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211 East 43rd Street, Room 1207, New York, NY 10017, USA
Tel/Fax: (212) 370-0075 www.unanima-international.org

Mining and Water

Mary Corbett, CND

Mary shares the UNANIMA International office and also represents both the CNDs and UNANIMA on several of the NGO Committees at the UN in New York.

I don't think Gregoria (who cannot give her full name for legal reasons), from the mountainous region of Guatemala, ever imagined she would be in London, England in October 2009. She most certainly was not there as a tourist but, together with women from Ecuador and Peru, for a meeting organized by LAMMP (Latin American Mining Monitoring Programme). There, these rural and indigenous women, living in communities affected by mining developments, raised awareness of gender issues related to the severe impacts of mining on their communities: loss of natural resources, including contamination or loss of water; health problems related to the presence of heavy metals and dust released into the environment by mining processes; the impact of mining on the social structure of such communities, including violence against women, prostitution and trafficking that can be part of the spiral of impoverishment from loss of land and access to natural resources; and the criminalization of the women if they legitimately resist what is being taken from them when a mine comes into their communities without their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

In the draft of our UNANIMA International Framework & Plan of Action on Water, we hold that "...access to life-giving water is a right for all life-forms on the planet." In the Mining Working Group of the NGO Committee on the United Nations International Decade of the Worlds' Indigenous Peoples, we are receiving many similar case examples from around the world. They too document effects of the absence of FPIC, which is enshrined in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

It is clear that while indigenous wisdom and now science confirm the profound interconnectedness of all creation, that relationship is greatly threatened and we must work to restore it.

Failure of UN Conference on Climate Change

Over and over again the Africa group negotiating at the UN Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen, repeated the statement: "Africa is very disappointed in what's on the

table in Copenhagen.” They told the negotiators and the observers in the plenary assemblies and in their press conferences. What is being promised cannot even ensure that the increase in global warming will not reach a cap of 2 degrees Celsius. We need a cap of no more than 1.5 degrees or the science estimates Africa's temperatures will increase by 3.5-4 degrees. Our continent will become a furnace. Our water will dry up and our agriculture will fail.



This illustrates the urgency felt by Africa and the small island states like Cape Verde and Tuvalu that the negotiations realize a fair, ambitious and legal binding outcome. Instead what came out of Copenhagen was an “accord” negotiated in secret by the United States under President Obama in which there were no commitments to reducing carbon emissions nor providing money to assist poor nations in their efforts to adapt climate change. Neither was there any mention of reducing emissions through the REDD forest management process – something that had been negotiated earlier in the Copenhagen meeting.

Those of us from the so-called developed world need to continue to exert pressure on our leaders to negotiate and seal a deal that can save our planet. For more information on the Convention including webcasts from many of the key players, see www.unfccc.int

A huge thanks to Louise Cleary, CSB

As most of you know Louise has been acting coordinator for the last six months while Catherine was on sabbatical. She has now returned to Australia. We wish her all the best and are in her debt for the fine work she has done in the last six months.

Brazil visit

Catherine will be in Sao Paulo, Brazil, from 18-26 January, 2010. She will be working with the SNJM from their Mission Sector and will share with them some of the outcomes of the UN Convention on Climate Change.

Commission on Social Development

From 2-12 February the 48th Session of the UN Commission on Social Development will take place in New York. As a part of their lobbying efforts for the commission, Louise for UNANIMA International and representatives of three other NGOs collated and prepared for publication a grass roots study on social integration. Once this is available we will post it on our UNANIMA web site.

Staff Changes

Amber Baker left the UNANIMA Staff at the end of November. Jessica Chen who has been with us for a year will increase her hours. Susan Weissert, the former director of the Maryknoll AIDS Task Force will join us temporarily for two days a week after the first of the year. We wish Amber well as she continues her career and welcome Susan.