Violence in Honduras

In March 2015, two leaders of the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), Berta Cáceres and Nelson Garcia, were assassinated within two weeks of each other. The murders are believed to be in retaliation for COPINH's ongoing resistance to various megaprojects that threaten their land, most notably Desarrollos Energético's (DESA) Agua Zarca Dam. Global Indigenous and civil society networks are calling for an independent investigation and protective measures for the victims' families and colleagues.

Following this news, two of the dam's largest investors, the Dutch and Finnish Development Banks, announced that they were suspending financing, and sending a delegation to Honduras to meet with affected communities and gain a full understanding of the situation. However, it should not have taken two murders to realize the risks associated with the project, as there is clear evidence that affected communities are opposed or at least divided. In 2013, Chinese engineering firm Sinohydro ended its involvement, citing "serious conflicts between [DESA and affected communities]...which were treated as unpredictable and uncontrollable to the contractor." Cáceres and other COPINH members were receiving numerous death threats, and Global Witness lists Honduras as the most dangerous country for environmental activists and human rights defenders. Other investors or contractors associated with the project include the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, COPRECA, Grupo Financiero Ficohsa, Siemens, USAID and Voith Hydro.

Sources: Business and Human Rights Resource Centre
**Mining Returns to Dongria Kondh**

The Dongria Kondh community in India has been forced to resume their battle against mining on their land. In 2014, the community made headlines when all twelve villages voted unanimously to expel Vedanta Resources from their sacred mountain, and the Supreme Court of India ruled that their decision must be respected. Now, Survival International reports that the Odisha state government is "petitioning for the right to hold another referendum for the Dongria to pave the way for a large scale mining operation, this time by a state run mining company." Survival also alleges that Vedanta Resources remains active in the area, having "opened a bauxite refinery close to the Dongria's hills without having secured permission to mine in the area. Even though the mine itself was quashed, the refinery has continued to operate at a loss."

Sources: [Survival International](#)

**Settlement Reached for Brazil Disaster**

In March 2016, BHP Billiton and Vale reached a deal with the Brazilian government to pay $5.27 billion in damages for a November 2015 tailings breach at the Samarco mine, which killed 19 people, left hundreds homeless, and caused what some say is the worst environmental disaster in the country's history. Prosecutors criticized the deal for favoring the companies, and failing to "guarantee the proper clean up and payment of damages for populations that were not included in settlement talks."

Companies frequently define their impact areas too narrowly both during project planning and in the wake of accidents. If the prosecutors' claims are true, the companies should expect continued fallout from affected communities, and more financial and reputational damage. The deal does not block other legal actions being pursued against the companies in both Minas Gerais and Espirito Santo states.

Sources: [Reuters](#)
Biotech Industry Risk Alert

The Mozambican government is gradually awarding free land to ProSavana, an agribusiness venture from Brazil, Japan and Mozambique, to plant GMO soy and other cash crops in an area that is currently used by four million people for subsistence farming. According to Mozambican NGO Justiça Ambiental, "no information was given to Mozambicans; we only found out through international civil society organizations...[The program has yet to be officially implemented] but over time, land is slowly being taken."

GMO bans in a growing number of countries are prompting more biotech companies to enter Africa, which could exacerbate the already high frequency of land grabs and resource conflicts on the continent. While the environmental health impacts of GMOs are a contentious debate, there are also the social impacts creating a separate source of risk for the industry.
Sources: Farmlandgrab.org

The Cost of Ignoring Cleanup

Indigenous Peoples in the Peruvian Amazon are dealing with the aftermath of another large oil spill on their land, this time from a pipeline belonging to state owned PetroPeru. The company says that "no expense and no amount of human effort will be spared to clean up this oil spill within a month." However, a state of emergency has been declared instructing locals not to drink from the river or fish for four months. Additionally, the company is accused of using child labor in the cleanup process.

Falling oil prices have slowed the encroachment of new oil projects in the Amazon, but there are also fewer resources for proper maintenance of existing oil projects, resulting in the heightened risk and frequency of accidents. Even if oil prices go back up, companies will have a hard time getting projects off the ground due to the industry's ever growing legacy of devastation.
Sources: BBC
New Report Highlights Land Tenure Gaps

A report by Oxfam, the International Land Coalition, and the Rights and Resources Initiative highlights vast discrepancies between formal and informal land ownership in Indigenous communities. While one-tenth of the earth’s surface is under formal land ownership by Indigenous Peoples, half to two-thirds is under informal or customary land ownership systems that receive little to no recognition from governments. Looking beyond Indigenous Peoples, the report estimates that globally, 2.5 billion people do not have title to the land on which they live. These people are highly vulnerable to displacement by large-scale resource projects, and are socioeconomically disadvantaged because they cannot receive financial, legal or technical assistance for better land management.

Extensive information on both formal and informal land ownership should be included in social and environmental impact assessments and other baseline data provided to business managers. Besides the intrinsic value of the information itself, the data gathering process is an opportunity for engagement.

Sources: Reuters