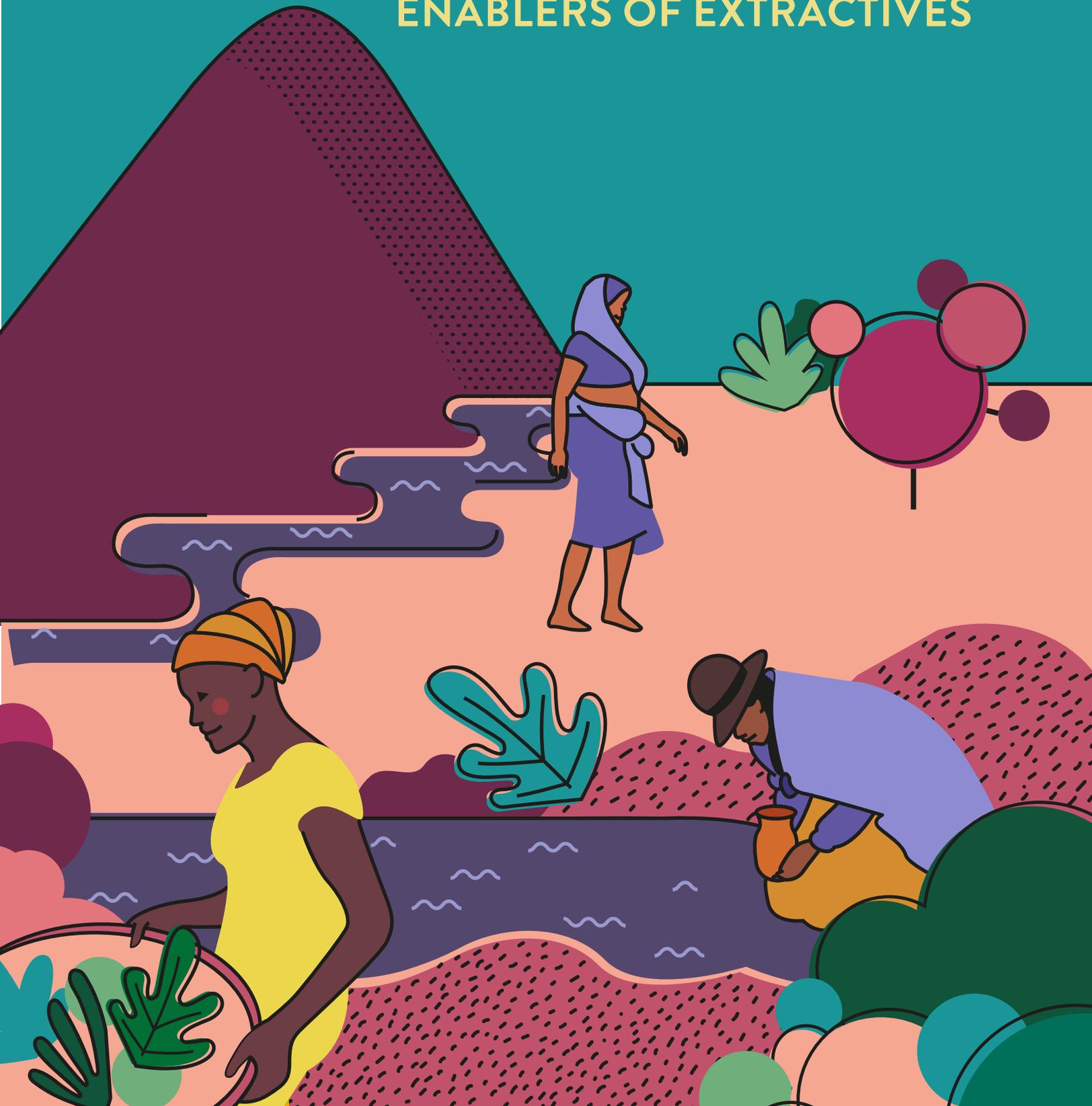


# BEHIND THE SCENES:

EXPOSING THE FUNDERS AND  
ENABLERS OF EXTRACTIVES



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*This publication was made possible by the Count Me In! Consortium and funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*



# PROLOGUE

On March 3, 2016, Berta Caceres, a globally recognized indigenous women human rights defender, was assassinated for her work to stop a large dam that threatened her community. As coordinator of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) she played a leadership role in the community's years of organizing, advocacy and resistance.

Despite the community's strong opposition, the project looked like it would go forward until Berta's murder brought global pressure to bear on the investors behind the proposed dam to pull their funds. The Count Me In! Consortium, a Dutch-funded collaborative of feminist movement support organizations and donors, many of whom had worked with Berta and other women human rights defenders (WHRD) for years, joined these efforts in solidarity. The revelation that one of the dam investors was also the Dutch state (development bank FMO) came as a shock. But it also presented an opportunity to engage with the Dutch ministry for frank dialogue, pressure and dissent. Five years later the dam project remains suspended, and efforts continue to gain justice for Berta.

