there were multiple irregularities. The right to free and informed consent of these communities was not respected. In July 2020, the first three railway sections were built, and a report was presented on the environmental impact on the lands involved, but the project continues.

The objective of the Mayan Train is to generate development and tourism in the region, but in reality, it is a territorial planning project that will involve the mobilisation of the affected population. Initially, electric trains with less polluting effect were going to circulate, but this has not been guaranteed and some will run on fuel. The construction of eighteen stations and twelve stops has been planned in “sustainable communities” called “development poles”, a development that will involve forced displacement. Its cost is a little more than six billion euros.

It is striking that 70% of the train's income will come

from freight transport and a third of this percentage will be for the transport of fossil fuels. In fact, despite being a tourist train, the route, origin and destinations of the train have not yet been published.

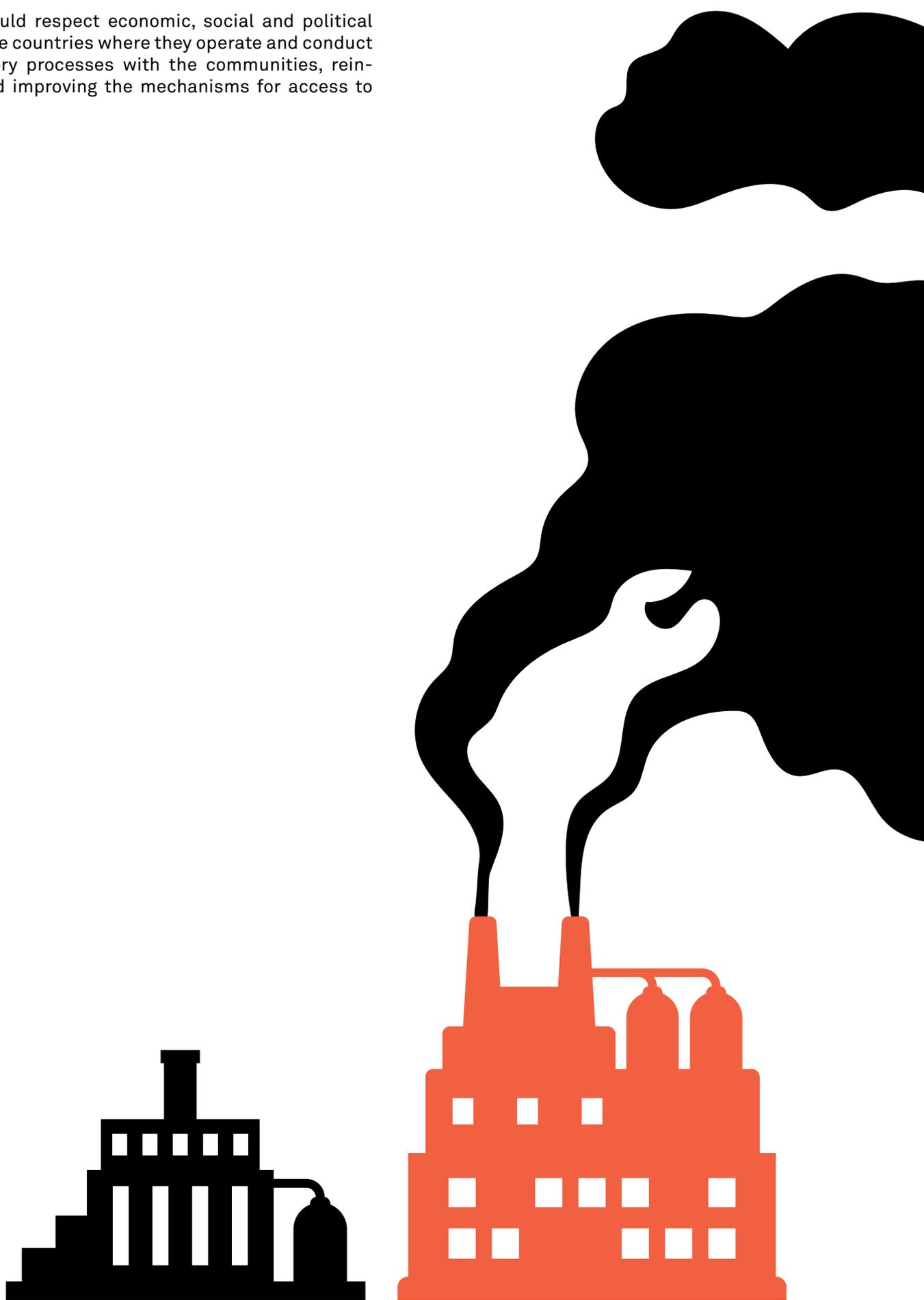
Who will benefit from this project? Some companies of Mexican origin, but mostly multinational and transnational companies from the United States, Canada, Spain and other countries, such as Acciona, Tipsa, Iberia Group or Sener. More than two billion euros have been invested in contracts and 70% have been awarded directly without a public tender. The army is also involved in construction.

