FIRST PEOPLES WORLDWIDE
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Country Risk Alert: Philippines

The Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact has released a video featuring Indigenous women human rights defenders speaking about how "the government's economic policies of liberalization, privatization, and deregulation facilitate the massive encroachment and influx of various extractive industries into Indigenous Peoples' ancestral territories" in the Philippines. The loss of access to land and resources is compounded by the presence of militaries, paramilitaries, and other state sanctioned armed forces brought in to quell local resistance, and numerous community leaders have been killed or threatened for speaking out. Companies and projects mentioned include the Chico Dam, the Jaluar Dam, forestry concessions owned by ALSONS Logging Company, geothermal power plants owned by Chevron, and a host of other megaprojects that contradict the Philippines' laws requiring Free, Prior and Informed Consent from Indigenous Peoples.

Sources: Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact

Another Legal Victory for BC First Nations

In January 2016, the BC Supreme Court ruled that the provincial government breached its duty to consult First Nations when it gave the federal government sole authority over the environmental assessment process for Enbridge's proposed Northern Gateway Pipeline. This means the project, which obtained federal approval in 2014, must now apply for and obtain provincial approval as well, and that process must include consultation with First Nations along its planned route.

For consultation to be effective it must happen throughout project planning and implementation, not just at a single point in time. Indigenous Peoples' input is especially critical to decisions regarding the environmental assessment process.
Sources: Newswire

NGOs Call for EITI in Uganda

NGOs have started an online petition calling on Uganda to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in the wake of rising oil, gas and mining activity in the country. EITI is a global effort to enhance revenue transparency by requiring resource companies to disclose taxes paid to governments, and governments to disclose taxes received from resource companies.

Companies in Uganda should echo this request as a means of building bridges to civil society and mitigating social risk. Additionally, they should encourage Indigenous Peoples' participation, which many countries have failed to incorporate in their national EITI frameworks.
Sources: Change.org

Two More Legal Hurdles for Belo Monte

In December 2015, the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) opened a case against Brazil for human rights violations caused by Norte Energia's Belo Monte Dam. Affected communities filed the complaint in 2011 alleging "the absence of consultation and Free, Prior and Informed Consent, the lack of participation and adequate assessment of environmental impact, and the forced displacement and violations of the rights to life, health, integrity and justice." Following four years of review, the IACHR determined there is sufficient evidence to open the case.

A few weeks later, a Brazilian judge suspended the dam's operating license due to the company's failure to fulfill its promise to build a regional office of FUNAI, the Brazilian government agency tasked with managing Indigenous Peoples' issues.

These are the latest in a long series of legal hurdles against the Belo Monte Dam since the contract with Norte Energia was finalized in 2010. Although construction is nearing completion, the financial consequences of poor social risk management are likely to continue piling up as communities pursue redress for the dam's devastating impacts.
Sources: AIDA, Telesur

Sami Herders Resist Mining

Community opposition is mounting to Beowulf Mining's proposed Kallak Mine in northern Sweden. While some residents see mining as a much needed economic boost for the remote region, others-especially the Indigenous Sami reindeer herders-see a direct threat to their livelihoods. Sami leaders say the company's environmental management plan does not address the fact that large swaths of grazing grounds will be impacted or destroyed. The Mining Inspectorate of Sweden has deferred to the Swedish government to make a decision about the project because it cannot determine whether it will enable the Sami to continue herding at a manageable level.

If the project is approved it will likely open the floodgates for more mining on Sami lands, raising concerns about cumulative impacts. Sweden's recently released mining strategy seeks to triple the country's number of active mines from 16 to 47 by 2030.
Sources: Cultural Survival

Arctic Indigenous Leaders Call for Change

Arctic Indigenous leaders spoke at the opening session of the 2016 Arctic Frontiers Conference in Norway, where they called for changes in the way climate change in the Arctic is discussed. "Far too often when we talk about climate change in the Arctic, no mention is made of the peoples of the Arctic," said Vittus Qujaukitsoq, Greenland's Minister for Finance, Mineral Resources and Foreign Affairs. "The human dimension is all too often neglected as if the Arctic were a wildlife sanctuary without human inhabitants...used as a symbol for western conservation movements."

Aili Keskitalo, President of the Sami Parliament of Norway, criticized the widespread installation of wind turbines on Sami lands, which are destroying reindeer habitats and causing mental and financial issues for communities that rely on the animals to make a living.

Tara Sweeney, an Alaska Inupiat businesswoman who is Chair of the Arctic Economic Council, emphasized that they key to success is resource development in the Arctic that is guided and regulated by the Indigenous communities who live there. The Kvanefjeld uranium project in southern Greenland was cited as an example of this.
Sources: Alaska Dispatch News