Teaser Articles 2015 May 24 Pack

Every year WPP publishes its May 24 Pack around critical themes affecting the realities of peacebuilding on the ground.

The 2015 edition of this publication will focus on the theme "Women, Peace and Security: Business as Usual?", highlighting the impact of the business sector on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

The launch of the 2015 WPP May 24 Pack will coincide with the 15th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in October, 2015, in New York. In anticipation of the publication and in celebration of May 24 itself, WPP has released these five teaser articles will be releasing several teaser articles from the publication in the days leading up to May 24.

‘Shrinking Space’: The Impact of Counter-terrorism Measures on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

By Isabelle Geuskens

This piece was originally published on the Sustainable Security website*

In an important year for the Women, Peace and Security agenda, women’s civil society organizing is increasingly being affected by counter-terrorism measures.

2015 is a key year for women peace activists around the world. Following the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2122 on October 18, 2013, the Security Council members will convene a high-level review in October 2015 to assess progress at the global, regional and national levels in implementing UNSCR 1325 (2000), renew commitments, and address obstacles and constraints that have emerged in its implementation.

Fifteen years into its implementation, there are still a lot of challenges to be overcome. However, women peacemakers and activists are as resilient as ever. They continue to push the important message behind UNSCR 1325 forward, in environments that can be risky, unsupportive, or outright hostile. However, this resilience is closely tied to the existence of a vibrant civil society space.

It is therefore important to assess new challenges to women’s peace agency, posed by counterterrorism measures (CTM), which are increasingly having an effect on this enabling space. Peacebuilders are often hesitant to discuss their experiences openly, fearing damage to their reputation as well as other repercussions.

To this end, in early 2015 the Women Peacemakers Program, together with the Human Security Collective contacted a selection of partners to explore the particular impacts counter-terrorism measures are having on women’s organizations working for peace, which increasingly are being affected directly and indirectly. The findings are summarized below.

The impact of financial counter-terrorism measures

Post 9/11 counterterrorism measures have impacted on civil society’s operational and political space in several ways. Some counter-terrorism mechanisms, such as the use of terrorist black lists and partner vetting systems are relatively widely known about. A lesser-known measure is the prevention of terrorism financing through the non-profit sector.

**http://sustainablesecurity.org/2015/05/08/shrinking-space-the-impact-of-counter-terrorism-measures-on-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda/*

*This article is the first of the five articles to be published by the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) during the week leading up to **International Women’s Day for Peace and Disarmament** on May 24.*

The article is part of the 2015 WPP May 24 Pack “Women, Peace and Security: Business as Usual?” to be published in October, 2015, to coincide with the high-level review of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325).

About Isabelle Geuskens

Isabelle’s journey into peace work started during 1998-1999 during her studies, when she lived in Belfast and conducted research about local communities’ experience of the Troubles, the Good Friday Agreement, and the impact of peace projects run by local community leaders. Upon obtaining her Masters Master of Arts Degree from the University of Maastricht in 2000, she started working on a project-base in the field of women’s studies (University of Utrecht) and peacebuilding. This took her to Srebrenica during 2001, where she worked for the Working Group Netherlands-Srebrenica, during which she was involved in cross-community initiatives. In 2002, she became the Program Manager of WPP at the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR). Under her leadership, WPP started pioneering a program on engaging men for gender-sensitive peacebuilding. Since WPP’s establishment as independent foundation during October 2012, Isabelle serves as the WPP Executive Director.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a highly influential global consortium established in 1989 by the G7, has developed an anti-terrorism financing recommendation for Non-Profit Organizations (NPO) - Recommendation 8 - in their Anti Money Laundering/Countering Financing of Terrorism standard. This standard assumes that non-profits are vulnerable to abuse for terrorism financing. To date, over 180 countries have endorsed the standard and as such, are subject to a peer evaluation by the FATF every 6 to 7 years. Receiving a low FATF rating immediately influences a country's international financial standing.

In recent years, a number of countries have started to use the FATF standard, and specifically Recommendation 8, as a pretext to clamp down on civil society space. Although countries often deny that it is the case, evidence is growing that upcoming FATF evaluations can have a preemptive chilling effect on civil society space. This is a direct result of governments' desire to show the FATF that they are capable of preventing terrorist financing abuse through their non-profit sectors. In addition, some states are starting to pass more restrictive non-profit laws *after* an FATF evaluation - as if the evaluation itself serves to legitimize the drafting of such laws.

As a result of these mechanisms, a growing number of women activists around the world are experiencing a shrinking civil society space for their peace and human rights activism: they are increasingly facing restrictive NGO legislation, suffocating financial regulations, intimidating surveillance practices and exhaustive reporting requirements.

Restrictive legislation

Many women peace activists engage in civil society work that is critical and political. They often operate in high-risk settings, where they face repercussions because of the very nature of their activist work, which challenges established notions and bastions of (patriarchal) power. Several respondents reported that their governments are trying to control, limit, or stop critical civil society work through the development and passing of new Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) legislation. This new legislation is impacting on their space to operate, e.g. by putting restrictions on receiving funding support. As one activist from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region shared: *"The Rights and Liberties Committee at the Constitution Drafting Assembly has released their suggestion for the Constitution... namely that local civil society should be banned from receiving any foreign government funds."*

A women's organization based in South Asia observed a difference between the difficulties experienced by various organizations: *"There is enough funding for service delivery organizations and those who follow right wing politicians. However, there is no funding for the rights-based organizations, or for those that work towards alternatives. And women's peace activism in particular faces great challenges."*

Intimidating surveillance practices

Some respondents reported that their national governments were engaging in nationwide campaigns of invasive NGO inspections, using harassment tactics such as personal intimidation and threatening activists with the closing down of their organizations: *"When I received a grant from one (domestic) Foundation, I was getting calls from the intelligence bureau and had to supply them with three-years of audited statements, a list of Governing Board Members and staff members. [...] They visited my home three times, to ask me questions."*

Some women's groups also faced demanding reporting requirements because of government regulations: *"In some locations, all civil society organizations have to submit a copy of their annual report to the police, armed forces, and intelligence offices of the state."*

'Better safe than sorry'

The FATF standard has had a great impact on the financial service industry, particularly on banks. There is a growing body of evidence that shows that banks' risk averse behavior - due to fear of sanctions when not abiding by the FATF standard, which may include the withdrawal of their banking license, freezing of assets, hefty fines - has resulted in the withdrawal of bank services to civil society active in conflict areas. As a result of the "better safe than sorry" attitude of the banks, a growing number of civil society organizations are experiencing great difficulties in making or receiving money transfers. Over the years, many donors have become careful in grantmaking - with some donors avoiding partners in high risk, terrorist prone areas, and a number of donors are tightening their own due diligence.