Our experience highlighted for CMI! that a key leverage point for land defenders opposing extractive projects, and one often quite elusive, is the ability to identify and pressure funders enabling the projects. This realization led us as a consortium to launch a research project on how to "follow the money" enabling extractive projects, in order to make this analysis available and useful for WHRD in their communities. This briefing paper is a summary of the findings of this research.

CMI!'s Behind the Scenes briefing paper provides policy makers, WHRD, social movements, and grassroots organisations facing extractive land grabs with analysis to understand the web that is impacting their lands and develop stronger strategies in response.

In solidarity,  
the Count Me in! Consortium

*We also welcome feedback and suggestions at [info@justassociates.org](mailto:info@justassociates.org)*

# BEHIND THE SCENES:

## EXPOSING THE FUNDERS AND ENABLERS OF EXTRACTIVES

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# INTRODUCTION

Extractivist projects often have disastrous impacts on the lives and livelihoods of indigenous, rural, and land-based communities. Characterized “by the extraction of natural goods and resources,” these kinds of projects, including large-scale mining, fossil fuel extraction, mono-crop plantations (e.g., palm oil), hydro-electric dams and sand dredging, have four defining features<sup>2</sup>:

1. Intensive extraction of natural resources
2. Large quantities, often focusing on a single product or crop
3. Low requirement for processing
4. Intention that extracted materials are for export.

The damage from extractivist projects tends to affect women more immediately because it lands on top of existing gender discrimination and the greatest responsibility for food, water, and family care, and it intensifies experiences of all forms of violence. That is why women are often on the frontlines of community resistance against extractivism. This has made them targets of vilification, abuse, arrests, and repression, and, in growing numbers, violent attacks and assassination.

Berta Caceres, the Honduran feminist, land defender and indigenous leader of COPINH who was murdered in

2016, became one of the best-known examples of violent repression. In the aftermath of her death, the Agua Zarca hydro-electric dam that she and her community were resisting, came to a standstill when the funders of the project withdrew under intense international public pressure (although the permit for the project remains open.)

Her case brought attention to the fact that while extractivist projects are usually located in the global South, they require sizable investments that often originate in the global North. Could mobilisations focused on exposing and pressurising such investors help similar communities and activists resisting extractivism? What are the challenges such efforts would face? How can allies

and institutions help? And what needs to be done to ensure the best possible outcomes?

This paper follows the efforts of the Count Me In! (CMI!) Consortium to engage with these questions by sharing the findings of its commissioned research titled ‘Behind the Scenes of Extractive Industry: Critical insights from Honduras, Indonesia and Zimbabwe’ by Salena Fay Tramel and Arif Naqvi. It also charts the efforts of the consortium to popularize the report’s findings through its popular education manual ‘Behind the scenes of extractives: money, power and community resistance.’

<sup>2</sup> CMI! Extractives Working Group  
*Behind the Scenes: Investigative Research on Extractive Industries and Public/Private Funding. Undated*

# THE CMI! AND ITS EXTRACTIVES WORK

The CMI! Consortium is a network of feminist funders, educators, and movement builders working to achieve human rights and equality for women, girls, and trans people worldwide. Member organisations are: The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA), Just Associates (JASS), Mama Cash, and the Urgent Action Funds (Urgent Action Fund-Africa, Urgent Action Fund-Latin America, and Urgent Action Fund), with WO=MEN the Dutch gender platform, as a lobby partner.

CMI! implements two overarching strategies to reach this long-term goal:

1. Developing and strengthening the capacity of women's human rights defenders and their organisations to advocate for themselves;
2. Helping local partners lobby and advocate for critical initiatives around gender-based violence, economic justice, and sustainable resourcing for women's rights in policy-making spaces at the international and regional levels.

This research was meant to support women human rights defenders who are confronting extractive industries and advocating for the rights of their communities. The collaboration of all members of CMI! provides key information and knowledge, reinforcing the work already done by individual member organisations.

# FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the research is to reveal the financial drivers and enablers of extractive projects and offer this analysis to women activists and their communities to use in their struggle against these projects. This focus emerged from the experience of CMI! partners in Honduras in the aftermath of the murder of Berta Caceres.

Berta Caceres was an activist and leader of the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), which she co-founded in 1993 to defend the ancestral land and territories of the Lenca indigenous people. Caceres and her comrades brought a strong feminist and decolonial orientation to this work. The defence of the Gualcarque River put her in direct conflict with the multinational corporations and state officials that sought to commodify and profit from this and other natural resources in territories under indigenous control.

In 2016, hired assassins murdered Berta Caceres in her home. Over the course of several investigations and court cases it became clear that this crime was instigated and overseen by powerful military, political, and business figures connected to the proposed Agua Zarca hydro-electric dam project. The dam threatened to harm the sacred river, flood indigenous-occupied land and displace communities, and Caceres was a key leader in the opposition to it. Her assassination was part of a violent strategy to neutralise this opposition.

