



Solar energy devices on display at a local fair in the Peruvian highland village of Chumbivilcas.

SIMON RUESEGGER

PERU

Hildegard Willer in Lima

New winds in renewable energy

High oil prices and climatic change prompt call for clean energy sources.

It was no accident that the Incas adored Inti, the sun god. Anyone who has felt the blaze high in the Andes has a rough idea of just how powerful the sun is.

The same is true of the strong winds that hit Peru's long, Pacific coast.

But renewable energy resources such as solar and wind power had rarely entered in debates over Peru's energy sources, and mainly by academic circles and nongovernmental organizations researched or implemented small local projects.

But things are changing. The Ministry of Energy and Mines last May held the first Congress on Biofuels and Renewable Energy and has been promoting a series of workshops and meetings on the subject with the private sector.

The interest in renewable energy for Peru follows in the footsteps of global efforts to seek alternative energy amid the skyrocketing price of oil.

"The biofuels boom that attracts big international players" is also a factor, says Javier Coello, director of the Intermediate Technology Development Group, a nongovernmental organization that has worked for several decades to promote alternative energy in development programs.

But he noted that another important factor has propelled the interest: global warming, which increases the "demand for cleaner energy for the future."

Peru currently depends on oil for 56 percent of its energy supply and more than half of the country's oil is imported. The Energy Ministry plans on replacing a big chunk of the imported oil with Peru's natural gas and will increase the country's current use of renewable energy from 27 percent to 33 percent.

While global warming has prompted an urgent need for renewable energy sources, these forms also have an environmental impact.

Among them are the hydroelectric plants in the Andes, whose use of enormous quantities of flowing water upsets the local flora and fauna. Another source is wood fuel, which accounts for 17 percent of renewable energy consumption in heavily-deforested Peru.

Small hydroelectric plants, the sugar cane-based bio-energy solar and wind power have a lower impact on the environment. And solar, wind and geothermic sources are just in their beginnings in Peru, says Energy Deputy Minister Pedro Gamia Aita.

Clean energy is more expensive

The higher cost of wind and solar power, however, compared with the price of gas, oil or hydroelectric energy is a major hindrance to a greater usage of clean energy.

Gamio Aita says the government is promoting a bill so that 5 percent of the energy supply comes from renewable energies other than hydroelectric power.

Congress is currently debating whether 5 percent or 1 percent will be allotted to these clean energy alternatives, a controversial issue since wind and solar power are very expensive and would inevitably cause electricity rates to increase.

If the law is approved, it could mean increased foreign and national investment in solar and wind power parks, mostly located along Peru's coastline, where most of the production and consumption areas are located.

Left out of the electric grid
The country's current en-

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COLOMBIA

Marches against FARC.

More than a million people jammed the streets of Bogota on Feb. 4 to protest the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country's largest guerilla group.

"No more kidnappings, no more lies, no more death, no more FARC," was their rallying cry. Residents held other anti-FARC marches in some 50 Colombian cities and 130 cities around the world.

The march was backed by the government of President Álvaro Uribe and various social and political organizations in the country. But the opposition Alternative Democratic Pole, the country's second-largest political party (*LP, Dec. 13, 2007*), called on marchers to protest not just the FARC but paramilitary groups and human rights violations allegedly committed by government security forces.

Relatives of captives being held hostage by the FARC (*LP, Feb. 6, 2008*) refused to participate and said they were instead in favor of a humanitarian accord.

Astrid Betancourt, sister of the French-Colombian former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, who has been held hostage by the FARC for six years, said she refused to march calling the demonstration a government-controlled event.

"The way they have called this march masks a justification of the President Álvaro Uribe policy of war, to close off any possibility of a solution from dialogue for the hostages' release," she told journalists. "The way these marches have been called sparks rage and does not work in favor of [their] liberation." —*LP*.

ergy supply situation is another story in the Peruvian highlands. In Santo Tomas, a small Andean village in the southern Cusco department, Ronal Huallapayunca, Hugo Sueña and Swiss development worker Simon Rüegegger, of the Program of Employment and Youth run by the Sicuani Prelature, promote the use of renewable energy to fight poverty.

They have built solar panels in rural schools and have taught local residents how to cook with solar power and how to better construct their homes according to local climate.

The majority of inhabitants in Chumbivilcas, the province where Santo Tomas is located, form part of the 25 percent of Peruvians who lack electricity.

"We have lent solar panels to rural schools that are not connected [to the grid] and some have responded very positively," Rüegegger said. "They are powering a computer and lamps to study at night."

But there have been other cases in which the solar panel only works for a short period of time due to a lack of maintenance. But Rüegegger says that powering through these solar panels is a true alternative to provide ener-

gy to isolated villages, even though it means a higher cost than conventional energy methods.

Who regulates alternative energy sources?

It is a challenge to keep track of all the renewable energy projects in Peru. Multilateral lending organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank or the World Bank finance some of these projects. Others receive funds from bilateral cooperation and Clean Development Mechanism projects oriented toward the carbon market. None receives government funding.

Gamio says that the ministry is hoping to discuss renewable energy in mid-May, when Lima hosts the EU-LAC Summit, a meeting of Latin American, Caribbean and European leaders.

Peru has become an attractive country for private investment and other outside funding, and renewable energy is no exception.

But some ask if it's enough to open the doors to foreign investors when the government lacks a plan to promote the use and development of this energy.

"Providing people with energy should be a task that the state assumes," Rüegegger said. □

MEXICO

John Ross in Chiapas

Rebel women

Zapatista women celebrate their long road to empowerment.

Dozens of Zapatista *compañeras*, many of them Tzeltal Maya from the Chiapas lowlands decked out in rainbow-hued ribbons and ruffles, their dark eyes framed by ski masks, emerged from the rustic auditorium to the applause of hundreds of international feminists gathered at the opening session of an all-women's "Encuentro," or meeting, hosted by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) late last year.