It is not a project that promotes greater mobility and communication, but one of clear territorial planning. It is the basis for a development model directly related to extractivism: there are more than seventy energy generation projects around the roads, companies that will benefit by lowering the costs of personnel mobility and the transfer of raw materials and fuels using the train. The construction of six gas pipelines is also expected along its route. This intensive use of the land will cause the indigenous people to have to sell or rent their ancestral lands, making agriculture, their main source of income, difficult.

The world's largest fund manager, BlackRock, has invested the most money. Larry Fink, CEO of these funds, says that his company is committed to the principles of governance and sustainability, that it promotes responsible projects and defends human rights, yet invests in projects that do not comply with such principles.

Projects like this give strength to groups of companies with foreign capital that operate in areas where there is a strong abandonment of communities by the authorities and are responsible for current and future effects. Companies and countries of The Global North, as citizens and defenders of human and environmental

rights, should respect economic, social and political rights in the countries where they operate and conduct participatory processes with the communities, reinforcing and improving the mechanisms for access to justice.





8. LEGAL SUPPORT FOR FORCED DISPLACEMENT DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS.

**GABRIELA CARREÓN AND GISELLE
GARCÍA - CEMDA**

Since 1993, the Mexican Centre for Environmental Law (CEMDA in Spanish) has provided legal support for environmental defence processes and displaced persons.

The definition given by the International Organisation for Migration to “displacement for environmental reasons” is: “people or groups of people who, mainly due to a sudden or progressive change in the environment, which adversely affects their lives or living conditions, are forced to leave their usual place of residence, or they choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and move within the country or abroad.” (IOM, 2014: 13). This definition is a nice way of talking about dispossession. This displacement is not voluntary, people have not wanted to leave the place where they were born and where their family is, and there are several causes that come together in this decision.

The main problems are mining, the expansion of large tourism projects, the misuse of water, the overexploitation of industrial agriculture, soft drinks and breweries, megaprojects that not only go along one of these lines but rather a combination and are located in areas of high biodiversity importance.

In Mexico, there is a problem of normalising violence. The socio-environmental violence generated by dispossession goes hand in hand with structural, symbolic and physical violence. There are three hundred socio-environmental conflicts in the country that mainly affect indigenous people and peasants, 50% more cases in the last three years. This rise has to do with the generalised violence in the country, a result of dispossession and social inequality. There has been a clear decrease in State intervention, especially in terms of budgets, since environmental expenditures are lower, but not investment in oil matters or in the armed forces.

Indigenous peoples, with their close relationship to nature and trying to protect everyone, have suffered from discrimination for a long time. In 2011, there was a human rights reform that recognised multiculturalism at the institutional level and the original ownership of the land and access to its natural resources by indigenous people, primary protectors of territory and diversity. The

right to information, justice and free and informed prior consultation was recognized in the Escazú Agreement in 2018. But the reality is different, taking a toll economically, emotionally, personally and in terms of community.

People end up leaving their territories because their way of life is altered, they are vulnerable due to their lands being occupied and the consequences of the industries being set up there, such as having health problems.

For legal purposes, for now, the causal link between climate change and the effect on communities is not easily applicable, although it is something that is increasingly being debated. Regarding legal support, there are several defences available by reporting the systematic violation of human rights, such as access to a dignified life, natural resources, health, work, education. For example, the so-called Amparo Trial, a human rights defence trial whereby the complainant has to prove the infringement of any of those abovementioned rights in their statement.