The opposition to the Agua Zarca hydro-electric dam, however, only intensified after her death. COPINH mobilised international solidarity to bring public pressure on the Dutch and Finnish governments, who had been exposed as the dam's financiers. As a result, the governments decided to withdraw their funding effectively halting the project.

The CMI! Consortium was part of the network of civil society groups, who continued to work in solidarity with Caceres' family and COPINH to stall the Agua Zarca project. In reflecting on this experience, CMI! wondered whether working to expose the funders and enablers behind extractivist projects could help other communities and movements facing similar struggles.

Even though the conditions and experience in Honduras could not simply be replicated elsewhere, it could inform activists in other communities. Applying the knowledge from COPINH's strategy would require adaptation based on knowledge of each project's particular investment chains and its enablers, as well as an understanding of the political conditions on the ground. In addition, activists would need a level of agreement, will, and resources to shape this knowledge into relevant strategies.

The research looks at what would be needed for such a strategy to be effective by providing examples of communities resisting extractives projects in various contexts. The report highlighted the hydroelectric dam project that affected Caceres and her community in Honduras, diamond mining in Zimbabwe, and a sand dredging and land reclamation project in Indonesia.

The project and, by extension, this paper want to go beyond simply understanding who the funders and enablers of extractivist projects are to ask the strategic question: What can be done to help activists and their communities effectively use this knowledge in their resistance?

## RISKS OF VIOLENCE IN EXTRACTIVES- AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

Over the last fifty years, the extraction and commodification of natural resources has tripled, accelerating even more since 2000, according to the International Resource Panel.[1] This has led to extractivist projects increasingly targeting the natural resources in territories occupied and used by indigenous and land-based communities. The result is often the loss of land, livelihoods, ancestral and cultural continuity, and autonomy for these communities.[2]

Those who defend their territories and resources against such projects face rising levels of violence. According to the Global Witness Report, 212 land and environmental defenders were murdered in 2019 - the highest number ever recorded by the organisation.[3] Women human rights defenders are particularly vulnerable to specific gender-based risks. In just four Latin American countries in 2014, IM-Defensoras reported 762 attacks on women activists, 38% of whom were defenders of land, territories, and natural resources.[4]

CMI! listed the following gender related risks faced by WHRDs in extractives affected communities:

- ◆ Increased structural gender-specific and racialized violence used to divide communities, undermine women's leadership, and break down resistance
- ◆ Cultural and spiritual destruction of livelihoods and traditional economies
- ◆ Public shaming, stigmatization, and criminalization, and attacks on

- ◇ honour and reputation
- ◇ Threats and attacks in the private sphere and against friends and families
- ◇ Physical attacks, sexual violence, torture, killings, and enforced disappearances
- ◇ Attacks against defenders' collectives and movements.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to understand that, on the whole, women in indigenous and land-based communities are the targets of enormous violence. And the origins of this violence can be traced directly from colonial legacies to the present-day practices of in-country elites and the boardrooms of multinational corporations and investors in the global North.

<sup>2</sup> *CMI! Extractives Working Group*  
*Behind the Scenes: Investigative Research on Extractive Industries and Public/Private Funding. Undated*



## THE INVESTMENT CHAIN IN EXTRACTIVE PROJECTS

The research used the notion of ‘investment chains’ as a guide for investigation and analysis. An investment chain is the connection of actors and relationships that are involved in any one project. Each actor’s place in a project can be understood through their relationships with other actors and to the project as a whole.

By locating each actor ‘upstream,’ ‘downstream,’ or ‘midstream’ in the project, we keep sight of the complexity of relationships and factors at work - even as we can focus on any individual. While midstream refers to the project and its physical surroundings, including contractors and local communities, upstream refers to investors and enablers who are not directly involved in the day-to-day management of the project. These actors still need to advance funds, permits, and other resources for the project to happen. Downstream refers to actors who are impacted by the products of the projects, for example, the clients of the project and local and adjacent communities.

Understanding the investment chain of a particular project gives activists an overview of the actors and factors on which extractive projects depend, with a knowledge of which ones are important at particular phases. It helps activists identify those points where pressure can be optimally applied to achieve the desired changes.

Although the ‘investment chain’ concept centres investments and investors, it helps trace the institutional and interpersonal relations behind extractives projects. This allows activists to locate these relations within larger social and historical systems of oppression such as patriarchy and colonialism. This is crucial for the development of resistance strategies because it forces

activists to look at what is really needed to achieve long-term transformative change and free victims of extractivism from historic systems of oppression. This may not be the work of one research project or intervention, but every intervention benefits from this sort of systemic awareness.

In each of the three instances investigated, investment chains showed the importance of investors. In Honduras, national corporations tended to use foreign funds to set up and run extractivist concessions while European banks would use financial intermediaries to funnel their funds to transnational and local companies. In this case of the Agua Zarca Dam project, the bank was the Dutch pension fund investment/ development agency, FMO, which also channelled funds on behalf of Finnfund, a development agency of Finland. CABEL, a regional development bank for Central America, was also involved as an investor.