Women's peace organizations more easily fall prey to these restrictions. This is partly because women's organizations usually operate on small budgets, which means they often do not have the leverage to negotiate a solution with their banks, which big donor organizations and charities are often still able to do. Several respondents mentioned facing challenges with their banks, ranging from delays in receiving their funds; to banks requesting additional project information before releasing the funds. Some activists reported that certain banks would no longer release foreign funds to their organizations, or had refused to provide their organization with a bank account. One activist made mention of a bank closing a women's organization's bank account.

A respondent from the MENA region shared: "*Sometimes we are facing difficulties during the money transfer process, it takes a long time for us to receive the funds, and some correspondent banks reject the amount. Recently a new system has been introduced: there is a limit on the amount we can withdraw on a weekly basis from the bank. This means we cannot pay all our organizational expenses on time, such as staff salary, rent, activity expenses... Everyone is calling us for their money, and we have to promise them that we will pay them next week... Sometimes we are taking loans from other people just to cover our expenses.*"

In addition, several reported that direct access to funding is getting more difficult. This is partly due to donors' increasingly preferring to channel funds via large organizations capable of producing grant proposals according to their demanding guidelines, as well as able to absorb rigorous reporting and auditing requirements. Increasingly, these complex and time-consuming requirements are clashing with the reality on the ground. Many women's organizations are operating on very modest budgets with a combination of limited paid staff capacity and/or volunteer efforts, in a demanding environment that is at best challenging and at worst highly insecure and hostile. An organization based in Europe reported significantly increased pressures on human resources regarding donor reporting: staff found themselves working overtime to meet the requirements of this related additional bureaucracy, and on some occasions had to seek external advice.

Cumulative effect

As such, counter-terrorism measures – whether subtly or bluntly - are having an impact on the civil society space women activists so desperately need to do their critical work for peace and women's rights, worldwide.

As one respondent, whose organization had been severely impacted, summarized: *"We face an increase in expenditure (because we want to avoid targeting, we now travel in groups, which is more costly); increased surveillance of our movement and programs (officials are asking for reports and bank advices, including that of our personal bank accounts); postponing or cancelling of some of our programs or keeping low profile for some time; mental unrest of our members; impact on the reputation of our organization as our work was projected as "anti-national", which has affected the outreach of our member organizations. Also, a few partner organizations have left the network fearing repercussions by the government."*

The cumulative effect of the range of pressures is that the enabling space for women's civil society work is shrinking and therefore progressive and pioneering work for inclusive development, peace and women's rights becomes frustrated. The implications for broader security concerns are worrying. When alternative civil society voices and constructive seeds of change are not provided with the soil to take root, threats to the daily security of people and communities are given free reign. As such, opportunities for actors looking to exploit these vulnerabilities increase.

It is important for civil society to come together to exchange experiences as well as document and monitor the impact counterterrorism measures are having on their peace and human rights work, in order to engage in collective advocacy. It is equally important for the Women, Peace and Security community to engage with the different CTM stakeholders and vice versa, to raise awareness about the importance of safeguarding critical civil society space worldwide, so that women's voices and actions for peace and human rights can continue to change the world for the better.

***Background Note**: In early 2015, the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP), together with the Human Security Collective (HSC) contacted a selection of partners in the field, to gain insight into the multiple ways the CTM agenda is affecting their work for peace and women's rights. The findings are summarized in WPP's Policy Brief: Counterterrorism Measures and their Effects on the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.*

International Women's Day for Peace & Disarmament

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: BUSINESS AS USUAL?

*This article is the second of the five articles to be published by the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) during the week leading up to **International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament** on May 24.*

The article is part of the 2015 WPP May 24 Pack "Women, Peace and Security: Business as Usual?" to be published in October, 2015, to coincide with the high-level review of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325).

The Challenges for Women Defenders Working on Business and Human Rights

By Alejandra Ancheita

This piece was originally published on the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) website*

The challenges and risks that human rights defenders (HRDs) are facing in Mexico and other Latin American countries are diverse and growing daily in the absence of comprehensive State action to address this situation.

The inadequate response of the Mexican government to the hundreds of cases of attacks and intimidation has become evident in various spaces. For instance in the recent Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations, the Mexican State received 24 recommendations on the situation of human rights defenders and journalists in the country, whilst the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, in the Interior Ministry, has received 130 applications for protection.

Its response has been insufficient, particularly for those groups of defenders who face particular and heightened risks. As a woman human rights defender who works on issues related to business and the environment, I ought to know.

Situations of particular vulnerability require a tailored response

The report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders to the UN General Assembly (2013) informs that HRDs are commonly branded as being against development *per se* if their actions oppose the implementation of development projects that have a direct impact on natural resources, people's land and the environment. But, rather than demonstrating opposition to development, such actions should be embraced as legitimate attempts to defend the rights of those affected directly and indirectly by development projects and policies, as long as such defense is pursued through peaceful means.

Importantly, the fact that women human rights defenders face specific threats has been well established. However, existing protection mechanisms have not yet adjusted to incorporate this reality into their functioning, thus leaving women defenders vulnerable to gender-specific threats and aggressions. This is a global phenomenon and, in over 15 years as a human rights defender in Mexico, I have personally suffered violations of my human rights because of my gender and numerous colleagues have found themselves in the same situation.

**http://www.ishr.ch/news/challenges-women-defenders-working-business-and-human-rights*

About Alejandra Ancheita

Alejandra Ancheita, the founder and Executive Director of the Mexico City-based ProDESC (The Project of Economic, Cultural, and Social Rights), is a Mexican lawyer and activist who leads the fight for the rights of the migrants, workers, and indigenous communities. Since founding ProDESC in 2005, Alejandra and her team have run strategic campaigns aimed at protecting the economic, social, and cultural rights of Mexico's marginalize people. The results of these campaigns include unprecedented accountability mechanisms between some of the world's largest transnational companies, thereby ensuring the rights to dignified housing, health, education, and a fair wage, among others. In October 2015 she became the 2014 winner of the Martin Ennals Awards.

Because women HRDs face gender-specific risks, it is essential to make protection measures gender-specific. Women defenders are convinced that their security requires a holistic approach. This involves not only applying a gender-specific interpretation of traditional security measures, but also addressing the root causes of insecurity for women HRDs and guaranteeing the conditions necessary to enable them to carry out their work.