CEMDA conducts research, public policy and consultations, and organises dialogues where we meet with communities to exchange knowledge on legal issues, the environment and their relationship with the territory.



9. ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF COMPANIES IN THE GENERATION OF FORCED DISPLACEMENTS DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS.

LEIRIA VAY - Defender of the Environment and the Rights of Indigenous People CODECA

Leira Vay has been in Barcelona since March with a Basque defenders' protection program. There has been a wave of repression, criminalisation and persecution of the CODECA movement. Twenty leaders of the movement have been assassinated. Their struggle is vilified and stigmatised, and they are considered to be criminals. That is why they want to show the reality of the situation and meet other organisations to create support networks.

There are terms that seem to be used without being clear about their meaning, such as the concept of development. In 1996, a peace agreement was signed, but unfortunately that peace did not come, and circumstances have not changed. It was said that Guatemala was an underdeveloped country, and there was talk that it was going to develop, and the population agreed. However, they were not talking about the same thing: for some it was development, for others it was looting.

Development has brought the destruction of Mother Earth to Guatemala, property hoarding, labour overexploitation, greater poverty and repression, and now also criminalisation and persecution.

It was believed that things were going to improve, but the State signed an agreement that turned out to be a strategy to be able to loot the country, silence the people and strengthen the neoliberal system by opening the doors to transnational companies and extractive projects that destroy Mother Earth. They say that the people were consulted, but it is not true. They have silenced the indigenous communities; they have impoverished them. They can no longer wear their clothes and they are told that for that reason, they are no longer indigenous. In addition, those affected by hydroelectric projects do not have hydroelectric power.

The agrarian conflict resulted in an armed conflict that served to continue enslaving people. Farmers with lands that were no longer arable sold them at exorbitant prices to the peasants, who with great eagerness contracted loans to acquire them, only to discover their worthlessness and remain in debt. A team of 117 re-

searchers collected data from 906 farms and it turned out that they had become the property of a single sugar mill. Who is this development for?

It also confuses the word "influence", which became trendy at the signing of the peace agreement. "Speak up and influence" they said. However, the result of the proposed laws will never respond to the people's interests, but only to those of big capital. They change the content of the proposal, leaving the same name, thereby confusing the communities.

The big problem of indigenous peoples and rural communities is that they are seen as poor people who do not think and are merely cheap labour. People without human rights whose problems are never resolved. Mother Earth is a resource, not a good. And it is also subject to rights, it is the source of life!

The fight for human rights depends on those of Mother Earth. The main challenge is not to change governments, but to conduct structural transformations.

Who is responsible for the environmental damage? The big transnationals that destroy everything, not those who cook with wood and do not have stoves.

They fumigate the lands and the communities, they pollute the rivers without taking into account that the towns are left without water to drink nor to irrigate their crops, and they force them to buy so-called "pure water." Mechanisms that clearly show that nowadays the economy is worth more than people and life.

10. THE COLLECTIVE CASE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE: FORCED DISPLACEMENT DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLATION.

**SUSANA DE LA CRUZ - Human Rights
Defender**

The implementation of megaprojects results in the death of many people and causes countless forced displacements along with paramilitarism, a mechanism for the eradication of Zapatismo implemented by the government. A deployment of forces not authorized by the community generates a lot of confrontation.

There have been many unfortunate events recently. Simón Pedro, a human rights defender who gave voice and visibility to the situation, was murdered in public and in the presence of his son, by a person who shot him from a motorcycle. These crimes go unpunished because they are related to organised crime and, therefore, justice does not intervene. Defenders are left in a highly vulnerable situation, being watched and threatened with death. In recent months, more than two thousand people have been displaced, many are refugees in the mountains without minimal conditions of food or medical care, including children and elderly, and the government has no will to solve this.

Defending territories and human and environmental rights brings with it danger, arrests and torture, imprisonment and murders. They catch innocent people and make them sign documents that hold them responsible for crimes they did not commit. International observers documenting these cases have also been victims of this lack of safety. Life and safety are not guaranteed. There is no protection for defenders, their work is hampered.





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