These investors worked closely with a network of Honduras-based enablers, including the national government's electric power company, ENEE, as well as a company called Desarrollos Energéticos Sociedad Anónima (DESA) specially created as a vehicle for the Agua Zarca project in order to outsource the work of ENEE. Such outsourcing allows for the deniability and lack of accountability that go hand in hand with the human rights abuses and criminal acts associated with extractives projects. DESA executives were among those implicated in the murder of Berta Caceres and as of July 2021, David Castillo, the founder and former CEO of DESA, was convicted for his role in orchestrating Berta's murder.).

In Indonesia, the investment chain for the CitraLand City Losari sand dredging and land reclamation project showed a different dynamic: Indonesian companies and Indonesia-registered subsidiaries of foreign companies exerted most of the control. The biggest single foreign investment was that of the sovereign wealth fund of Norway, which amounted to 3.88% of total investment. The business managing the CitraLand City Losari project was called KSO Ciputra Yasmin. It was licensed by the government to undertake the project and was responsible for commissioning contractors. Investors had not yet pulled out and the project seemed close to completion at the time the research took place.

In Zimbabwe, the investment chain of the Marange Diamond Fields shows

much more direct government involvement than in Honduras and Indonesia. Zimbabwe's government effectively owns and operates diamond mining in Marange. The business managing the project was identified as the Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC, which is wholly owned by the Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation (ZMDC - itself wholly owned by the government of Zimbabwe.

In 2016, the government expelled the seven companies that were mining diamonds in the region without significant disruptions to the fields' operations. Subsequently, under a new president, businesses have been invited to return on condition that they work in partnership with the ZCDC. Most of the businesses currently active there are headquartered in China, the UK, and Russia, and information on them was not freely available.



# THE FUNDING MODELS OF EXTRACTIVE PROJECTS

There are different ways to understand the types of investments and investors in extractive projects, and all of them are useful to activists. There are generally three types of investments: direct borrowing, indirect borrowing, and equity. These investments are made by the following types of investors: banks, states, institutional investors, and companies. For the purpose of this paper, the issue is identifying the potential pressure points where activists can influence different investors to push for change.

In Honduras, the investment was direct borrowing from state-owned multilateral banks. The position of a single foreign investor (FMO of the Netherlands) in the investment chain was so crucial that its withdrawal brought the project to a halt, although it has not officially ended.

In Indonesia, the type of investment was equity bought by companies who financed their purchase through direct borrowing from corporate institutional investors and state-owned mutual funds. No single foreign investor in the investment chain was in a position where it could stop the project by withdrawing. The biggest foreign investors provided only 3.88% of total investment.

In Zimbabwe, all the equity was provided by the Zimbabwean government and foreign private companies. The experience of 2016, when all foreign investors were ordered out, demonstrated that no single foreign investor, or even all of them in combination, could stop the project by withdrawing.

These three instances suggest that targeting foreign investors, while an effective strategy in Honduras, would be less successful in Indonesia and hardly so in Zimbabwe. In instances where a focus on investors would not promise

results, a focus on clients possibly could, although that was not fully explored in the research.

Importantly, government-owned -- or government-aligned -- investors in liberal democracies tend to be more sensitive to public pressure than corporations and authoritarian governments. Activists must take into account the political context of the project's location, and where the investment or the investor comes from, when crafting their strategies.



# THE GLOBAL CONTEXT: NEOLIBERALISM

The effectiveness of any strategy that involves exposing and pressurising behind-the-scenes investors and enablers depends on the context in which women activists and their allies operate.

The last two and a half decades has seen the global dominance of neoliberalism in politics and economics.

Overall, proponents claimed that neoliberalism would expand human freedom if governments gave more freedoms and state support to capitalist corporate businesses. Key planks of this economic strategy included floating currencies, reregulating finance markets to favour financial corporations, the privatisation and commercialisation of public services, and the dismantling of the welfare state.[16]

Creating new opportunities for corporations to invest, profit and accumulate is a key part of the neoliberal agenda. This has led to the intensification and growth of extractivism, the increased commodification and appropriation of land and resources historically under the control of Indigenous and other land-based communities, environmental degradation and the cheapening of the labour and lives of women.

Therefore, the struggle of women activists in extractives-affected communities against extractivism should be recognized as deep and systemic. Thus, efforts to expose and challenge extractives funders and enablers must align with and support the leadership, organizing and movement-building of impacted communities.

This project identifies investors and locates them within the system of neoliberal capitalism which continues to perpetuate historic systems of oppression such as colonialism and patriarchy. This means that ending the exploitative dynamics of extractivism will require systemic, sustained, and fundamental change.

# GOVERNMENTS, STATE INSTITUTIONS, AND OTHER ENABLERS

The research confirmed that, in all three cases, governments, state institutions, and private sector actors share common features that allow them to be enablers of extractive industries.

## The Legacy of Colonialism

All three countries were former colonies and continued to display colonial patterns and power structures in their political systems. Extracting their own natural resources for the primary enrichment of capitalists in Europe and the United States, for instance. The women who are fighting the attacks on their land, livelihoods, and well-being are the direct descendants of the survivors of colonisation.