Integral security for women defenders must also seek to transform public opinion to understand and support our work. The first step in this regard is for States to recognize that working to defend certain rights can make women HRDs particularly vulnerable, for example by working on indigenous land rights in Latin America. Public statements made by public officials on the importance of our role and the legitimacy of our work are key. Authorities must investigate and punish those responsible for statements that seek to defame or attack defenders or delegitimize their work, even when such statements are made by non-State actors like community leaders or company representatives. Given the severe impact inflammatory statements have on women defenders' work and wellbeing, they must be treated as aggressions in and of themselves.

Governmental protection mechanisms: the Mexican example

In the vast majority of countries there are no specific mechanisms in place to protect human rights defenders. Where mechanisms have been created they are often hindered by operational failings, a lack of financial or human resources, the absence of gender-sensitivity, limited options for collective or community measures, and absent political will. Rather than taking preventive measures or tackling the structural causes of violence and discrimination against women defenders, these mechanisms focus on securing the physical integrity of individual defenders in the short term, using a rigid approach with a common set of measures applicable to all. States need to address this situation in order to comply with their obligation to create a safe and enabling environment for women defenders and those working on business and human rights.

As my work is based in Mexico, and due to my incorporation into the Federal Protection Mechanism for human rights defenders and journalists last year, this is the Mechanism I am best-placed to comment on. One very positive aspect of the mechanism is that four of the nine members of the decision-making body come from civil society. However, the Mechanism is also faced with several challenges.

The Mechanism falls short in the preventative aspect. Recently, various actors including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the CEDAW Committee have highlighted impunity for violations against women defenders as the greatest obstacle in improving their safety. In spite of this concern, the law establishing the Mechanism does not guarantee the adequate investigation and prosecution of perpetrators.

The Mechanism also fails to incorporate a gender perspective to better understand the situation facing women HRDs. I believe that the Mexican authorities have the opportunity to set best practices in this regard, by providing gender-sensitive training to staff and by developing gender indicators to guide the granting, planning and implementation of protection measures.

Mexican authorities responsible for the Mechanism must also effectively involve defenders in the design and implementation of protection measures, as well as conducting risk assessments in a more transparent way. This is particularly important in the case of defenders working on issues that impact upon private actors such as business, or those defending land rights in isolated communities. Finally, cooperation and coordination between federal, state and local authorities in the implementation of protection measures need to drastically improve.

Global business, global response

But the responsibility doesn't stop there. The international community also owes a duty to support the work carried out by HRDs. For example, in 2004 the European Union adopted Guidelines for the support and protection of human rights defenders, instructing EU missions to adopt a proactive policy for their protection. It is important to recall the responsibility which third States have to prevent human rights violations that arise from the activities of companies based within their jurisdiction, particularly given the lack of political will and weak institutional capacity which often exist in the countries where large transnational companies operate, such as Mexico.

Human rights defenders: steadfast

Whilst States must take on these multiple aspects to ensure our security, as human rights defenders we will not tire of demanding impartial investigations, the sanctioning of those who perpetrate against us and guarantees of no-repetition. These are our rights of access to justice and it is crucial that we demand an end to the impunity which currently propitiates the painful maelstrom of violence in Mexico.

International Women's Day for Peace & Disarmament

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: BUSINESS AS USUAL?

This article is the third of the five articles to be published by the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) during the week leading up to May 24th that marks ***International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament.***

The article is included in the 2015 WPP May 24 Pack "Women, Peace and security: Business as Usual?" to be published in October so as to coincide with the high-level review of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325). The launch of the publication will likely be combined with a side event in New York.

Servicing Extractivism?

By Sophie Toupin

The buzz word Corporate Social Responsibility (CRS) is almost as old of an idea as the push back and criticisms it has engendered. Critics of the practice have also intensified recently, particularly within a context of resistance to extractivism, both in the Global South and Global North, in addition to the activism surrounding divestment and climate change particularly among youth on university campuses. At the scholarship level, there has been an explosion of articles written about this practice from different perspectives be it anthropological, developmental, sociological, legal and managerial, among others. In theory and practice, criticism on CSR has led to the emergence of new concepts such as the 'Business and Human Rights' and 'Corporate Sustainability' (CS) frameworks. Both are seen as being more holistic in scope and have been used by the United Nations through for instance the creation of the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on business & human rights, the Global Compact Initiative, which used the frame of CSR, but now speaks about CS, and finally in the new sustainability development goals (SDGs) that are part of the 2015 post-development Agenda. The new SDGs explicitly say that the private sector has an important role to play in realizing these goals.

At the international governance level, the concept of CSR is increasingly superseded by the term corporate sustainability. Corporate Sustainability, Marcel van Marrewijk (2003) suggests, has a "traditional bias towards environmental policies" (p.101) as it is rooted in the legacy of the Brundtland Report, which famously outlined that the needs of the present cannot compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. CSR on the other hand has more of a legacy of being linked to the social aspects of corporations such as human rights. The term sustainability in an era of climate change is seen as more apt than responsibility hence the reason why Corporate Sustainability is more and more seen to be broader than CSR.

In this article, I will first attempt to briefly trace the history of CSR highlighting how the practice has evolved over time. I will then look at the ways in which the Government of Canada has crafted its own understanding of CSR in its national and international development programs, the impact it had on the NGO sector and some of the reasons why it still uses the term CSR when the global community seems to have shifted to the concept of CS. To conclude, I will focus on the new collective frame (worldview) of social movements who are now converging towards an opposition to an extractivism framework.

About Sophie Toupin

Sophie Toupin's current work explores the linkages between technology, feminism and activism through ethnographic studies and projects. Over the years, her work has focused on issues ranging from community media, gender and ICTs, women, peace and security, social movements, and gender and access to justice, among others. She currently works for Media@McGill, a hub for research and scholarship on media, technology and culture at McGill University in Montreal.

A CSR short history

It is with the emergence of big businesses in the United States in the first half of the 1900s that the question of corporate responsibility came to light. The idea of corporate responsibility emerged in a context where there was an increase in state legislations to regulate businesses, the concentration of power in big companies and the emergence of other organized groups, mostly trade unions, which could potentially threaten the unilateral power of corporations (Acquier & Gond 2005).

With this in mind, the question that businessmen, such as the iron and steel magnate Andrew Carnegie or Henry Ford, asked themselves was: How can big businesses and businessmen use their power "responsibly" in a context of increased state regulations and contestation restricting corporate behavior? Basically, their concern was how to self-regulate without being imposed regulations by outside forces. In the early decades of the 1900s, the dominant understanding of what would be later known as CSR was of "public service". This understanding of CSR alluded to an implicit contract between society and corporations (Acquier & Gond 2007). Following the 1929 economic crisis and the lack of confidence in business behavior, which had largely been responsible for the crisis, state regulations on businesses was imposed through what became known as the *New Deal*. Strong regulations of corporations by states did not last long. Indeed, the role played by corporations in supporting the war efforts during the Second World War brought public confidence back to corporations and a belief that they could self-regulate to the benefit of society. The work, advocacy and voices of trade unions and other critical voices that had previously helped to bring about more regulations were largely stifled under McCarthyism and red-baiting, bringing back the discourse around CSR as a voluntary business practice.