Last July, at the conclusion of a meeting with farmers from a dozen counties in the village with the haunting name of *La Realidad* — "The Reality" — a young rebel from that community, "Evarilda," apparently without clearing the invitation with the EZLN's General Command, called for the all-women encounter, explaining that men were invited to help with the logistics but would be asked to stay home and mind the children and the farm animals while the women plotted against capitalism.

True to Evarilda's word, at the Dec. 29-31 gathering which drew 300-500 non-Mexican mostly women activists to this village, officially the autonomous municipality of Francisco Gómez, and which honored the memory of the late Comandanta Ramona, men took a

decidedly secondary role. Signs posted around the area called "Resistance Until the New Dawn," a sort of Zapatista cultural and political center, advised their male counterparts that they could not act as "spokespersons, translators or representatives in the plenary sessions." Instead, their activities should be confined "to preparing and serving food, washing dishes, sweeping, cleaning out the latrines, fetching firewood, and minding the children."

A role change

Indeed, some young Zapatista men donned aprons imprinted with words like "tomato" and "EZLN" to work in the kitchens. Meanwhile, older men sat quietly on wooden benches outside of the auditorium, sometimes signaling amongst themselves when a *compañera* made a strong point or smiling proudly after a daughter or wife or sister or mother spoke their histories to the assembly.

The role of women within the Zapatista structure has changed drastically since the rebellion's gestation. When the founders of the EZLN, radicals from northern Mexican cities, first arrived in the Tzeltal-Tojolabal lowlands of southeastern Chiapas, women were kept monolingual by the husbands as a means of control, dedicated themselves to raising families and had little standing in the community. Those from the outside offered independence and invited the young women to training camps in the mountain where they would learn to wield a weapon and a smattering of Spanish. They became part of the EZLN fighting force.

On Jan. 1, 1994, when the Zapatistas seized the cities of San Cristobal and Ocosingo and five other county seats, women

MEXICO

The right to protest. The “All Rights for Everyone” National Network of Civil Human Rights Organizations launched a campaign Feb. 5 against the criminalization of social protest, under the slogan “Protest is a Right, Crackdown is a Crime.”

The organization, known by its Spanish initials as Red TDT, says that social protesters are increasingly being treated as criminals in Mexico and that the government continues to bring cases against protesters to court.

The organization says that authorities use tactics such as arbitrary arrests, pressing severe charges against protesters, such as political crimes or crimes against national security, or making social protest illegal or failing to provide due process.

“Social protest is the expression of citizens’ discontent with the decisions in which they were not involved that endanger them,” said Red TDT, pointing to 60 cases filed in courts.

Throughout the month of February, Red TDT will campaign against the criminalization of social protest in 20 of Mexico’s 32 states, pushing for social protest to be recognized as a right and an “indispensable act in a true democratic society.” —LP.

comprised a third of the rebel army — women fighters were martyred in the bloody battle for Ocosingo.

Integrating women into the military structure proved easier than cultivating participation in the civil structure, which was rooted in the life of the villages. Although women occupied five seats on the 19-member Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee, the EZLN’s General Command, their numbers fell far shorter in 29 autonomous municipal councils and the five “Juntas de Buen Gobierno” (“Good Government Committees”) which administrated Zapatista regional autonomy.

But as the Zapatista social infrastructure grew, women became health and education promoters and leaders in the commissions that planned these campaigns.

Women’s liberation in Zapatista culture has been boosted by the rebels’ prohibitions against the consumption of alcohol in their communities. Whereas many inland Maya towns like San Juan Chamula are saturated in alcohol with soaring rates of spousal and child abuse, the Zapatista zone has the lowest abuse indicators in the state, according to numbers offered by the women’s commission of the Chiapas state congress. As a state, Chiapas has one of the highest numbers of feminicides in Mexico — 1,456 women were murdered here between 2000 and 2004 (LP, Feb. 9, 2005 and April 19, 2006). The low incidence of violence against women in the zone of Zapatista influence is more remarkable because much of the lowland rebel territory straddles the Guatemalan border, a country where 500 women are murdered each year.

COLOMBIA

Susan Abad in Bogota

Millennium Goals’ progress disputed

Discrepancies in measurements cause varied opinions on goals’ completion.

Only seven years away from the end of the term given to complete the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) — which 189 countries pledged to reach to alleviate poverty in a historic meeting carried out in New York in 2000 — there is still no consensus in Colombia on whether all the pro-

A story to tell

With the men tending the kids and cleaning latrines, the women told their stories in the assemblies. Many of the younger *compañeras* like Evarilda had grown up in the rebellion — which is now in its 24th year — and spoke of learning to read and write in rebel schools and their work as social promoters or as teachers or as farmers and mothers. Zapatista grandmothers told of the first years of the rebellion and veteran *comandantas* like Susana, who spoke movingly of her longtime *compañera* Ramona, “the smallest of the small,” recalled how in the war, the men and the women learned to share housekeeping tasks like cooking and washing clothes.

“Many of the *compañeros* still do not want to understand our demands,” Comandanta Sandra admonished, “but we cannot struggle against the bad government without them.”

The Zapatista *compañeras*’ struggle for inclusion and parity with their male counterparts grates against separatist politics that some militant first-world feminists who journeyed to the jungle espouse. Lesbian couples and collectives seemed a substantial faction in the first-world feminist delegations. Although no Zapatista women have publicly come out, the EZLN has been zealous in its inclusion of lesbians and gays and incorporated their struggles in the rainbow of marginalized constituents with whose cause they align themselves.

Among international delegations in attendance were women representatives from agrarian movements as far removed from Chiapas as Brazil and Senegal, organized by Via Campesina, an alliance that represents millions of poor farmers in the developing world. □

jected goals will be reached by 2015.

Due to differences in the methods used by the National Department of Planning (DNP, for its initials in Spanish) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to measure the goals’ indicators, there are varied assessments of the eight agreed upon goals: to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environment sustainability; and establish a global partnership for development.

