

INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION ANALYZES SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES IN PERU

14.07.2014



Last June, an international delegation led by Climate Alliance Luxembourg and Climate Alliance-European Secretariat traveled around Peru on an 11-day study tour, to study the social and environmental impacts of the extractive industries (gold mining, oil, etc.) in

Peru.

The delegation was made up of 13 members coming from Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, Denmark, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Brazil, that belonged to diverse sectors such as national and municipal politics, academia, media and civil society organizations.

The first part of the study tour took the delegation to the Andean region of Cajamarca, where Yanacocha, the second largest open-sky gold mine in the world operates under the property of MNC Newmont.



Facing the large-scale mining projects, and in order to protect the water sources and the biodiversity in the region, the public health of the local population and their land rights; an important citizens mobilization is putting up a peaceful struggle against the mining companies abuses and the Peruvian government, more concerned about protecting the interests of foreign direct investment, in spite of its little positive local impact.

In Cajamarca and Celendín, the delegation met up with different local stakeholders to get a broad-view of the problematic such as civil society organizations; the private sector; the regional government, community leaders and the heart-breaking stories of some victims of the contamination of the mine or the brutal police repression that left 5 dead demonstrators killed by police gunfire in 2012.

In spite of several contacts through different channels, Newmont Mining company was the only stakeholder in the region declining to meet the international delegation.

After the Andes, the delegation moved to the Amazonian region of Loreto to observe the more environmentally-respectful "Indigenous way of life" and the impact of 40 years of oil extraction in their traditional livelihoods. Together with Climate Alliance local partner FORMABIAP, the delegation visited the Training Center for Indigenous Bilingual Teachers, where through an adapted and state-recognized educational program, the indigenous communities try to preserve their culture and traditions in total respect with the Amazonian rain forest. The international group also had the chance to spend an entire day at the indigenous community of 2 de Mayo, down Marañón river, where they could listen to the impact of the last oil spill on the quality of the water and the ensuing reduction of fishing stock, basic foundation of the indigenous diet.

Back in the regional capital of Iquitos and before heading back to Lima, part of the delegation met up with indigenous community leaders that had been camping for two weeks in a central square of the city to demonstrate against the last oil spill in the area caused by Argentinian company Petroplus, partnered by Petrochina, which is controlled by China's state firm CNPC. The demonstrators, coming from all regions of the Peruvian Amazon, were claiming President Humala's presence in Iquitos for discussions after 40 years of failed government promises and the 2009 bloody confrontation, referred as El Baguazo, where over 50 people died both from the indigenous communities and Peruvian armed forces.

In both scenarios (gold mining in the Andes and oil extraction in the Amazon), the delegation could find common points in the lack of free prior informed consultation to local communities, the non-respect of basic rights and no interest in keeping a real dialog between the private sector, the government and the local communities affected that are just ignored and repressed if necessary for the sake of "economic growth", even though there is little social investment locally or little improvement in employment indicators. As an illustrative example, in the early 1990s, the region of Cajamarca ranked as the third poorest region in Peru. After 20 years of large mining projects, Cajamarca is now the poorest region in Peru with the worst literacy, maternal and infant mortality rates in a country considered an "emerging economy" that has been growing at a 5% rate in the past decade but with very little trickle down effect to the rural populations.

On the last day of the Study Tour in Lima, the delegation met with the National Coordination Body of Human Rights Associations to talk about the criminalization of the struggle of peasants and indigenous peoples against the abuses of the Peruvian State and the MNCs and how legislation has been modified to facilitate police repression and human rights abuses.

A very enlightening meeting with the Vice-Mayor and Acting Mayor of Lima followed. The Peruvian capital is a fast growing metropolis of 10 million inhabitants and important environmental challenges where the municipal government is implementing innovating initiatives for mobility, reforestation, reduction of CO2 emissions and re-organization of green public spaces, working with grassroots organizations.

As final activity of the study tour, the delegation encountered AIDSESEP, the representatives of the Peruvian indigenous communities from the Amazon, where topics such as the raising climate change challenges, how they are preparing the next COP-20 summit in Lima next December and how Europe could support them in their environmental cause, were discussed.

As a follow up of the study tour, in the next few months, our 13 participants, selected because of their relative influence in their different areas of work and expertise, will participate in multiplying events in their respective countries such as press conferences, debates and round tables to sensitize the larger European public of what they have seen in Peru and the impact of our unsustainable western consumption model on the populations in the South.

This study tour is one of the corner-stones of the 3-year awareness raising program "From Overconsumption to solidarity: Enhancing citizens' competence with regard to Europe's responsibility for global sustainability" co-funded by EuropeAid and involving 16 civil society organizations from 4 different continents (Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America) where Luxemburgish NGO ASTM Action Solidarite´ Tiers Monde - Climate Alliance Luxembourg plays the leading role in the

consortium.

Auteur: Klima-Bündnis Lëtzebuerg