In the 1960s, Milton Friedman, one of the architects of the Washington Consensus, an ideological process that largely set the stage for neoliberalism (Harvey 2005), described the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility as being "deeply subversive". He rather argued that "there is little dangerous currents to the very foundations of our free society as the acceptance, for the leaders of company, a liability other than to maximize the return on their shareholders' money" (Friedman, 1962). Though Friedman openly criticized the concept of CSR, his words nonetheless reaffirmed the importance for government not to meddle in the affairs of businesses.

More recently, the concept of CSR has been somewhat superseded by the concept of CS as earlier stated, and seems to be embraced in international settings. The Government of Canada though is an example of a country that still talks about CSR, as I will show below. One reason that might help explaining the above is the strong legacy of the environmental dimension within a framework of CS. And since, in the past years, Canada has officially withdrawn from the Kyoto Accord; has drastically cut the budget of Environment Canada, the department responsible for environmental policies and programs; and is operating one of the world largest oil sand extraction sites, the narrative of CSR might in fact be more apt.

Canada, CSR and extractivism

Since the Conservative party took majority power in Canada in 2006, the government in place has been cutting into social programs (education, health, social benefits, environment, etc.), reducing the size of the state, putting in place austerity measures, among others.

At the foreign and development policy levels, Canada saw a number of significant changes, amongst others: the disappearance of the expression "human security" and "responsibility to protect"; the replacing of the expression "international humanitarian law" with "international law", "child soldier" with "children in armed conflicts" and "gender equality" with "sexual equality", "equality between the sexes" or "equality between men and women" from the Canadian foreign policy; a disengagement of Canada from the United Nations (UN);

a refocus from middle-income countries in the Americas over African countries with less promising commercial prospects (Brown, Heyer and Black 2014); an increase in public-private partnerships; and the merging of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to create a new institution called the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. With this new institution, the links and ties between development, aid and trade were made more explicit.

At the CSR level, the Government of Canada launched in 2009 its first Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy entitled "Building the Canadian Advantage: Canada's Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy for the Canadian International Extractive Sector." This new strategy suggests that the Conservative Government has prioritized and link "Canadian aid policy, with private-sector development and investment (especially in mining) and Corporate Social Responsibility" (Macdonald and Ruckert 2014, p.126). To start implementing its strategy, the government instituted a pilot project for targeted Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) to provide services to communities (schools, medical units, etc.) with mining operations on their territories. The three publicly known partnerships were between World University Service of Canada and Rio Tinto Alcan in Ghana, Plan Canada, and IAMGOLD in Burkina Faso, and World Vision Canada, and Barrick Gold in Peru (Carin 2012).

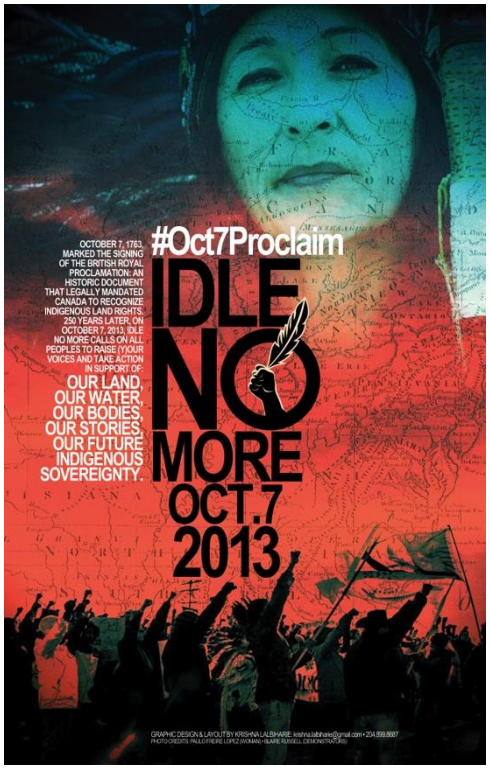
These public-private funded projects raise important questions such as the extent to which such projects help the private sector industry sustain controversial mining activities. Macdonald and Ruckert (2014) wonder if these projects are a way to recast companies as humanitarian actors. These projects have also a strong emphasis on the domestic self-interest and thus the question of the extent to which this is a valid goal for aid ought to be asked. To add to this understanding, Professor Darin Barney at McGill University argues that certain rhetoric of nationalism, such as economic nationalism and national identities, have been mobilized by the Canadian economic and state elite in an attempt to manufacture consent with regards to resource extraction. This rhetoric, he argues, is exemplified in the Canadian discourse that promotes: "Doing Business the Canadian Way" or "Promoting Canadian Values" through resource extraction.


Photo credit: Virginia Johnson

In the same period of these new priorities and shifts in development policies, a wave of funding cuts affected the NGO sector in Canada. Rights and Democracy, The North South Institute and The Pearson Peacekeeping Center, among others, are all NGOs that have had to close their doors as a result. Others, such as Status of Women Canada (the Federal Agency that supports gender equality), Canadian Council for International Cooperation and Match International (an NGO supporting women's rights in the Global South), were either defunded or saw their funding drastically cut. Kairos, whose funding renewal was approved by CIDA in 2010, was reversed in, what Prof. Stephen Brown from the University of Ottawa called, a political decision and not one based on the merits of the proposal. The Native Women's Association of Canada's Sisters in Spirit project received funding with major strings attached: it could "continue to improve awareness of the missing [and murdered indigenous] women in Canada, but it was forbidden from continuing to compile the Sisters in Spirit database", a database that tracks and documents the missing women. As a result of these decisions, the NGO sector in Canada has been hit hard, in particular women's rights advocacy groups that work at the national or international level.

Many extractive companies, whose headquarters are in Canada, do have extractive operations abroad and/or are linked to subsidiaries that are located in the Global South, at times in conflict and post-conflict countries. However, at the peace and security level, the current Women, Peace and Security (WPS) National Action Plan (NAP) of Canada makes no reference to the private sector. This poses the question of the relationship between extractive corporate practices, gender issues and conflict and post conflict countries. What does it mean to do "responsible" WPS in a context where extractivism happens? Would it be about giving women services (small perks to accept the presence of an extractive operation?) or would "responsible" WPS be about enabling civil society space, as space where women can organize against what they see and deem as abuses of their natural resources?