“We currently have three levels of national indicators: those from the DNP, which has 31 indicators, those from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and those managed by the UNDP (51 indicators). The three, in many cases, do not measure exactly the same and the sources are not always the same,” explained José Fernando Arias, Social Development director of the DNP.

Government optimism

César Caballero, UNDP coordinator for the Millennium Project goals, confirms that the first goal of reducing poverty in Colombia

LATIN AMERICA/ CARIBBEAN

Economic slowdown. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is predicting slower economic growth in the region this year amid a global market downturn, especially in the United States, Latin America's chief trade partner.

According to the institution's "Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean 2007" report, released in December, the region's economies grew 5.6 percent last year — 0.3 percent more than in 2006 (*LP, Feb. 7, 2006*). But ECLAC is predicting a slower growth of 4.5 percent for this year.

In addition to market volatility, ECLAC says that there are internal risks that are expected to produce slower growth in the region, including low currency value, rising inflation rates and an increase in public spending.

LATIN AMERICA/ CARIBBEAN Gross domestic product growth (%)

Country	2006	2007
Panama	7.5	9.5
Argentina	8.5	8.6
Venezuela	10.0	8.5
Peru	7.2	8.2
Dominican Rep.	10.0	7.5
Uruguay	7.3	7.5
Colombia	6.0	7.0
Costa Rica	6.8	7.0
Cuba	12.5	7.0
Honduras	5.6	6.0
Paraguay	4.0	5.5
Guatemala	4.6	5.5
Trin. & Tob.	12.0	5.5
Chile	4.4	5.3
Brazil	2.8	5.3
El Salvador	3.8	4.5
Bolivia	4.5	4.0
Mexico	4.8	3.3
Haiti	2.5	3.3
Nicaragua	3.7	3.0
Ecuador	4.9	2.7
Jamaica	2.6	1.5

Source: ECLAC

to 28.5 percent by 2015, "seems unlikely to be reached," and explains that the reason he holds this pessimistic projection is because "in 2002 we had 52 percent poverty and now, despite having advanced, we are at 45 percent poverty."

The DPN, however, projects that by 2010 poverty will decrease to 35 percent, which would make it likely to arrive at 28.5 percent by 2015.

Arias further claims that not only will they reach the goal to reduce extreme poverty to 8.8 percent — which was at 20.4 percent in 1991 — but he hopes to go beyond the projected goal and reach 6 percent by 2015.

Another concern for the UNDP is achieving universal primary education. In 1992, the illiteracy rate between the ages of 15 and 24 — one of the indicators agreed upon — was 3.7 percent in 1992, which would hopefully go down to 1 percent by 2015.

Caballero estimates that "the illiteracy rate in this range in 2006 was 2.1 percent, and following that current reduction trend would mean that the illiteracy rate of that range reaches 1.6 percent in 2015."

But the DPN projects that the illiteracy rate for this age range will be 1.4 percent in 2010, implying that the goal of 1 percent could be met by 2015.

The UNDP expert says that they additionally fear incompleteness of the fourth goal — regarding the reduction of child mortality — to have 95 percent vaccination coverage for children younger than 5 years through the Extended Immunization Plan. But for the DPN, this goal will be achieved by 2010.

Both organizations coincide, however, in their concern for promoting gender equality and empowering women due to the increase in violence against women and for their sparse political representation in parliament — two important goal indicators. Caballero

says that "women make up 50 percent of the population and there are hardly 12 percent women parliament members."

Policies not enough

One issue the DNP and UNDP undoubtedly coincide on is the immense inequality between the rural and urban areas, even within the same departments in Colombia.

"The averages of goal reaching are pushed by the big cities, but the rest is really trailing behind," said Caballero, who added that if the rural areas and less-developed departments were measured separately, "it is likely that none of the MDGs would be achieved in these places."

Likewise, Arias claimed that "the MDGs will not be completed in the straggling zones of Colombia nor any other country in the world. What we can do is to make a great effort to reduce the regional and societal gaps."

But national policy is not enough to reduce the gaps, said Caballero.

"It is essential to implement regional policies and projects that are based on regional realities. Departments and towns must be reached so that these policies are flexible in practice and can be adapted to each of the issues," he said.

For this reason the UNDP assists mayors and governors in the most vulnerable regions and, by adapting technical experience to their reality, helps them to identify initial indicators as a base from which they can design their own policies for social development.

In the meantime, the DPN has a Transfer Monitoring System, which serves to assign resources to towns that lag behind and supervise the use of these resources in key sectors such as health, potable water and education. "We will not achieve anything by having a fair assignment system if the spending is not done well," said Arias. □

inbrief

- The United States is no longer the top destination of exports from the Andean Community. **Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru** exported some US\$4.4 billion to that the United States between January and September 2007, almost half of the \$8.5 billion exported in the same period in 2006. Most exports are now destined to Central and South America, Europe and Asia.

- The US State Department admitted on Feb. 9 that a security officer in its embassy in **Bolivia** asked visiting scholars and Peace

Corps volunteers to report about Cubans and Venezuelans working in the country. President Evo Morales declared the officer an "undesirable person" and he was recalled to Washington.

- **Brazil** is expecting to double its ethanol production within five years, from 18 million cubic meters a year to 35 million in order to satisfy a growing global demand for biofuels. To achieve this objective, Brazil requires 2.5 million hectares of sugar cane.

- The Farabundo Martí Na-

tional Liberation Front (FMLN) of **El Salvador** has denied claims that the Venezuelan government is going to finance its campaign in the country's 2009 presidential elections, after comments from a US intelligence officer.

- Former bishop Fernando Lugo made his candidacy official for April's presidential election in **Paraguay**. Lugo, candidate for the opposition Patriotic Alliance for Change party, is the favorite. He faces retired Gen. Lino Oviedo, who led a failed coup in 1996.