## Special Economic Zones

The governments of all three countries featured special economic zones (SEZ) as part of their general commitment to neoliberalism. Although SEZs have different names and histories in each country, they are all devoted areas in the country where labour laws, women's rights, environmental regulations, and business oversight have been shaped to conform more closely to the demands of investors. These SEZs play a significant role in enabling extractive projects.

## Suppression of Social Movements

Movements led by women, peasants, and indigenous and land-based communities are important organisers of resistance against extractivism. In all three countries, these movements and their allied NGOs are marginalised and repressed by governments, while trade unions and NGOs with more extractives-friendly agendas are supported. Unions are important enablers

in these contexts because they work to include their members in extractivist projects. Despite this opposition, social movements have been effective in slowing or stopping projects in many places.

### **Military Involvement**

In all three countries, the military and militarised police play key roles in politics. Both the Honduran and Zimbabwean governments came to power through military coups, while the Indonesian government uses the management of a 'security crisis' to justify elevation of the military. The military and other security forces are often used to impose and protect extractive projects, guarding the interests of owners and investors while enacting violent attacks on activists and resisting communities.

### **Corruption and Organised Crime**

There is an important link between the extractive industries and criminal activities such as narco-trafficking, diamond smuggling, private appropriation of public resources, and illicit political funding. Because these matters are difficult to verify, researchers are often limited to reporting on perceptions of corruption and criminality. But there is little doubt that these activities create the conditions which drive and enable extractivist projects and reproduce the type of violent masculinity that targets women activists and land defenders.

### **Gender-based Violence**

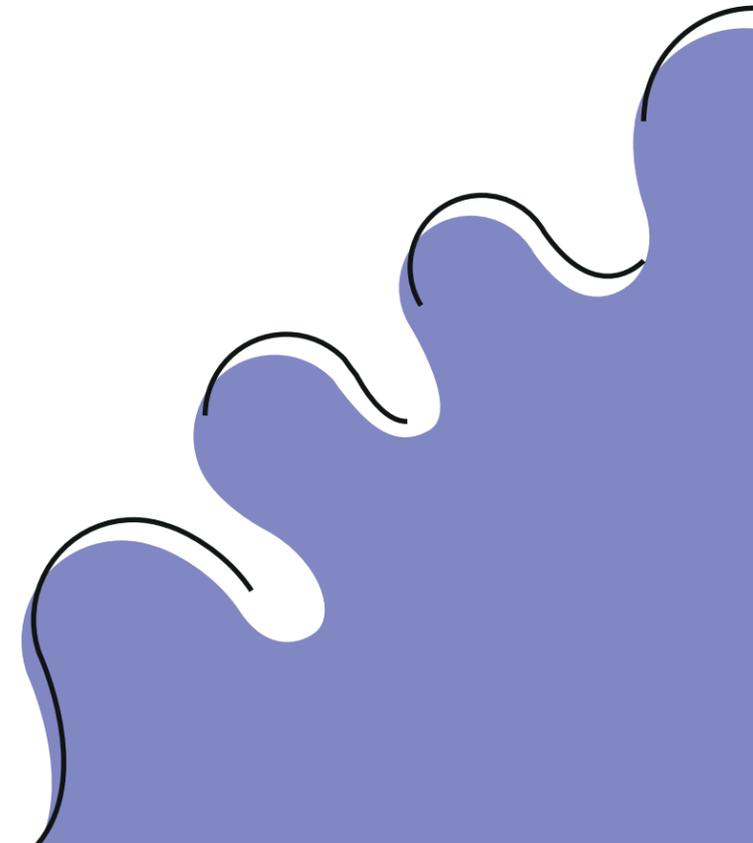
Gender-based violence and threats, often sexual in nature, against women activists in extractives-affected communities play a significant role in containing and undermining resistance against these projects. Women activists are more likely to have their children threatened, to face sexual harassment and assault, and to experience devastating slander attacking them as "bad women" and "bad mothers." These attacks can stoke resentment against women leaders within their own communities for having stepped out of conventional gender roles.

Though they have much in common, each country has its own particularities that allows it to act as an enabler. For instance, in Honduras, the extractives industry is dominated by 'the big twelve families' and enabled by US and oth-

er international investment streams. The army also plays a heavy role in the economy and even in health and education, not surprising as the country has seen four military coups, most recently in 2009.

Indonesia is a semi-feudal society which heavily marginalises peasants and indigenous communities. There, the government has direct interests in infrastructure and mining, since many politicians, including the current president, are openly funded by mining companies.

Factions of the Zimbabwean military and security services directly own and manage diamond mining fields through front companies. The current president was the minister of defence in 2008 when the army conducted a massacre and mass rape of mine workers and women in communities near the Marange Diamond Fields.[6] This gives him a personal stake in repressing and silencing activists and communities seeking justice.