Resurgence of resistance



Poster credits: Krishna Lalbiharie/photo credits: Paulo Frere Lopez (woman), Blare Russell (demonstrators)

What we are seeing emerge in Canada is a strong reaction against the instrumentalization of the earth for profit, whether it be in the Global South or Global North. This is a narrative that Benford & Snow (2000) have called an collective action frame to stop extractivist projects, particularly the exploitation of tar sands and the pipelines that are being built to transport oil (Mitchell 2011). The resistance to extractivism has become one of the strongest social movements in Canada and it has been led by Indigenous movements and young people, with women playing a key role. As a case in point, in 2012, as a result of the Jobs and Growth Act (2012), also known as the omnibus Bill C-45, four indigenous and white women launched a protest called: 'Idle No More'. Over the next couple of months, demonstrations, marches, round dances and blockades were organized against this act, which threatened to "erode Aboriginal land and treaty rights insofar as they reduce the amount of resource development projects that required environmental assessment; change their regulations that govern on-reserve leasing in a way that will make it easier for special interests to access First Nations reserve lands for purposes of economic development and settlement […]". (Coulthard 2014, p. 160).

Key questions that arise from this are: Is 'responsible resource development' around the world possible? What does responsibility and sustainability mean in such a scenario? Who decides what these concepts mean? Can a CSR and/or a CS framework address these issues? How will the post 2015 development agenda and SDGs deal with these issues?

One of the multiple reasons why 'Idle No More' was so inspiring to many and instrumental in creating an opposing framework, was its aim to decolonize politics, where water, air, land and all creation for future generations are not to be spoiled under the guise of economic development, unbridled capitalism and settler-colonialism (Coulthard 2014). 'Idle No More' took a decisive stance against resource exploitation on indigenous territories, outlining and reinforcing Indigenous decolonial politics that aimed at letting them decide what happens on their territories and to say no to resource exploitation on their lands.

The framework of resistance to extractvism is a global phenomenon. It shows that it is a worldview that is embraced both in the Global South and the Global North. In Canada this frame of contestation is met with a new potential law. Currently, the Canadian government is in the process of passing a law called the *Anti-terrorism Act 2015* (a.k.a. Bill C-51), which could target, among others, indigenous dissent and activism against extractivism.

Conclusion

Credit: www.idlenomore.ca

From its inception, CSR has been an ambiguous concept and all should be very attentive to the meaning given by corporations and governments. Is it more about advancing corporations' public relations profiles? Is it really about changing for the better corporate practices? Is it having positive impact for the most marginalized? Other questions that need to be debated are: Will the broader concept of CS bring about change? Where does the post 2015 development agenda and SDGs fit in these debates? Moreover, how will the new frame of contestation that is emerging within civil society pan out at the global level? What kind of echo does Naomi Klein's book, "This Changes Everything" (2014) have in the chambers of power? Will the emerging civil society stance that says "No" to a neoliberal agenda based on extractivism be heard and, if so, by who? And what will be the reaction to it? Being faced with very different perspectives on these issues raise important questions for civil society, governments and corporations a like as they highlight divergent value systems grounded in different definitions of truth, awareness and understanding of the meaning of "development", "modernity", "progress" and *buen vivir*, among others.

See page 6 for the Bibliography

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WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: BUSINESS AS USUAL?

Undermining Extractive Mining: Cases of Women's Activism in Latin America

By Rita Hershkovich and Sophie Schellens

*This article is the fourth of the five articles to be published by the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) during the week leading up to **International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament** on May 24.*

The article is part of the 2015 WPP May 24 Pack "Women, Peace and Security: Business as Usual?" to be published in October, 2015, to coincide with the high-level review of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325).

About Rita Herschkovich

Rita Hershkovich is a recent graduate with a strong interest in women's peace activism. She pursued her bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences with a major in Human Interaction, at Leiden University College The Hague. Her bachelor dissertation focused on the effects of militarization on gender identity in young Israeli women serving in the army. Rita then went on to do a master in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam. She is currently volunteering at the Women Peacemakers Program for the WPP 2015 May 24 Pack "Women, Peace & Security: Business as Usual?". In this position, she looks forward to using her skills in anthropology to represent and disseminate women's voices as a step toward a gender-sensitive approach to peacebuilding.

About Sophie Schellens

Sophie Schellens MA MSc has been involved in women's rights and peace work since an internship at the Dutch Embassy in Jordan, where powerful stories of women peace activists inspired her to get actively involved in women's peace activism. Within subsequent research she focused on women's activism and the Middle East, with her thesis analysing women's organizations in Syria. Her ambition to make a difference was strengthened through work experiences at GPPAC and AVAAZ. In 2013 she began as the Program Officer of WPP, where communications are a large part of her daily activities. Sophie holds a Bachelor in European Studies and two Master Degrees in International Politics and International Conflict and Development, both obtained in Belgium.

In her contribution to the 2014 May 24 Pack, Cynthia Cockburn identifies a missing component in the mainstream peace movement's conception of what causes militarization and war. Along with economic interest (capitalism) and the political system (ethno-nationalism), she argues that the power system of patriarchy is the third, often overlooked, cause of war. As Cockburn puts it: "Economic and political power is intertwined with, shapes, and is shaped by sex-gender power, patriarchy, the worldwide system of male dominance."[1] Applying a feminist lens to the extractive mining industry, many women activists have analyzed how the three causes of violence and armed conflict (ethno-nationalism, capitalism and patriarchy) converge within the extractive mining industry. They have come to the conclusion that the patriarchal system the extractive mining industry represents does not work for them, and that they have most to lose when a mining corporation enters their land and community. As a result a growing number of women are at the forefront of nonviolent activism against extractive mining activities.

The three causes of armed conflict interconnect within the extractive mining industry, with women specifically bearing the brunt. First, part of capitalist philosophy is to make as much profit as possible, which is rooted in a self-perpetuating system of inequalities and forced expansion for new markets. Within the extractive mining industry, this is exemplified by the occurrence of gross human rights violations, such as land grabbing; forced labor; the absence of, or limited labor rights; and forced displacement. A connection with colonialism can be made: Capitalism allows for Northern-based powers to exploit countries' natural resources under the guise that their mining techniques are superior and more efficient. In reality, they are damaging the natural and socio-cultural environment for their own profit-driven interests. Looking at it from a gender lens, Heather Gies[2] argues that the connection between capitalism and colonialism within the extractive mining industry builds upon the inequality and commodification within society, specifically exploiting women.

Secondly, in many cases, indigenous populations are bearing the brunt of the extractive mining industry. Extractive mining activities disregard their property rights, with them being marginalized and robbed of their livelihoods and traditions strongly tied to the land.