Corporate Social Responsibility:

Communication & Information

LATIN AMERICA

Interview with José Luis López Follegatti, environmental specialist

“Information is not just how it’s released, but how it arrives”

In recent years the issue of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has kindled varied opinions and debate in the region, including the polemic caused by those who defend its voluntary nature and those who stress the need to regulate it. To look at this issue in greater depth, we have talked to José Luis López Follegatti, advisor on dialogue, leadership and environment related issues in the nongovernmental organization Labor, based in Peru. Labor, along with other Peruvian and Latin American non-profits, forms part of Red Puentes, or Bridges Network, which promotes CSR from a citizen rights perspective.

In the following interview, conducted by Elsa Chanduví Jaña, managing editor of LATINAMERICA PRESS, López Follegatti talks about the importance of the right to information within the framework of CSR, highlighting that a lot still needs to be done to get at this information.

What are the basic common principals related to CSR that are managed in Latin America?

The most operative principals [are]: transparency in what is done, permanent information, participation systems — what you do can be done better if you make sure people are informed, even more so if they get involved in what you do; being accountable for actions; the ability to make allies — when you do something and you can involve one, two other actors, this makes it better. And also the ability to awaken others to their own abilities, their own potential, so that they themselves can exercise an activity that not only depends on small contributions or gifts, but their own ability, initiatives and support.

How are CSR practices currently being developed in the region?

CSR is still unequally developed in the region, it is not a practice incorporated by the majority of companies. But there are enough good examples that we can get an idea of what it is, though it's different in each country.

There are good corporate alliances — like the Ethos Institute in Brazil that makes alliances and sets up suc-



José Luis López Follegatti

WILLIAM CHICO

cessful social responsibility projects — to individual alliances made by companies with mayors and communities as in Peru, or social responsibility that is practiced with the state or by the state, with a government that channels this social responsibility and makes it more effective, like in Chile's case.

There are also foundations created, like in Venezuela, Colombia and Argentina, that receive funding from corporations and do major works in favor of the most vulnerable communities. Then, there are different ways for companies to build their relationship with each country's government and society; each way is being tested, each has its own virtues and its own limitations.

How should CSR practices be in order to really support sustainable development and rights?

[They should] break away from several current notions. [First] from the utilitarian notion, that is, the idea that I am socially responsible because it is convenient for me that people are calm and that I can get more investments. Though this is partly true, it cannot be the fundamental guiding aspect. So they have to get out of this direct utilitarian notion.

The other is "I am going to simply be the most giving and paternal in order to support the poorest communities, but their opinion or participation doesn't really matter to me." It is a philanthropic notion, which is not lasting.

The other notion is to tell the state, "I give you money and you are the one who has to solve the problem of being more socially responsible. Don't get me in this mess." Then they pressure the state to be more efficient. This notion, though it is necessary to have the state regulate, direct and facilitate the process of relationships and support, is not good because it relieves the company of taking responsibility.

Another general vision is: "You are socially responsible not because you want to meet one of the community's immediate needs, but you want to transfer a capacity so that the capacity transferred is assimilated and promotes activity in this social sector." But this is not achieved between a company and a community, it is achieved with an extensive relationship that

“It is not only a duty for companies to inform, but a strategic need.”

— J. L. López Follegati

has many alliances so that all actors are mobilized: the university, governments, mayors, then all together bring about a final result of acquired capacity.

Do you think there is any relationship between CSR and the right to information and communication?

It is one of the most interesting points and is demanded to be practiced. These days there is so much speed, access and fluidity of information and communication, if you don't put yourself in the information circuit and say “here I am with my information, with my activities and I'm making them available for everyone,” the flow of the information and communication circuit that generates global integration can quickly bring about a distortion in the information. And that company, due to not wanting to inform, ends up trapped with distorted information on its activity and [people] develop an opinion based on that distorted information.

Thus it is not only a duty for companies to inform, but a strategic need, because if they don't inform, others will inform for them and they cannot be sure what information others are going to give.

Information can also be seen as the communities' right, correct?

PERU

Milagros Salazar in Lima

Muted dialogue

Communication between mining companies and communities in dire need of repair.

Cabuyal, situated on the border with Ecuador, is the most isolated town in the northern province of Ayabaca in the Piura department. Here, the Majaz mining company could make a strong social and environmental impact with their copper and molybdenum Rio Blanco project.

But the Cabuyal inhabitants, despite their close proximity to the mining site, are far from knowing the benefits and potential risks of their neighbor's activities.

In order to access the complete environmental evaluation of Majaz exploration (*LP, Oct. 3, 2007*), a townperson would have to travel more than 20 hours on foot, horse and bus until reaching the government offices of the Regional Mining Directorate in the city of Piura. And, on not finding the document, the journey would have to continue on down to Lima in an additional 14-hour bus ride in order to reach the archives of the Ministry of Energy and Mines.

In its 2006 report on the Majaz case, the Peruvian Ombudsman detected that the

These days, rights are at the same time needs and conveniences with the other party. In this case, since information is a right and at the same time a convenience — we'll call it that for now — for the company, then this can be improved through the creativity of both actors. Then information is not just reporting an incident; information is the flow of a monitoring, observation and analysis system of what happens in a certain place when a company with a certain level of influence acts.

The monitoring, observation, analysis and evaluation system works with the company, but with the participation of the community, the NGO, the university, then it is going to react by providing valid, legitimate and timely information when it works effectively.

The other problem with information is, do I understand it? Can I challenge that information? Information is not just how it's released but how it arrives. How it arrives is what must be worked on. But all inform, there's no doubt about that. The state and the companies inform. But do I assure that the information arrived how I wanted it to? Some people make allies with NGOs so that they help ensure that the information adequately arrives to the communities. There are systems being built: legitimate audits, environmental audits that everyone shares. □

company did not fully comply with law requiring them to make public information available.