# USING LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

One of the big questions that researchers wanted to answer was what role legal and human rights instruments played in the struggles of women activists in extractives-affected communities. The issue came up again during the post-research discussions, which looked at human rights law and its practice in all three countries to determine if and how activists and communities could effectively use these instruments to support their resistance.

Informants in each country could identify what legislation and rights provisions carried weight in their particular context and how they could be potentially useful. Few communities, however, appeared to actually take advantage of these laws. In fact, the extractive industries were much more able to use the law in the pursuit of their interests.

Globally Free, Prior, Informed Consent (FPIC), serves as a potential point of leverage for activists. FPIC is a specific right that allows indigenous peoples to give or withhold consent to a project that may affect them or their territories and is recognised in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). While this remains a critical principle and tool, there are many challenges in enforcement.

In Honduras informants were aware of this right, and that an FPIC law was drafted in their national congress. Article 62 of their mining law of 2013, while benefiting extractive industries in many ways, does require consultation with communities who would be affected. Activists in the country, reported that FPIC, unfortunately, is often co-opted and abused by corporations and others seeking foreign funds for extractivist concessions. Even communications that challenge such concessions have been criminalised. Many in-

formants emphasised that illegal contracts, impunity for elites, and cases of high-level corruption effectively rendered FPIC unenforceable in the country.

In Indonesia, even though states are obliged to ensure that their investments comply with human rights, activists have found more success using public protests and direct action like blockades and occupations. There are some efforts to use legal instruments. For example, activists in North Sumatra have received paralegal training to address trawling. But given that the state itself has legalised destructive practices including fish bombing, such avenues are not as effective.

Researchers familiar with the diamond trade in Zimbabwe pointed to the Kimberley Process, the UN's conflict diamonds certification scheme, as a potentially important legal instrument. Activists were wary of its business-first approach, though. In 2010, the process certified Marange Diamonds as conflict free, despite reports of government-led torture, abuse, and a massacre in 2008.

National laws should be another avenue for holding the extractive industries accountable, but as noted above, destructive practices are often written into law. One example is Zimbabwe's Mines and Minerals Act which criminalises traditional methods of storing and sharing seeds.

In many cases, laws exist on paper but not in practice. Zimbabwe's constitution calls for women's rights and freedom of speech, for instance, but informants across the spectrum there said that both articles were consistently violated.

On the whole, the law in all three countries is firmly on the side of the extractives industries. In many cases, because of corrupt practices that enable companies not to comply with international human rights standards and avoid taxes, extractive projects seem to operate outside or above the legal system. The question then becomes which regulatory frameworks could activists in extractives-affected communities potentially use, what rights do they contain and how could they complement other strategies?

## Global Governance Bodies

The research mapped three global governance bodies that could help activists achieve some political gains when facing extractive projects in their communities.

### Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

In 2012, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and its Committee for World Food Security (CFS) platform, released the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (Tenure Guidelines 2012).[7]

Peasants, Indigenous peoples, and environmentalists were part of its drafting process. The guidelines are currently the only international regulatory instrument on natural resources that prioritizes the “most vulnerable and marginalised.” Advocates claim that it has set a new global standard for land and resource control from a human rights perspective.[8]

This instrument may allow social movements to advocate for reclamation of their land under the right to food. Detailed information about how to understand the guidelines as a tool for advocacy can be found in the popular manual for communities and movements.[9]

### United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC)

The United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), and its collection of rights-based mechanisms, has initiated a thick dossier of human rights-based regulatory frameworks which have been passed at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

Two HRC declarations, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)[10] and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) [11], specifically address the extractive industries. The emphasis on FPIC in these international agreements, is a key leverage point for indigenous communities. UNDRIP echoes FPIC stating that “Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.” While women’s rights are written into both pieces of legislation, they should be read alongside more

gender-specific treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

### UNFCCC’s Conference of the Parties (COP)

Finally, activists and researchers have identified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change’s (UNFCCC) yearly Conference of the Parties (COP) as a key political space for social movements. Climate change negotiations have been particularly open to civil society actors working to expose the environmental destruction of extractive projects and challenge “green” solutions to the climate crisis, such as hydropower and carbon trading, which are often extractive themselves.[13]

These three global governance bodies and frameworks have the potential to help activists in extractives-affected communities, but more information is needed to assess their effectiveness.

## Risks and Limitations

Using human rights instruments has its limitations and comes with risks that activists must consider.<sup>3</sup> Below are some of these disadvantages - along with some ideas on how best to deal with them.

### Limited Legal Instruments

Human rights provisions and laws can only take you so far and struggles that rely largely on them are limited to winning what is already on the books. This is a problem because women land defenders’ demands, including an end to patriarchy and neo-liberal development, go beyond what is legislated. Therefore, using human rights instruments can only be one of a set of much broader strategies.

Also, using courts and tribunals require lawyers, time, and money. This means communities in resistance can become dependent on outside institutions and experts which can marginalise the activists and their concerns. This risk is higher for women, and even more so, indigenous women, as they tend to be excluded from processes like this and face discrimination in accessing resources.