[1] *Cynthia Cockburn, 'Feminist Antimilitarism: Patriarchy, Masculinities and Gender Awareness in Antiwar Organizing' WPP May 24 Pack 2014, p. 33*

[2] *See: http://www.telesurtv.net/english/analysis/Facing-Violence-Resistance-Is-Survival-for-Indigenous-Women-20150307-0018.html*

Artisanal miners, women and men alike, are often caught in an absurd legal trap that forbids them to continue their traditional small-scale mining, thus forcing them to seek work under the large mining companies that are taking over their lands. Where some men can take up jobs within large-mining projects as an alternative, women are often left deprived from their livelihoods. This ethno-nationalist component hits women specifically hard, with them relying on their lands, their homes and on the local water sources to sustain their families and their entire communities.

Thirdly, the extractive mining industry is legitimized, reinforced and sustained by patriarchal values, as it is characterized by strong elements of hierarchy, domination and the use of (gendered) violence. Business and political actors benefitting from the exploitive extractive mining industry often rely on institutionalized violence as a means to serve their interests. This is reflected in the highly militarized operations of extractive mining, exemplifying militarized masculinities and the use of dominant power. Mining corporations are often government-backed and hold close ties with armed forces, private security companies and paramilitary groups that defend their interests by means of gendered violence against local populations as well as human rights defenders.[3]

In her contribution to the 2014 May 24 Pack, Sumshot Khular describes the interaction between mining companies, the government, increased militarization and the effects on the local communities in South Asia. *"Many indigenous territories across South Asia continue to be heavily militarized, and their prime lands, the source of their livelihood and survival, are conscripted for military infrastructures."*

In regards to how this specifically affects women, she mentions *"Indigenous women, by virtue of their gender and ethnicity, face particular impacts and increased vulnerability from the consequent loss of traditional livelihoods, displacement, conflict and poverty. Violence against indigenous women is as intricately related to their collective and individual rights to their land, resources and territories as their wellbeing, cultures and identities are. The aggressive development models associated with intensive militarization have been ravaging not only our lands and resources but also our people, especially women and girls."*

Looking at violence against women in regards to extractive mining, Heather Gies notes *"Capitalism, colonialism - both patriarchal systems - don't see worth in women's bodies and the work they do, and instead commodify them. This positions violence against women as a justified and structural part of the state that upholds these systems"*.[4]

All around the world, women are standing up to challenge extractive mining, and simultaneously challenge the capitalist and patriarchal system that drives these mining activities. So how does women's activism in Latin America against extractive mining take shape on the ground?

WPP spoke to women involved in anti-mining movements in Rancho Grande (Nicaragua) and Verapaz (Guatemala), and reviewed sources on La Toma (Colombia) about the role of women within these movements.[5] In Rancho Grande, the Ministry of Promotion, Industry and Trade (MIFIC), granted a gold exploration and mining permit to a Canadian company in 2003. Communities within this region began nonviolent actions such as blockading access roads to mining sites as well as large marches to express their resistance against the government-backed extractive industry.

[3] *See: e.g. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/22/the-global-extraction-industry-has-become-hallmarked-by-plundering-violence-and-political-corruption*
[4] *See: http://www.telesurtv.net/english/analysis/Facing-Violence-Resistance-Is-Survival-for-Indigenous-Women-20150307-0018.html*
[5] *See e.g. http://afrocolombian.org/category/espanol/, http://www.elespectador.com/opinion/marcha-de-los-turbantes-columna-530872, movie "The War We Are Living" (DVD series Women, War, Peace)*

The village of LaToma, located in the municipality of Suarez-Cauca, Colombia, has seen the rise of an afro-Colombian women-lead anti-mining movement that started after the mining and energy boom in the early 2000s.[6] 'Marcha de los Turbantes' (March of the Turbans), is a women-lead initiative that arranged a march to Bogotá from La Toma on November 18th, 2014. Finally, Verapaz in Guatemala is home to various dispersed indigenous communities that have come under threat of extractive mining as well as hydroelectric and oil drilling activities. The 'Pastoral Social' movement has emerged in protection of these communities and their land.

Women at the forefront: connections with the land and nature

Looking at the motivations of women's involvement in anti-mining movements, one thing stands out; the connection of the women with the local nature and environment. This connection goes beyond the role the land and the environment play in the livelihoods of the women. In all three cases - Guatemala, Colombia and Nicaragua - women characterize Mother Earth/Nature as a female entity. For them, it is a woman who cares and nurtures and protects her 'children', her communities. For women, this female identity of Mother Earth/Nature provides strong guidance in their daily lives and therefore the women feel a strong affinity and loyalty to their lands. It has provided them with their livelihoods and the daily rituals – which are passed down from generation to generation – that reinforce their cultural identity.

Women regard the extractive mining industries' invasion of their lands and communities as a direct attack on Mother Nature, and the connected feminine values and identity. As such, they also view it as a personal attack on themselves. They see extractive mining as gender-based violence; a patriarchal industry invading and attacking the feminine nature. This experience drives women to be actively involved and at the forefront of anti-mining movements in many indigenous communities throughout Latin America. Their activism is not only about protecting their lands and livelihoods, it is also about defending their gender identity.

Marcha de los Turbantes' statement elaborates on this: "*We were taught that the land is not sold, they understood that we guarantee the resurgent stay in the territory. Four centuries have passed and their memory is our memory, our practices are handed down from our grandmothers' and grandfathers' practices; our daughters and our children today continue reaffirming our identity as free people. Many of us had to raise our sons and daughters alone. The territory has been our partner and has been with us in times of joy and sorrow. Our grandmothers taught us that "the territory is life and life is priceless"-"the territory is dignity and this is priceless.*" [7] The land, or territory, is even referred to as a 'partner' further emphasizing the irreplaceable role the land plays in everyday life.

In describing this relationship with the environment in the Rancho Grande community, Teresa Perez González, member of the local women's network in Matagalpa and researcher on the extractives model for development in Rancho Grande from the perspective of the anti-mining movement, said the following: "*the landscape is not just the mountains and trees, it is part of their identity, it is part of their tranquility of life*". It is clear that a common thread between these struggles in Latin America against the extractive industry is the understanding of the environment as an integral and irreplaceable part of life and identity.

Militarism and the use of violence

All three cases are heavily affected by militarized violence and coercion, both as a means of evicting communities from their land and as a direct response to nonviolent activism. In Verapaz, road blockades and marches are often halted by the police, with armed forces intimidating the participants. These actions disappointed the nonviolent movement.

