



CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Greater transparency can shed light on the murky world of resource corruption

Having stronger laws on transparency is very important. Such laws can address revenue collection from the mining sector and also empower people in resource-rich countries by giving them the information they need to hold their governments and companies accountable. The EU needs to introduce robust transparency laws if Europe is serious about improving the lives of the world's poorest writes Bishop Stephen Munga, member of the working group of the Tanzania Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/mar/30/greater-transparency-resource-corruption>

Congo-Kinshasa: UK Oil Company Announces Workplan to Explore in Congo's Unesco World Heritage Site

A London-listed oil company, SOCO International, has announced plans to press ahead with oil exploration in Africa's oldest National Park and UNESCO World Heritage site, Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Two permits - published today by Global Witness - giving SOCO the go-ahead were signed by DRC's hydrocarbons and environment ministries despite a previously announced commitment by the government to suspend oil exploration in the Park pending the result of a Strategic Environmental Assessment. The assessment, funded by the EU and other international donors, is expected to be complete in late 2012.

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201203161215.html>

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Fighting against land grabbing - “International Day of Peasant Struggle” on April 17

All fisher-folk movements, agricultural workers organizations and social justice movements around the world are invited by Via Campesina to organize actions on April 17. The main theme of this International Day of Peasant Struggle is the massive popular resistance to land grabbing.

http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1212:call-for-april-17-international-day-of-peasant-struggle&catid=26:17-april-day-of-peasants-struggle&Itemid=33

Sierra Leone: landowners are taking on a goliath, a French group

In a new land deal brief released today, Socfin Land Investment in Sierra Leone, the Oakland Institute details a pattern of coercion, lack of consultation, and failure to fairly compensate Sierra Leonean landowners who have been pressured into ceding their land to the corporate giant. Landowners and land-users from all over Sierra Leone will come together to discuss and strategize about how to respond to abuses and coercion such as those related to Socfin's operations.

<http://farmlandgrab.org/post/view/20266> (EN)

The purchase of farmland abroad is expanding rapidly

The purchase of agricultural land abroad has been a rapidly expanding market for a number of years. This entails risks for the environment and is generating geopolitical tension. 66% of land transfers affect Africa, in particular Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique and South Sudan. Mr Mathieu, an expert at the FAO warns that it is a bomb ready to explode if nothing is done about it.

<http://farmlandgrab.org/post/view/20218> (Fr)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Cassava offers climate change hope to African farmers

Cassava is an ideal crop for sub-Saharan regions, as it thrives in hotter conditions and grows without water, a study shows. It outperformed potatoes, maize, beans, bananas, millet and sorghum in tests using a combination of 24 climate prediction and crop suitability models.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/feb/28/cassava-climate-change?newsfeed=true>

Farmers and forecasts

Armed with more knowledge about how to get and interpret weather reports, farmers should be able to boost their output. But few groups, donors and investors, are focusing on how climate information can better be used by farmers and communities in disaster-prone areas.

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report/95214/CLIMATE-CHANGE-Farmers-and-forecasts>

TRADE

What do the new World Bank poverty statistics really tell us?

Extreme poverty in the developing world is down despite the recession, a World Bank briefing note announces. If it were only that easy. The statistics upon which most poverty elimination claims are based are extremely misleading and often steer experts toward the wrong solutions.

<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/80973>

CONTROL OF SMALL ARMS

Development bomb: Arms Transfers and the development of Chad

France and other countries have sold arms to Chad without taking seriously the risks posed by such transfers on the economic and social development of the country, reveals Zobel Behalal in the report of CCFD-Terre Solidaire. Exporting countries and Chad share the responsibility for a breakdown in the control mechanisms as they do not take development seriously. This report points in particular to the fact that, contrary to a commitment by the country's authorities, much of the oil revenue has been used for acquiring weapons and not for the development of the country.

http://ccfd-teresolidaire.org/ewb_pages/d/doc_2739.php (fr)

2012 Meeting on the UN Programme of Action on small arms (PoA)

The Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) on the UN Programme of Action on small arms (PoA), took place from the 19-23 March in New York. The discussion was positive and productive. After some controversy and amendments, the PrepCom report, was adopted by the Committee. The report provides a good starting point for the 2012 Review Conference (RevCon) on the PoA, which will take place from 27 August - 7 September. IANSA ensured a strong and visible presence of civil society at the PrepCom for the 2012 Review. Representatives of civil society were given the floor in a plenary session.

