

Land rights projects

Indonesia

The indigenous peoples in the Indonesian province of West Papua are afraid of losing their land. In 2008, inhabitants of the village of Kaliki transferred 20 hectares of their land to an agribusiness investor in a traditional ritual, for the price of some 80 euros per hectare. Even today, there is still no valid sales contract. Kaliki residents subsist on hunting and sago trees, which they cultivate themselves. The loss of their land threatens their existence. The influx of plantation workers from other parts of Indonesia also contributes to destroying the Papua culture.

For this reason, the Evangelical Church in Tanah Papua (GKI) has begun to educate people in the region about the consequences of the loss of land, and to foster an awareness of the significance and preservation of the natural basis of life. In addition, the church is providing them with legal aid in order to win back the land that they sold under unfair conditions or to prevent the imminent loss of land.



Superintendent Nerotouw, with congregation members, marks out the land of Kaliki.

Democratic Republic of Congo

In the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the years-long war and increasing population pressure is squeezing out the weakest population group, the Pygmies. Pygmies, many of whom live in the tropical rainforest as hunters and gatherers, often face discrimination by the rest of the population. The Baptist Community in Central Africa (CBCA) reports on cases of land conflicts that have destroyed Pygmy houses and driven away residents.

The Baptist Community stands up for the rights of this weakest and most vulnerable population group in regions such as Kit-sombiro, Katwa, and Bebi and supports them in legal disputes in court.



Polisi Kivava (CBCA) visits a Pygmy village in Congo.

Against land grabs. For human rights

Projects in the UEM Human Rights Action 2012



The land will give its fruit, and
you will have all you want to
eat and will live in safety

Leviticus 25:19

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Dr Jochen Motte





The Kaliki congregation during a seminar on land rights in February 2011.

For land rights

In recent years, the commodity of »land« has developed into a sought-after object of investment and speculation by states, international corporations, banks, and investors. The growth in the global population, the rising demand for food and biofuels, along with other raw materials for industrialised and threshold countries has led to a run on the last vast tracts of land that can still be bought or leased cheaply. These are primarily in Africa, but also in Latin America and Asia.

A study on palm oil published in 2011 by UEM and Bread for the World found that the demand for palm oil in Indonesia is further accelerating logging in tropical

rainforests, especially in Kalimantan (Borneo) and Papua – with serious consequences for more than the global climate.

It is often overlooked that there and elsewhere, there is no »empty, uninhabited, fertile, arable land« or untouched rainforest. The boom in land is leading to a global destructive competition that victimises small farmers, nomads and indigenous peoples that have little or nothing with which to push back against the massive pressure from local and international elites and stakeholders.

The most well-known example of land-grabbing is the attempt by Korean concern



GKI seminar against land grabs and destruction of the rainforest, with Kaliki residents.

Daewoo to lease 1.3 million hectares of land in Madagascar over 99 years, which was planned in 2008 and broke down amid political resistance. The parcel was the size of Thuringia.

The dealings often remain secret, the contractual conditions opaque. It is suspected that China has secured access to 2.8 million hectares of land in the Democratic Republic of Congo to invest in palm oil plantations on this parcel.

The United Evangelical Mission, along with its member churches in Africa and Asia, is standing up for the indigenous population to prevent their oppression or expulsion. By doing this, it is campaigning

for their land rights to ensure other human rights, such as those to food, housing, health and education. International concerns should only be acquiring land rights in places where the human rights of the affected population are respected. Contracts should then only be concluded if, from the start, those affected are included, legal certainty exists, and contraventions of contractual agreements can be punished. This is another reason that the UEM is standing up with other organisations to create a binding and verifiable obligation for companies operating internationally to respect human rights. In addition, human rights should be the foundation of German and European policy for domestic and foreign trade.

Giant rice plantations are arising in south Papua as a result of the MIFEE project (Merauke Intergrated Food and Energy Estate).



»The land will give its fruit, and you will have all you want to eat and will live in safety«
(Leviticus 25:19)

The Israelites understand land to be a gift from God: a blessing, the basis of existence, a promise. The verse from the book of Leviticus expresses this. The land feeds its inhabitants; possessing it is a requirement for social and economic security. Yet in ancient Israel there was already oppression, developments taking place that today we would describe as globalisation. If in nomadic times the land belonged to everyone equally, inequalities evolved with the establishment of the state of Israel. Over and over again, voices in the Old Testament recall the God's gift of the land to all of its inhabitants and criticise land grabs or land profiteering, especially when this happens

unfairly. Thus we see in Leviticus a few verses before: »And if you sell anything unto your neighbour, or buy anything of your neighbour's hand, you shall not oppress one another« (Leviticus 25:14). Those who had lost their land through debts and lived in bondage or slavery were to return to their land during the year of jubilee.

With sharp words, the prophet Isaiah criticises the behaviour of land profiteers: »Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may dwell alone in the midst of the earth!« (Isaiah 5:8). As the photo on the poster shows, with land being carried away in a shopping trolley, at the end not a soul is left to be seen there. All of the others have gone; they have become paupers and can no longer enjoy God's gift to their lives.

Secure in the knowledge that God gave land to humankind as the foundation of a life in dignity, the United Evangelical Mission would like to provide a voice and an ear for the people today who are being victimised by expulsion and land acquisition that is threatening their human rights and the basis of their existence.

A GKI member expresses his opinion on the planned sale of his village to a commercial enterprise.