[6] *See: http://www.pbicolombia.org/fileadmin/user_files/projects/colombia/files/colomPBIa/111203_mining_in_colombia_web.pdf*
[7] *See: http://afrocolombian.org/category/espanol/*

The movement felt that taking up the defense of their land and rights should be supported by the government, as government is supposed to represent the interests of its citizens. Conchita Reyes, General Director of Social Pastoral Outreach Team: "*We say in Guatemala that behind the political system is the power of the army. The concept of security in Guatemala is that you can combat insecurities through control by the combined forces of the police and the army, which is what the government/political system is using. This concept is very removed from the women's concept of peace in these communities.*"

Women's definition of security, Conchita explained, includes access to land, housing, food and safer spaces for women. She specifically mentioned the distance between the indigenous people's homes and their water sources; a trip that exposes young girls and women to sexual and physical violence.

Conchita added: "*Historically, in Verapaz, since the time of the internal armed conflict, women have been the ones suffering the most violence, and I think that women are really tired of so much violence.*" One example she offered of this occurrence is the beating of pregnant women who were involved in a peaceful blockade against hydroelectric projects in Verapaz: "*This takes on a double meaning, the fact of being attacked for being women and also a disregard for life and motherhood.*"

In the case of Nicaragua, similar military intimidation and other government responses to the anti-mining movement have resulted in a strong feeling of betrayal and disillusionment among affected communities. Here too, they see themselves as merely protecting their lands and protect their country from harmful developments; a cause they feel certain the government should support.

The statement released by Marcha de los Turbantes highlights the immediate threats the affected communities and defenders of these communities are faced with: "*Today our lives are in danger. The possibilities existing for people of African descent are minimal. Many men and women are threatened with death.[…]. Meanwhile for us we are forced to endure harassment, fearing for the lives of our children, and our children fearing their own lives."*[8]

The stronghold of patriarchy

In contrast to the movements in La Toma and Verapaz, in the case of Rancho Grande women have not been in the forefront of the anti-mining movement. According to Teresa, reflecting on the movement in Rancho Grande, this is due to the duplication of society's patriarchal structure within the anti-mining movement. Though the movement in Rancho Grande consists of people from different political parties, the core framework is structured by the Catholic Church. Patriarchal systems from the church are replicated in the movement, leading to, amongst others, male-dominated leadership. This is also illustrated by the established commissions within the movement. Women attend these commissions, but they don't vocally participate very often. Teresa explained: "*they are used to being silent […] I think their resistance is not so obvious, but it is very important.*"

Women are also discouraged from getting involved in the more physical aspect of the conflict, such as demonstrating. They are mainly relied on to provide the men with food and logistical support for such activities. This example shows how patriarchal duplication within anti-mining movements affects women on different levels of operation and mobilizing.

Though Guatemala has similar patriarchal structures in society as Nicaragua, patriarchy within the movements is less prominent. The struggle is identified as one that concerns both men and women equally. As such, patriarchy is viewed as manifesting itself through violence against women by the armed forces and the industry itself.

[8] *See: http://afrocolombian.org/category/espanol/*

Women leading by example

Women have been connecting the dots between patriarchy, capitalism and corrupt political systems and have come to the conclusion that extractive mining means women are even losing out more. With their activism, they are not only directly addressing the social injustices affecting their communities; they are challenging patriarchal values as a whole. The nonviolent activism of women in Nicaragua, Guatemala and Colombia is only a tip of the iceberg of women's mobilizing against extractive mining. There are many more examples of women's activist leadership in Latin America, as well as South Asia, Africa and Canada. Women are sowing the seeds for a global resistance movement all over world, in order to harvest cultures of peace that bring forward human rights, gender equality, prosperity for all and environmental preservation.

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International Women's Day for Peace & Disarmament

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: BUSINESS AS USUAL?

This article is the last of the five articles to be published by the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) during the week leading up to ***International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament*** *on May 24.*

The article is part of the 2015 WPP May 24 Pack "Women, Peace and Security: Business as Usual?" to be published in October, 2015, to coincide with the high-level review of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325).

About *Teresa Perez González*

Teresa Perez González is a feminist, economist, and international cooperation worker for development organizations in Mozambique, Guatemala and Nicaragua. She is currently finishing her Master degree in Gender and Development Perspectives and is researching the anti-mining struggle in Rancho Grande, Nicaragua. Teresa is deeply committed to social justice and women's rights and is a member of the Matagalpa Women Network that uses creative and joyful activism through different forms of art, such as music, theatre, dancing and gaming as social transformation tools against sexism and patriarchy.

Teresa's dissertation title is "Mining and Development in Nicaragua: a feminist view on the Rancho Grande case"

Women's Role in the Rancho Grande Resistance: Facing Patriarchy In- and Outside

An Interview with Teresa Perez González by Rita Hershkovich*

"The feminist economy model argues that sustainability of life must be the goal of development instead of the accumulation of capital, they [the women of the Rancho Grande anti-mining movement] basically have the same argument. They just want to live with their land"

Rancho Grande is a municipality located in the Matagalpa department of Nicaragua. It is a highly agriculturally cultivated region that generates Nicaragua's main export products, namely coffee and cocoa, which provides employment to local communities, contributing to a stable local economy and a sustainable development model for the country. Responding to foreign interests in the mining potential of the land, the Ministry of Promotion, Industry and Trade (MIFIC), granted a gold exploration and mining permit to a Canadian company in 2003.[1] Since then, a strong resistance movement has risen to protect the region from the devastation. Locals educated themselves on the impact of mining projects by visiting other places affected by such activities. They saw the negative consequences and heard about the environmental and social devastation that the industry brought with it, and decided they did not want the same results for Rancho Grande. Rancho Grande is divided into 36 communities; every last one of these communities has publically and unconditionally opposed mining projects in the municipality.[2]

As part of her master research, Teresa has been speaking to the men and women involved in the community resistance movement as well as the authorities and people in support of the mining in Rancho Grande. Her aim is to understand the complex situation by looking at the economic, political, social and environmental dynamics and systems through a feminist lens. Currently, there is a lack of meaningful representation of the anti-mining movement in the media, which is solely representing the corporate voices on the matter. This is also a complaint she encountered during her conversations with the people of Rancho Grande, when she and the Matagalpa Women's Network joined one of their marches in support of their cause. Teresa hopes that her research on the matter can help make their voices heard within the academic community and beyond.

* This article is a follow-up of the forth May 24 teaser article "Undermining Extractive Mining: Cases of Women's Activism in Latin America"

[1] See: http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/4931

[2] Ibid.

Rita: What is the role of women within this particular conflict in Rancho Grande?