The journey to try to become an informed community member in a mining activity zone is full of obstacles and, additionally, the communication channels between communities and companies are usually blocked.

Experts claim that if companies were to look for effective ways to communicate with the communities surrounding their projects to listen and consider citizens' opinions as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the companies could contribute to preventing socio-environmental conflict, cooperate in environmental management and promote the townspeople's rights.

The key to being responsible

At first sight, CSR is understood as a corporate compromise to contribute to the prosperity of areas inside and outside their domain, including worker relations, good tax standing, protecting the environment and working toward inhabitants' well-being.

“The key to CSR is getting a company involved in a community's development,” sustained Iván Lanegra, manager of Natural Resources and Environmental Management in the regional government of Junin in central Peru. Then, said Lanegra, when the company links its activities to the future of these people's, no longer acting independently, “measures to establish good communication policies are taken.”

This method of approach, where central, regional, and local government plays a cen-



JORGE GARCÍA

Smelter and ecological tourist announcement of the company Doe Run.

tral role in enforcement and promotion, depends greatly on the access and quality of information: how transparent or trustworthy it is and if it is available or not so that communities can participate as informed citizens.

But this has become a remarkable challenge since the Environmental Evaluation — which companies must show to communities as well as the state before they begin exploration— and the Environmental Impact Studies

term for presenting observations on the evaluation from 25 to 20 days.

For Alice Abanto, the Ombudsman's commissioner for Public Services and Environment, this feeds the perception that the state is disinterested in what the communities think, causing the social validation process of the projects to convert "into a mere formality within an administrative process."

Clouded norms

In Peru there are very generic and weak norms on the issue of communication. The General Law on Environment establishes a company's voluntary adoption of socially responsible policies in the zones where they operate in order to mitigate or eliminate the impacts of their operations, and also lays out the government's duty to guarantee access to environmental information and citizen participation. But this norm is usually ignored or ineffective.

Regarding the regulation on citizen consultation and participation for approval of the environmental study, companies are obligated to carry out workshops and talks in order to gather the inhabitants' opinions before the mineral extraction phase, but are not obligated to incorporate the opinions.

Economist José De Echave of CooperAcción confirmed that communication is not set up as a "two way" process that allows suggestions to be implemented to generate "balanced relationships."

According to lawyer Fabián Pérez of the Center for Analysis and Conflict Resolution in the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, dialogue efforts must be understood as part of the communication challenge for development that allows information to be conveyed honestly and transparently to these isolated communities that have low education levels due to the state's absence.

Communication is no longer just an act of good will, but an economic necessity if companies want to prevent conflict and to advance their projects, making dialogue initiation a key element for progress. □

Communication and information: Blocked path

- In 2006, the nongovernmental organization Grufides discovered that Yanacocha — the biggest gold mining company in Latin America — copied two of their environmental evaluation reports word for word regarding the mining exploration stage of two different projects, which compromises the quality of these technical studies as well as the information's validity that, according to the law, must be available to the public. The projects in question are Yanacocha East-Basins of the Rejo and Porcon River (Peizo) and the Yanacocha East Zone-Basins of the Chonta and Quebrada Honda Rivers (Peyze), in the northern Cajamarca department.
- The communities surrounding the Blanco River project headed by the Majaz mining company in the high Ayabaca and Huancabamba provinces, have to travel between 15 and 20 hours from their towns to the city of Piura in order to access the environmental evaluation. In the town closest to the mining company only an executive summary was left even though the law demands that a copy of the full document must be left, according to the government Ombudsman.
- US company Doe Run promotes health and information campaigns on how contamination by the toxic smelting agents used in La Oroya — located in the central highlands in Peru — can be reduced through good health and hygiene. But environmental organizations warn that with these campaigns the company sidesteps its responsibility of significantly reducing their metallurgical plant's harmful emissions. According to studies, more than 90 percent of children residing in La Oroya have levels of lead in their blood above the 10 microgram per deciliter limit permitted by the World Health Organization.

Companies promote integral citizenship

A wider notion of social responsibility gains territory.

Achieving integral citizenship for all Brazilians is the core of social responsibility, a concept that has been extending across Brazil.

This responsibility includes companies' ethical participation in their relationship with all links of the productive chain, including stakeholders, not only in terms of financing a social project or program, but also integrating the wider notion of social responsibility.

Augusto Rodrigues, director of corporate communication and institutional relations at CPFL Energy, the principal private group in Brazil's electricity sector, observed that in recent years there was an evolution in the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR), which includes some concerns for the future: the future of the company, the community and the planet. In this way, the company becomes a protagonist, giving incentive to mobilizing and helping give information on issues that will affect the future, such as global warming, education and the fight to end corruption.

Ethical compromise

The notion of CSR really began to spread after the action taken by organiza-

tions like the Ethos Institute of Companies and Social Responsibility, created in São Paulo in 1998.

The Ethos Institute promotes the idea that a company is ethically responsible for its workers' well-being, for its customers and the community where it operates. The idea also includes the need for companies to be concerned about the environment, being attentive to the origin of the products they work with and not accepting, for example, materials made from child exploitation.

Irreversible tendency

"Corporate social responsibility is an irreversible tendency, not a trend," said businessman Luis Norberto Pascoal, president of DPaschoal Group and one of the biggest proponents of the concept's diffusion in Brazil. Pascoal originally conceived the idea of DPaschoal Foundation, created in 1989 to give incentive to projects and programs on education.

According to a study conducted by the Group of Institutes, Foundations and Companies (GIFE, for its initials in Portuguese), created in 1995, education is the area that companies are most attentive to in their practice of social responsibility. The 2005-2006 study revealed that of the 68 institutions examined, 55 implemented or supported education-related initiatives. The amount disclosed by 34 organizations adds up to 124 million Brazilian reais (US\$70.4 million) for investments in education in 2005. GIFE estimates that the total investment in education is at least twice that amount.