<sup>3</sup> See the CMI popular education toolkit “Behind the scenes of extractives: money, power and community resistance”. Forthcoming

### Differing Definitions

Researchers identified another risk in the difference between popular and legal conceptions of human rights. Women in extractives-affected communities tend to have their own ideas of what human rights are and what they mean. These ideas are often in conflict with the often-narrower legal understanding that is used by courts and governance frameworks. If activists decide to pursue their rights using official instruments, it can be taken to mean that their popular understandings and claims are not valid. And more radical demands and tactics can be marginalised because they do not fit into the framework of human rights instruments. In the worst cases, this can lead to the co-option and neutralisation of people's struggles.

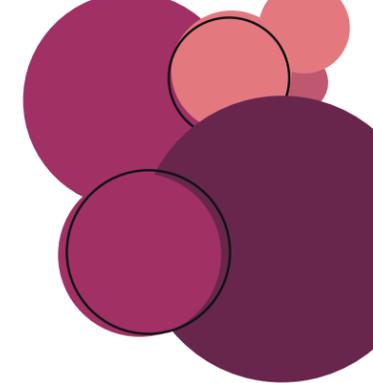
These potential disadvantages do not mean that activists should avoid human rights - only that they should do so thoughtfully in combination with other strategies and in ways that serve their best interests.

# RESEARCH AND PROJECT CHALLENGES

### Shaping the Research

The research undertaken report covered the complex, and often deliberately obscure, financing and enabling relationships behind extractives, a difficult area that many activists feel they are under-equipped to navigate. Many women in these communities lack the time, resources, and training to do the research necessary to advance their causes, or the media work that would go into sharing their findings and demands. Yet extractives-affected communities and the women land defenders within them are the crucial change agents in any social justice struggle. Activists, researchers, lawyers, and journalists who work as their allies are welcome - and needed. But they must take care to act in ways that follow the leadership and enhance the autonomy of those they seek to help. Despite the complexity of the subject, these women often have considerable reserves of resourcefulness, knowledge, skills, and networks, which allow them to engage with researchers and shape research as equals. Only they can judge whether any collaborative research and advocacy efforts have been successful.

Ultimately, this research project seeks to ensure that the research is useful to women in extractives-affected communities. Researchers found that participatory popular education processes and diagrams could meaningfully assist communities and communicate the most important workings of investment chains in straightforward and understandable ways. But after an initial round of community research, to get at more elusive information about a given extractive deal, it is often necessary to collaborate with academics or researchers who have access to subscriber databases and scientific journals, and to other experts.



## Protecting Women Activists

The aim of the research has always been to support women activists as they seek to put pressure on the behind-the-scenes funders and enablers of extractives projects. The assassination of Berta Caceres and of many other land defenders - and the findings of the research itself - is a sobering reminder of the risks activists face, and an indication that the use of such pressure and other tactics of resistance, will likely provoke backlash and violent responses. Community and activist protection strategies are, thus, an essential element of any effort to challenge extractive projects.

Though women activists face the same risks as all human rights defenders in extractives-affected communities, they have additional gender-specific vulnerabilities. Therefore, it was important to consider the protection and safety of the women involved in the project - and take their specific needs into account.

The CMI EWG developed a list of resources that could help extractives-affected communities confront this challenge. It includes the following:

- ◆ [Our Rights, Our Safety](#) A toolkit for Women Human Rights Defenders by JASS/Just Associates. Available in English, Spanish and Bahasa Indonesia. Also see the [Power and Protection](#) platform for more resources.
- ◆ Workbook on Security: Practical Steps for Human Rights Defenders at Risk by Frontline Defenders. Available at [frontlinedefenders.org](http://frontlinedefenders.org)
- ◆ Our Right to Safety: Women Human Rights Defenders' Holistic Approach to Protection by Association for Women's Rights in Development. Available at [defendingwomen-defendingrights.org](http://defendingwomen-defendingrights.org)
- ◆ New Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders by Protection International. Available at [protectioninternational.org](http://protectioninternational.org)



# ASSESSING PRESSURE POINTS AND STRATEGIES

The central purpose of this project was to offer support to women human rights and land defenders by helping identify and strategically assess pressure points they could use to stop extractivist projects and affect lasting change.

According to the online resource, Following the Money, a pressure point is the actors and relationship “in an investment chain that can be targeted in advocacy to influence the design, outcomes and impacts of a project, or to obtain remedies for harms. A forceful pressure point is responsive to advocacy and has the ability to influence the business managing the project and what’s happening on the ground.”[15]

The researchers identified possible pressure points in each of the three countries studied and rated them based on their amenability. They then produced a supplement titled ‘Exerting pressure behind the curtain’ suggesting strategies and resources that activists and their allies could use to effectively leverage those pressure points. The popular education course also included an exercise that drew on this work and took it further.

## Pressure Points

Identifying and assessing pressure points began with the project’s main research questions: who funds the extractive industry, who are its major stakeholders, and how are they interconnected?