"Curiously, the role of women in the anti-mining struggle in Rancho Grande, is *not* in the forefront as is seen in similar struggles/anti-mining movements in other countries in the region. The movement in Rancho Grande goes by the name of 'The Yaoska Guardians' (Yaoska being a main river running through the region that stands to be most affected by the mining). The movement is made up by different commissions, and although women attend assemblies, they don't vocally participate very often. They are used to being silent and therefore I think their resistance is not that obvious, but it is nevertheless very important."

Yaoska Guardians organize large protest marches against extractive mining. *Credit: Teresa Perez González*

"The Yaoska Guardians movement itself is comprised of people from different political parties, but its overall set-up is structured by the Catholic Church. Patriarchal systems within the church are duplicated within the movement, leading to a leadership that is entirely male dominated. This discourages women from getting more directly involved in on-the-ground activism. They are mainly relied on to provide the men with food and logistical support for such activities. It is interesting to see on how patriarchal views and values operate on so many different levels, and how it affects women everywhere, even within anti-mining movements."

"There are a few important examples I would like to mention in relation to the role of women in the conflict and movement. There was an incident where a local government representative, who supports the mining activities, forced public workers to participate in a march in support of the mining projects. I spoke to one council woman, who was also a teacher, who had gone to the march against her will and on her return suffered a brain hemorrhage that put her in a wheelchair. To this day, she speaks out on the matter of government coercion and continues supporting the struggle against mining in the ways that she can."

"The mining corporations are trying to gain the support of the locals despite 80-90% of the population being against mining. The company in question sought to attain this social acceptance through signature campaigns, however people informed me that the ways in which signatures were acquired were essentially corrupt. For example, a visit to the community health center would require a signature, which was then actually used for the purpose of supporting the mining projects without people's knowledge. As a result, many people refused to go to the community health center. In response, the women are recovering traditional medicinal practices passed on to them by their grandmothers. Again, I think this form of resistance is not so well known, but it is very important because these women are the ones guarding the families and preserving their ways of life."

“Another tactic of the mining company to gain support from the community consists of offering credits to local businesses, many of which are run by women, particularly food places. They establish economic ties within the community, whilst vilifying and criminalizing the anti-mining movement.”

“The men of the Rancho Grande resistance movement tend to claim that the women and men suffer the same impact of the mining; it is the same struggle in their eyes. They see the value of having women present, but not as a means to change the overall social (patriarchal) structure. Some men have discussions about the importance of women’s inclusion in the struggle, especially because some of them occupy powerful positions, and some discuss machismo and sexism, but I am unsure how deep these discussions go. The men are generally aware of the gender inequality that exists within the country, but it is not easy to change something that is so historically and culturally engrained.”

Rita: What are the biggest challenges women face?

“Sexism denies women’s leadership in the movement because they are expected to take care of the family and the house, while men are doing the resistance work. I also recognize patriarchy within the corporate context. The mining company offers local women some jobs, yet these jobs tend to fit classic gender stereotypes, such as cleaning, cooking, domestic labor jobs. It is interesting to note that the head of the mining company in Rancho Grande is a woman, the public relations person is a woman, the Mayoresse in Rancho Grande is a woman. These women face harsh criticism by the movement - merely for being women. Extractivism and patriarchy reinforce one another in many ways, and I can see that clearly in the case of Rancho Grande.”

“Sometimes women also face gender-specific challenges stemming from their resistance actions. For example, the Ministry of Education sent out a notice that the mining company was going to visit the schools in order to have some ‘green mining’ talks with the students. In response, many parents involved in the resistance movement refused to send their children to school. As a result, close to 1.600 children missed school and failed the year. This was seen as controversial, because of a child’s right to education. However, many local people felt that ‘the right to life’ was ultimately more important. Some schools were blockaded and when authorities were called in, there were incidents of violence against the women who were guarding the doors. This form of resistance also generated more domestic work for the women within the movement, because they had to become full time mothers with their children at home instead of at school.”

One of the peaceful protest marches in Rancho Grande. *Credit: Teresa Perez González*

Rita: Are there any common recurring experiences and/or sentiments you've noticed from speaking to these women?

"These women's biggest concerns regarding the impact of the mining projects are related to the care for their children. Their children need access to food and safe water. Safe water is of great concern to them, because mining activities tend to contaminate the bodies of water that are nearby. I was fascinated to discover that these women also associate the mining company's invasion of their lands with colonization. Similar to colonization, they said "some unknown power from outside is trying to take our livelihoods away". They look upon the mining company as taking away the wealth of the land, and leaving behind devastation. A feminist economic model argues that sustainability of life must be the goal of development, instead of the accumulation of capital, and these women basically have the same argument. They just want to live peacefully with their land."

"What is very important to them is their landscape. Landscape is not just the mountains and trees, it is part of their identity, it is part of their tranquility of life. One woman I spoke to told me that the explosions from the large-scale mining activities remind her of the times of war she had experienced, and she began to tell me about a traumatic memory of a young man who had died right in front of her. I think that women have the ability to connect experiences like that, more so than men. Because they have this ability to empathize, their resistance is probably not as confrontational as the men's. On the other hand, they do worry about *long-term* consequences."

Rita: What (non-violent) strategies do they employ to achieve their goals?

"Road blockades, marches, talking to alternative media to make their voices heard...

Presence of the army at one of the peaceful protest marches in Rancho Grande. *Credit: Teresa Perez González*

Often in response to the blockades and marches the government sends in the police as well as the armed forces to intimidate the participants. When they encountered this governmental response, the protesters were very disillusioned with the government, who, they felt, should have been on their side, protecting the land as well as the interests of its citizens. What is important to understand is that Rancho Grande played a vital role during the Revolution in Nicaragua. The resistance there was very structured and many important leaders of the Sandinista opposition were murdered there. When they finally came into power, people hoped they would fulfill what they had publically promised: 'the people are the president'. The people of Rancho Grande feel abandoned by the government, and this grievance fuels their struggle."

Rita: Do you personally think the movement will be successful in the end in stopping the mining activities?

"I change my mind about this every single day. I want to believe it is possible, but then I start reading and find all these policies that support mining in this country and I realize the power of these companies, which has a reach worldwide. On the other hand, I think the point of Rancho Grande is that their voices are beginning to be heard internationally and I am also finding more information about anti-mining movements than I did at the beginning of my research."

"Some people believe that if the movement stays together, they can successfully stop the project altogether. This is a very exciting and inspiring prospect." *Credit: Teresa Perez González*

"A woman told me that initially the government did not expect to encounter so much resistance from the Rancho Grande community. The movement was able to paralyze the mining activities. The company received permission last year in October, but they have not started mining yet. Some people believe that if the movement stays together, they can successfully stop the project altogether. This is a very exciting and inspiring prospect."

International Women's Day for Peace & Disarmament