The Chair's draft report is available at <http://www.poa-iss.org/RevCon2/Documents.html>

Summaries from the discussion as well as sessions and side events are available at:

<http://iansa.org/news/2012/03/2012-preparatory-committee-for-the-second-un-programme-of-action-review-conference>

MEDICINES AND HEALTH

The Ecumenical Pharmaceutical Network Forum on Access to quality medicines

The EPN Forum took place from 21st to 23rd March 2012, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The theme of discussions was 'Access to quality medicines: priority needs, priority actions for today and tomorrow'. Summaries of the speeches can be found at <http://www.epnetwork.org/forum-2012> On the 23rd March EPN celebrated its General Assembly. Begoña Iñarra represented AEFJN at both meetings. This was an opportunity to meet EPN members from different African

countries and to discuss and make critical decisions about access to quality medicines, as well as the activities of the Network.

EPN has published "Guidelines for Effective and Efficient Pharmaceutical Services". If your congregation has some sisters or brothers in charge of pharmacies, you can ask AEFJN to send you a copy. There are many other excellent EPN publications for pharmacists available on the PUBLICATIONS links at: <http://www.epnetwork.org>

Kenyan High Court set to make landmark decision on access to generic medicines

A group of people living with HIV who are challenging a law that denies them access to life-sustaining drugs have to wait a little longer to know the fate of their case. The case was due for judgment on March 9, 2012, but it was adjourned to April 20. In their case, the group is challenging the legality of the Anti-Counterfeit Act of 2008, which they believe will interfere with the import and sale of generic drugs. In this and most counterfeit laws (e.g. ACTA), generics risk being considered to be counterfeit.

In 2009, three people living with HIV filed a law suit seeking a ruling that the Kenya Anti-Counterfeit Act 2008 is unconstitutional and threatens access to life-saving generic medicines and thus infringes their right to health. The right to health is now guaranteed by Kenya's constitution.

<http://www.africasciencenews.org/en/index.php/health/63-health/335-kenyan-high-court-set-to-make-landmark-decision-on-access-to-generic-medicines->

EAC Medicines Registration Harmonization

On 30 March 2012, at Arusha, Tanzania the East African Community (EAC) launched the EAC Medicines Registration Harmonization (MRH) Project with the aim of promoting the harmonization of medicines registration in the region. This will be a key contributor to public health and lead to rapid access to good quality, safe and effective medicines for priority diseases. This marks the beginning of the implementation phase of the AMRH Programme across Africa and is also a milestone in improving access to essential medicines for priority diseases in Africa.

<http://www.africanexecutive.com/modules/magazine/articles.php?article=6465&magazine=380> (eng)

AFRICA

Africa - China Relations: Africa Must Tread Carefully

For functional democracy and good governance to take root in Africa, Africans must be proactive in developing strategies and mechanisms that will not only birth these, but also make it possible for African citizenry to own their means of production. As Africa's cooperation with China in the socio-economic and political areas experiences an upward trend, we must ask ourselves whether this cooperation is for the good of Africa. As much as China has presented a window of opportunities to Africa, its increasing influence is associated with predatory threats. China's presence in Africa is spurred by its need to exploit cheap African resources to service its ever rising developmental needs back home. Its commitment to avail aid with no strings attached to African countries -including dictatorial and corrupt governments - demonstrates that all that China cares about is access to resources and nothing more.

<http://www.africanexecutive.com/modules/magazine/articles.php?article=6459&magazine=380> (eng)

Is the EU taking its over-fishing habits to West African waters?

The West African coast has some one of the world's most abundant fishing grounds, but they are barely monitored or policed, and wide open to legal and illegal plundering. According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, all West African fishing grounds are fully or over-exploited to the detriment of over 1.5m local fishermen.

Heavily subsidised EU-registered fleets catch 235,000 tonnes of small deep water species from Mauritania and Moroccan waters alone a year, and tens of thousands of tonnes of other species in waters off Sierra Leone, Ghana, Guinea Bissau and elsewhere.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/apr/02/eu-fishing-west-africa-mauritania>