Researchers found that the funders of extractivist projects are highly diverse. Activists need to prioritise those who are most important to any particular project - and most amenable to pressure. The industries’ stakeholders are also highly diverse. In general, though, the investors are upstream, midstream are

the extractors and their enablers who help them access the extractives, and downstream are the commodity markets and customers.

Investors included governments, multilateral agencies, NGOs, corporations, and individuals. Through a variety of shifting investment vehicles, they were often several steps removed from the project itself and had varying degrees of awareness about it. Extractors could include the project lead, government agencies, suppliers, or contractors, and even members of the affected communities. Markets and customers are also diverse, depending on the structure of the specific industry. However, they can have a decisive role in stopping or cancelling projects through their willingness to buy or boycott products from particular projects.

Communities are usually reacting to projects at midstream, but by using the tools provided in our accompanying [popular education toolkit](#), they can be actively engaged with upstream and downstream actors. They can widen their role to engage with investors, parent companies, the corporate headquarters of contractors, and overseas governments and commodity buyers. They can even connect with other campaigners elsewhere who are struggling against extractive projects and have identified the same actors as pressure points.

## Strategies

Below are some of the key strategic considerations that emerged from the research and the drafting of the [popular education toolkit](#).

### Know Your Target

The process of analysis, evaluation and identification of pressure points is as vital for building community knowledge and unity as the research outcomes are for effective strategies. The research showed the importance of state institutions and actors such as legislators, regulators, owners of land and minerals, investors, clients, and law enforcers given their potential vulnerability to public pressure. Know and target the individuals inside relevant institutions who have the power to make or facilitate the desired changes. States and funder organisations - and some corporate actors - have specific officers responsible for overseeing the environmental and social impact of their projects, or for managing community and public relations. Sometimes these are

the officers who can most effectively convey and champion the message of activists within their institutions.

### Define Your Demands

Extractive industry investors and regulators are more open to demands that seek to improve the outcomes of their projects rather than close them down or reverse them. But this is something to be considered carefully and consciously. Framing objectives in this way may stand a better chance of getting a hearing, but it may not deliver the changes needed by extractives-affected communities.

### Insider/Outsider

The two approaches above can be combined in a two-prong insider-outsider strategy. Insider lobbyists can engage with extractive project managers for specific changes to how they operate, while outsider activists can organize for the closure of these projects. The two groups can work together only if they understand that their work is complementary. This approach, if not well coordinated, risks marginalising community-based activists, however, by leaving them out of insider spaces where it is assumed they cannot speak for themselves.

### Allies and Networks

Allies and networks are crucial, and allies in the countries where funders are based are especially important. In Honduras, support from global allies, civil society and journalists played a crucial role in the mobilisation that brought the dam project to a halt and in the on-going efforts to bring those responsible for Berta's murder to justice.

In Indonesia and Zimbabwe, allies in Norway and the UK could play a similar role by being conduits through which extractives-affected communities can put pressure on project investors. Diplomatic allies may be equally or more important in the Zimbabwean instance, given the relative independence of the government from the foreign investors.

# CONCLUSION: IS EXPOSURE A USEFUL STRATEGIC TOOL?

By way of conclusion, we must ask what the research says about the usefulness of a strategy that includes exposing and pressurising the funders and enablers of extractives projects.

In Honduras, this strategy has already demonstrated its usefulness. Campaigners exposed the funders of the dam project and caused them to withdraw, bringing the project to a halt. The question is whether similar strategies could have the same results elsewhere.

The research does not answer yes or no. Instead, it shows the issues that such a strategy would confront, the resources it would need, and possible pathways for it to follow. Without guaranteeing success, it notes that such an intervention could deliver two main benefits.

The first is that although it is unlikely that the withdrawal of a single investor in Indonesia or Zimbabwe would bring projects there to a halt, it is likely that such a withdrawal would worry those governments. Concern that more loss of funding could follow would make them more amenable to the demands of women activists and their communities. In this case, less influential investors could function as indirect pressure points on governments who are less amenable to direct pressure.

The second benefit would be that movement-building generates and attracts knowledge, coherence, allies, and resources. Women activists and their communities need a certain level of organisation in order to implement this strategy, but that implementation will build levels of organization and coordination, which are movement strengths that can then be used in other ways for the community.

Both of these benefits were seen in the Honduras example. The withdrawal of the funders made the government less combative, at least in its public stances, and the community and its allies grew stronger and to this day continues to use this strength to keep pressure on the investors and the state.

Of course, any pressure point strategy is most valuable if it is used in conjunction with other methods. It is not a substitute for community organising, public protests, popular education, and direct action such as blockades and occupations. Most importantly, the efforts should serve the overall goal of building strong movements of women activists and communities.

Exposing and pressuring the funders and enablers of extractive projects should be one strategic tool in a general approach that combines careful research, adaptation to specific contexts, attention to power relationships inside movements and campaigns, lobbying and advocacy. If women activists and feminist movement-building is at the centre of this, such an approach is bound to deliver benefits and successes.

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