Various studies are showing that social action taken by companies is increasing in the nation, as part of an amplified vision of social responsibility. According to the Company Social Action Survey by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Ipea), with ties to the Ministry of Planning, company participation in socially responsible activities increased from 59 to 69 percent between 2000 and 2004. This means that in 2004 close to 600,000 companies voluntarily participated in social action in Brazil. Furthermore, it is estimated that companies invest more than R\$5 billion (\$2.84 billion) in this social action.

The Business Pact Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Brazilian Highways — launched at the end of 2006 and supported by big companies like *Petróleo Brasileiro* (Petrobras), *Arcor do Brasil*, *Suzano Petroquímica* and *Itaipú Binacional* — is one of the most concrete indicators of how the concept of corporate social responsibility has evolved in Brazil.

Pascoal believes that company social responsibility still has a long way to come in Brazil, insofar as it is a concept that should be practiced by all of society, by all social sectors, as part of seeking full citizen participation.

"Brazilians have good hearts, are cooperative, but the majority of these actions have the characteristics of charity, of help to attend an immediate need. We still don't have a culture built on social responsibility, said Pascoal. □

Petrobras closely watched

Nongovernmental organizations closely follow company actions in Brazil.

Petrobras, the Brazilian company that has some of the biggest potential impacts on environment, is trying to implement a policy of social and environmental responsibility through their Development and Citizenship Program. The project focuses on the company's compliance with public policies, respecting diversity, making youths a priority and seeking to make their actions sustainable.

However, Petrobras confronts critical actions such as those related to spills. In 2000, 4 million liters of crude oil was spilled in the Iguazu river in Parana, which roused them to make an investment of \$3.8 billion Brazilian reais (US\$2.2 billion) over three years through the Program of Excellence in Environmental Management and Operational Security, resulting in a 97 percent decrease of spills between 2000 and 2002.

The construction of the Urucu-Manaus gas pipeline in the middle of the Amazon has also sparked concern among environmental and human rights organizations with respect to its effects on 10 nearby native communities over time. The pipeline, 670 km long, is in its final stage of construction and will carry natural gas from the Urucu oil zone, in the Coari municipality, to Manaus, capital of the Amazonas state.

Petrobras is also closely monitored by Brazilian non-profits for their activity in Latin America. For example, the Project for a Sustainable Brazil/FASE launched the book *Petrobras: integration or exploitation?* with articles about critical situations involving Petrobras, such as the project in the Yasuni National Park in Ecuador, where the Huaorani indigenous tribe lives (*LP*, July 27, 2005 and May 16, 2007). —JPM.

Corporal punishment abolished

Uruguay and Venezuela pioneer legislation in favor of minors.

Uruguay became the first Latin American country to legally abolish corporal punishment and other forms of humiliating treatment, a recommendation made in the United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children 2006.

"We know that the worst violence is invisible and cannot be controlled by law, but I think we have advanced a great deal: this law will change our minds, yours, mine, everyone's ... to modify the cultural norm that associates education with physical punishment," said Dep. Nora Castro of the ruling Frente Amplio.

The three short articles of Law 18.214, approved in November 2007, incorporated into the Children's and Adolescents' code a statute that prohibits "parents or guardians, as well as any person in charge of the care or education of children and adolescents, the use of physical punishment or any kind of humiliating treatment as a form of correction or discipline."

The bill had been approved unanimously by the Senate in August 2007, but when the debate reached the Deputies' Chamber, lawmakers of the right-wing opposition *Blanco* Party changed its stance and formed a front to knock the norm down.

Congress "is acting as a servant of the foreign body, who has confused us with a little banana republic," said *Blanco* Dep. Sergio Botana, referring to the United Nations.

Giving the example of a mother who slaps her child as he is about to stick his fingers into an electric socket, *Blanco* Dep. Luis Lacalle Pou, son of former President Luis Alberto Lacalle (1990-95), says parents should have the right to "moderately punish" their children or "give them a tug on the ear if they misbehave, hasn't that happened to any of us before?"

"From now on, I will be a criminal because

I punish or continue to punish my children," said Botana. "This law limits parents' power and perforates the family institution. Today everyone is talking about the rights of children. When is the government going to present a bill that defends the family?"

Punishment widespread

An investigation of the Arco Iris, or "Rainbow" Program that attends to victims of child and sexual abuse says that manifestations of violence against children is a problem present in all social strata, and is committed by adults with both high and low education levels.

A 2005 study by the organization Save the Children-Sweden, says: "The forms of violence against children are institutionalized in Latin America" and a report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) found that "Latin America is one of the most violent areas in the world and minors are the principal victims" (*LP*, June 15, 2005).

On Dec. 10, Venezuela became the second country in the region to abolish any kind of violence or humiliating treatment in schools or the home with a children's protection law.

The new legislation considers physical punishment "the use of force with the intention of causing some level of bodily pain or discomfort" to modify children's behavior. Humiliating punishment was defined as "any kind of offensive, degrading, devaluing, stigmatizing or ridiculing treatment exercised in rearing or education" of minors.

Other initiatives in the region

Days after Venezuela's approval, the legal commission of the Chilean Senate began to debate a bill that would change the Civil Code's article that allows parents to "correct" their child's behavior by stipulating that this excludes any kind of physical punishment.

According to Save the Children-Sweden, with Uruguay's and Venezuela's legislations, there are 18 countries in the world that protect children and adolescents from abuse by their

elders, while only Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica and Peru are developing legislation to ban physical punishment.

UNICEF cheered Uruguay's decision, but warned that just the law will not stop violence against children. "I doubt the state could tell parents how to raise their children," said Gimol Pintos, a UNICEF official in Rio de la Plata.

"The state is obligated to find a way to teach parents," said Uruguayan ruling party lawmaker Edgardo Ortuño, asserting that physical punishment should never be a recourse to teach a child. □

CHILE/PERU

No war. In a Feb. 8 statement, the Humanist Movement pushed for a peaceful solution to the maritime border dispute between Chile and Peru.

