

Through the Lens of Brazil: The Changing Dynamics of Human Rights and Global Philanthropy in Emerging Powers

Funder Learning Visit to Rio de Janeiro
20-22 May 2014

The Impact of Economic Development and Agribusiness on Environmental Justice, Land Rights, and Indigenous Communities

An in focus discussion circle

Speakers: **Rafael Dias**, Researcher, Justiça Global

Greg Miller, Donor Advised Fund Manager, Global Greengrants Fund

- Rafael described Brazil's development model: it is agro-exporting, based on commodities such as soya and beef, and relies on extractive industry and mega-projects.
 - This infringes on indigenous communities and creates conflicts.
 - Most government projects are combined with corporate projects.
 - There are mega-projects in Pará state dealing with iron and steel extraction.
 - In these conflicts, human rights advocates are vulnerable.
 - The major actors in these conflicts are:
 - 32% large farmers
 - 29% corporations/businessman
 - 7% mining
 - Indigenous communities are most affected by these conflicts.
 - The states in which these conflicts take place have higher homicide rates.
 - Pará, and the central-west states of Brazil have the most cases of jailed rural workers indigenous activists jailed
 - China is the biggest purchaser of Brazilian iron ore, which has greatly impacted mining and mining-related conflicts in Para
 - The mining projects are mostly located in the north and northeast of Brazil.
 - Those in power view traditional communities as backward.
 - 273 congressmen make up Brazilian Congress' business caucus.
 - Congress has prevented a large portion of land from being demarcated as indigenous territory.
 - Brazil does have a program for protection of Human Rights Defenders.
 - It is one of three such programs in Latin America.
 - It is a federal program created by a presidential decree in 2006.
 - Most protection cases are concentrated in the north.
 - This program is still not institutionalized or supported by a legal framework.
 - When HRDs need protection, police often refuse protection because they don't have any obligation to do so.
 - Recently, there has been an increase in criminalization of human rights defenders.
 - One of the best researched reports is the [Conflictos no Campo Brasil 2013](#).
 - The Brazilian Development Bank is the main funder of megaprojects in South America (more than the International Development Bank and World Bank together).

- There are no social considerations to the projects the Brazilian Development Bank supports, though there is a civil society platform to monitor the bank's funding.
 - The Brazilian Development Bank, China, and a mining corporation called Valle all play major roles in the conflicts.
 - Global Justice has studied the impact of mining on human rights defenders.
 - It has alliances with peer organizations in Peru and Colombia to research mining and compare the situations in their countries. It also partners with organizations in Mozambique.
- How has the work of human rights defenders made an impact?
 - In the case of Belo Monte (a R\$23 billion hydroelectric project), HRDs filed an application with the Inter American Human Rights Commission.
 - A restraining order has been granted until affected communities are heard.
 - The Brazilian government reacted aggressively, and ended their funding for the commission in retaliation.
 - Many human rights defenders want not only to mitigate the effects of mining, but to prevent it from taking place.
- What are some advocacy strategies that Justiça Global uses?
 - The main strategy is to unite affected groups.
 - It also works with the Inter American Human Rights Commission and the UN.
 - While Justiça Global acknowledges that those spaces are captured by the rhetoric of corporations, they advocate in these spaces.
 - They have spoken to an assembly of shareholders of Valle, and speak to shareholders of other corporations, too.
- Greg described Global Greengrants Fund's work (600-700 grants/year).
 - GGF has been working on agribusiness in Indonesia, particularly to mitigate the effects of palm oil on local communities.
 - Palm oil farmers burn down forests (often illegally), significantly increasing carbon emissions.
 - A presidential commission in Indonesia completely denied that any of this was happening.
 - GGF also funds conservation cooperatives.
 - China's investment in large-scale farming and mining projects in Southeast Asia and Africa is having a large effect on land, food, and the environment.
 - In India, Monsanto is introducing new GMO crops, while GGF funds West Bengal farmers working to protect indigenous seeds. They are dialoguing well with the government.
- What is GGF's approach to deploy small grants strategically?
 - GGF finds groups working in emerging areas without infrastructure, and provide general support.
 - It also funds larger organizations with general support so they can use it for travel and other expenses.
 - GGF trusts the people who know the region. It works closely with local advisors.
 - CASA was created out of the GGF Brazil advisory committee.
 - Sometimes receiving foreign funds is a "death/imprisonment sentence" due to restrictive funding laws, so CASA is able to make grants in Brazil and in South America.
- Does GGF fund groups that propose alternative development strategies or just anti-strategies?
 - It depends on where it is funding, but they do fund a lot of alternative models.

- There is a need for alliances among social movements and civil society to discuss alternatives to development.
- With mining, for example, activists in many countries have similar experiences, and should share with each other. There is a need to foster more exchange among attempts to resist
- Our current development paradigm is unsustainable in the long-term.
- We need to create alternatives and not just leave this thinking to large corporations.
- How is GGF dealing with the issue of large-scale land purchases?
 - GGF seeing a lot happening in areas where there are informal claims to land rights, no titles.
 - Many large companies are buying small plots of land one by one.
 - GGF supports groups that explain land rights and community to these communities so that they can coordinate to keep their land instead of selling one-by-one
- What are the effects of rising food prices on the developing world?
 - A few large corporations exercise a tremendous amount of control over food production.
 - Effective lobbying by these corporations (e.g. Monsanto) enables them to raise prices to detriment of rural workers.
 - This issue is related to the inequality of international trade.
 - What are your thoughts on the argument that social entrepreneurship can provide better returns than civil society work?
 - Investing in entrepreneurship is great once people have rights to their land
 - The most effective strategy so far has been to use existing domestic and international legislation to help groups understand they have rights.
 - A recent Goldman Environmental Prize winner was a GGF adviser in Peru who used the International Labor Organization Convention 169 (on the rights of indigenous peoples) to prevent a Brazilian corporation from building two major dams.
- During this conversation, a participant brought up the new discourse of the “philanthropication of privatization.”
 - This policy came about as a form of sustainable support for social work.
 - In countries where public goods are being privatized, a percentage of the proceeds from privatization go to fund that support the public good.
 - There could be a law demanding that 10% of shareholding goes to support public good.
 - For example, a portion of mining profits could go to a local community or into a pool.
 - In Africa, this policy is very attractive.
 - It solves the problem of constrained indigenous giving for social good, and also buffers organizations from accusations that they are being funded solely by international actors.
 - Many (including the participant’s foundation, Akiba Uhaki) are looking at this as one option to increase local philanthropy.
 - This could be a powerful source of financing for social justice/change work
 - A business-as-usual model is jeopardizing rights. Funders must focus on game-changing opportunities.

Panelist Biographies:



Rafael Dias
Researcher, *Justiça Global*

Rafael is a psychologist and a researcher at the human rights non-governmental organization *Justiça Global* since 2007. He currently is a manager in the Human Rights Defenders Program, and is a member of the organization's coordination team. Rafael has a Master's degree and doctorate in Psychology from the Universidade Federal Fluminense. He was also doctoral intern at the department of Philosophy at the - Université Paris Ouest Nanterre (*Paris X*).



Gregory Miller
Donor Advised Fund Manager, Global Greengrants Fund

Greg came to Global Greengrants in 2011 after serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Mongolia. While there, he taught English in secondary schools and served as a Volunteer Leader, assisting volunteers throughout the country. As the Donor Advised Fund Manager, Greg works with grassroots activists to develop and fund projects focused on the right to water, indigenous rights, environmental health, and marine environments, among others. He is currently studying for a Master's in Intercultural and International Communications at the University of Denver.