Peru filed a case with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague last month so the body defines the sea border with its neighbor to the south. Peru says the border should be drawn in an equidistant, diagonal line from the coast while Chile says that a border was already established by two 1950s treaties for a horizontally-drawn maritime border. Peru claims those two treaties were just fishing agreements. Some 35,000 square kilometers

(13,500 square miles) are being disputed.

Tomás Hirsh, former Chilean presidential candidate and Humanist Movement spokesman for Latin America, and Javier Zorrilla, the movement's spokesman in Peru, said that the ICJ is the appropriate channel to resolve this dispute and that both countries should develop a policy of peace, justice and integration and set up a disarmament plan to fight against poverty.

Relations between the neighbors have often turned frosty, a rivalry dating back to the 1879-1883 War of the Pacific when Chile took control of a valuable portion of southern Peru. —LP.

Unprepared for climate change

Region especially vulnerable to natural disasters.

The 2007-2008 Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) examines the impact of climate change and warns that global warming could have a disastrous impact on many developing nations if world leaders do not take serious steps to reduce carbon emissions.

The effects of climate change will have a particularly strong impact on developing countries that lack the resources to adapt to global warming and protect themselves against disasters such as drought or hurricanes.

The report concludes that the developed world must rethink an economic model based on unfettered consumption that has proven environmentally unsustainable. However, the bitter wrangling that went on during the recent Bali Climate Change Conference made it clear that many developed nations lack the political will to resist mounting pressure from the motor vehicle industry to reduce pollution targets.

Although no one will escape the effects of climate change, it is clear that developing countries will be hit hardest as natural disasters become more frequent and those with the least resources sink even deeper into poverty.

While this is undoubtedly true, most experts agree that climate change has made the world more prone to hurricanes. As well as making the isthmus more vulnerable to natural disasters, the rise in ocean temperature will have a strong impact on biodiversity in the region, as can be seen by the progressive erosion of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef.

Impact of climate change on the isthmus

The report concludes that climate change will worsen poverty and inequality in a region that already has one of the worst inequality indices in the world.

The chasm between developed and developing countries will also widen.

Inequality in terms of human development makes a country more vulnerable to the impact of climate change. For instance when Hurricane Stan hit Guatemala, disparities between the indigenous and non-indigenous population prevented a speedy recovery in the aftermath of the disaster.

The Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) manages the International Disaster Database (EM-DAT) which records all information on natural disasters across the globe. However, EM-DAT has failed to record the impact of natural disasters on marginal urban populations such as shanty town dwellers or on remote rural areas.

When Hurricane Stan hit Guatemala, EM-DAT recorded the 500,000 people who were directly affected by the disaster — those who died or lost their homes — but not those who suffered from chronic malnutrition after they lost their crops.

The impact of Hurricane Mitch, which hit Honduras in 1998 is another case in point. In the aftermath of the hurricane, the country's poorest households lost between 30 percent and 40 percent of their income after their crops were destroyed. As a result, the number of Hondurans living below the poverty line rose from 69 percent to 77 percent.

Honduras is one of the most unequal countries in the world with a Gini coefficient of 54 for wealth distribution, which means that the poorest 20 percent of the population receives 3 percent of the country's income. When a country like Honduras is hit by a natural disaster and the poor lose what little income they may have, the vicious circle of poverty and inequality only worsens. This should act as an ominous warning for Central America where sustained economic growth over the past 14 years has failed to reduce inequality.

Safety measures

According to "Climate Change in Latin America and the Caribbean 2006," a report published by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), points out that Latin America has made progress in terms of developing disaster mitigation programs but warns that much work remains to be done for the region to adapt to changing weather patterns.

However, the world's poor are not passive victims when disasters strike. Although many people in the developing world cannot afford insurance policies, they have developed their own insurance mechanisms, such as gathering livestock during normal seasons which can then be sold in times of crisis or diversifying agricultural produce and means of income.

For instance, in El Salvador, a survey revealed that people living in urban shanty towns invest up to 9 percent of their income in protecting their dwellings against floods and use family labor to build walls and drainage canals.

Indigenous people will be among the worst affected by climate change as they depend on ecosystems which will suffer the impact of changing weather patterns (*LP, Nov. 14, 2007*).

The report concludes that developed countries, home to just 15 percent of the world's population, generate almost half of all carbon emissions and must take responsibility for the effects of this in developing countries by reducing their emissions 30 percent by 2020, and by greater investment in funds to prevent and mitigate natural disasters in these countries.

Governments in the region must also play a role in combating climate change in their own way, such as reformulating their energy policies.

Researcher Gian Carlo Delgado Ramos, of the Autonomous Metropolitan University of Azcapotzalco in Mexico, says increased hydroelectric projects that are booming throughout Meso-America as a part of Plan Puebla Panama (PPP), have been erroneously labeled environmentally-friendly (*LP, Nov. 29, 2006 and Oct. 31, 2007*).

The researcher says that they contribute to global warming since vegetation and other organic material is flooded and decomposes with exposure to large quantities of carbon dioxide and methane. □

Political conflict unleashes media war

Government and private media both accuse each other of lying to the public.



Bolivian press faces off in ideological battle.

"Bolivia changes, Evo fulfills!" exclaims a brief televised message promoting the government. Later, another spot follows where an elderly lady dubbed "Doña María," demands that President Evo Morales "put hate aside" and converse with the opposition. The message is signed by opposition leaders and constitutes part of the media war in Bolivia.

A flip through televised news programs reflects a divided country. The national channel is in hands of the current government and favors the president. The majority of the private channels, in turn, severely criticize the leader's actions.

But news from the opposition is often interrupted by the government's advertising spots. Since private media has a much greater reach, the government buys advertising space from them, resulting in an ideological schizophrenia between informative news and government propaganda.

According to journalist and media analyst Rafael Archondo, the private media acted with caution during the first months of Morales' administration.

"The conflict just began in July 2006 when elections for constitutional assembly representatives were held," he said. "The private media understood that Morales' Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) could end up becoming a hegemonic party. The harshest criticism began when MAS proposed that the new constitution be approved by a simple majority, allowing them to write it without making allies. The law required a two-thirds majority [*LP*, Nov. 15, 2006]."

Morales counteracted by accusing the media and journalists of being "liars" and not reporting the social progress made by his administration. Some private media then responded by reporting the accusations to the Inter-American Press Association.

"Finally, social movements close to the government started to directly attack the television channels considered most against the government," Archondo said.

The national channel's headquarters in Santa Cruz was attacked by youths allied with the opposition.

Self-censorship

Though various media representatives accuse the government of trying to silence them, Archondo believes that state censorship is not possible.

"There is a lot of media in Bolivia, so it would be very difficult to control. The current situation demonstrates the contrary: that the media can criticize the government and, in fact, is doing it without end," he claimed.

For Archondo, the problem is not an even-

tual state censorship, but rather the already active self-censorship.

"The newspapers *El Deber* from Santa Cruz — the city that most opposes President Morales — and *El Alto* from El Alto — the city that most supports him — are owned by the same editorial group, but do not publish the same news nor promote the same opinions. The media feels itself obligated to adapt to the demands of its regions, and that implies self-censorship," he explained.

In recent months, political and regional conflicts have intensified, particularly due to the controversial approval of the new constitution on Nov. 24 without the presence of the opposition (*LP*, Dec. 12, 2007) and the government's proposal to drastically cut back state funding of regional budgets, which are controlled mainly by the opposition.

Public against private

As tension rises, Bolivians are growing increasingly accustomed to seeing up to 10 political television ads per hour.

Sociologist José Mirtenbaum signals that the private media is controlled by a relatively small group of owners.

"There are only a few owners and they all know each other. They have interests in market finance and banking, and some are landowners," Mirtenbaum said. "The private media is opposed to anything that resembles a social fight and quote-unquote 'communism.' They treat the indigenous president as well as the government in general as a target. But the government's mistakes also contribute to multiplying these criticisms."

The public media, on the other hand, has always been managed by the government in power — a custom that has not changed with Morales. But with almost all the private media against it, "the government feels obligated to defend itself even more strongly on public radio and television, which is why the partiality of these resources is obvious," Archondo said.

The media with the greatest impact on public opinion is television and radio, which are free and reach the entire nation. The newspapers have few readers due to their relatively high price (US\$0.50) and the population's low education level. The most popular newspaper, *El Deber* from Santa Cruz, only sells 25,000 copies among the country's 9 million inhabitants.

"In Bolivia there are 4 million adults who use the radio, television and newspapers in order to be informed. The majority know very well that these are tendentious and usually choose the ones that are closest to their own political thinking," said Mirtenbaum.

It is good news, Mirtenbaum believes, that internet access is increasing. Several years ago the cities grew full of internet cafes and now they are reaching the rural populations as well.

"The youths use the internet for fun — to play videogames and those things. But they also look up information and realize that there is something beyond Bolivia. Little by little, the internet is opening the world for them," he affirms. □

BELIZE

Latinamerica Press/Central America Report

New government takes over

Prime minister must resolve pending dilemmas.

On Feb. 12 the new Belizean government headed by Primer Minister Dean Barrow initiated its term.

Barrow, a 56 year-old Afro-descendent and leader of the opposition United Democratic Party (UDP), won 25 of 31 seats in parliament on the Feb. 7 elections. He largely defeated now former prime minister Said Musa, of the People's United Party (PUP), in power since 1998.

"This is clearly a people's victory," Barrow told a local radio. "They're giving us a huge vote of confidence."

Barrow's campaign focused on the implementation of an honest government with strong principles. His promises include measures to increase independent and impartial investigation into the corruption accusations hanging over the previous government.

Barrow — who will be in office until 2013 — also promised transparency in the business deals carried out by the government, proposing a revision of the Freedom of Information Act and the removal of secret clauses in official contracts.

The new administration has 16 ministers who, according to Barrow, were selected with



Dean Barrow

"This is clearly a people's victory. They're giving us a huge vote of confidence."

— Dean Barrow

geographic distribution and ethnic equilibrium in mind.

Various cultures, languages and ethnic groups coexist in Belize, including *mestizo*, Garifuna and Mayan indigenous, Chinese, Indo-Asian and Arabic, among others.

Though the official language is English, the majority of Belizeans speak Spanish. Some 46 percent of the 297,000 inhabitants are Spanish-speaking, while only 4 percent are native English speakers. A significant 33 percent speak Belizean creole.

Principal challenges

The greatest feats that Barrow must face are the external trade deficit, external debt and poverty that affects one third of the population. Though the UDP has promised to increase the economic growth rate by at least 6 percent annually, the International Monetary Fund estimates that the growth will be 3 percent for this year, similar to last year.

Another priority for Barrow will be the border dispute with Guatemala. While his party's opposition, the PUP, is in favor of a referendum on whether to take the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague or to an arbitration, the UDP plans to go directly to the ICJ. In either case, Belize will inevitably have to give concessions to Guatemala.

Belize won independence from Great Britain in 1981, but was only officially recognized in 1993 by Guatemala, which claims more than 11,000 square kilometers (4,250 square miles) — half of Belizean territory. In 2005, both countries signed the Agreement on a Framework for Negotiations and Confidence-Building Measures that would put an end to the Guatemalan claim.

Belizeans also voted in a referendum in the Feb. 7 elections, in favor of the eight Senate members being elected by popular vote and not named by the government, as established in the current Constitution.

The Belizean political system is a parliamentary democracy based on the British model. It forms part of the British Commonwealth and recognizes the English queen, Elizabeth II — represented by governor-general, Colville Young — as head of state. □

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