Development"? or "Appropriation"?

EQUATIONS
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Written at the request of Asia-Pacific Research Network (APRN), this paper looks at the concepts of development & development aggression through case studies from India, Indonesia and Philippines. The case studies explore issues of land grabbing and forest destruction for mining, monopoly in corporatisation of agriculture and the food crisis, tourism and displacement, land grabbing and forest destruction for production of palm oil, water as a commodity and the exploitation of human labour. This paper was presented at the Research Conference on Development organised by the Asia-Pacific Research Network (APRN) In December 2010 at Hong Kong.

Development as a concept is complex and eludes any definitive definition. The evolution of development process had several stages. It began with economic growth and then social, cultural and political rights became a critical component of the development process. The ideas of sustainability and development as enlarging people’s choices were added to the concept of development process. The United Nations Development Programmes’ (UNDP’s) current definition of Human Development includes the dimensions of empowerment, cooperation, equity, sustainability and security. Layered on to this are ideas of dignity and justice – often spoken of in the language of human rights and social justice. Political governance frameworks have also had an intersection with development – ideas such as democracy being more in tune with overall development than dictatorship and now participatory democracy contributing more to development than representative democracy.

According to Human Development Report 2000 (HDR 2000), human rights and human development share a common vision and a common purpose — to secure, for every human being, freedom, well-being and dignity. HDR 2000 looks at human rights as an intrinsic part of development and at development as a means to realizing human rights. It shows how human rights bring principles of accountability and social justice to the process of human development.

Universally, Human Rights is seen from two perspectives: the rights of individuals vis-à-vis the State, and rights of groups (community rights). The Human Rights Based Approach to Development (HRBA) emerged from the concerns of global poverty as an affront to human freedom and dignity, and also as a matter of injustice. Mary Robinson, the then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, singled out global poverty as the “biggest human rights challenge” of the day (2005; UNDP 2003). Her successor, Louise Arbour, continued the legacy by taking the position “inequalities within and between countries” as the “gravest human rights challenge” (2007. p. III).

The key elements of this concept can be summarized into four points:

1. Overriding concern is human freedom and dignity;
2. Realization of human rights – all rights including economic, social, cultural, civil and political - by all individuals is a central objective of development;
3. Human rights principles should be part of the process of development. These include:
   a. Equality and non-discrimination;
   b. Participation of individuals especially in activities and decisions that affect their lives, and the empowerment of people;
   c. Accountability of the duty bearer to promote, protect and fulfil human rights;
   d. Indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights; (further explaining that all human rights are individually important and should not be traded off one for another).
   e. Obligations of progressive realisation, non-retrogression and immediate realisation of core minimum standards.
4. International human rights norms and standards should be applied in the development process and governments are accountable for their obligations arising from their commitment to international laws to which they are signatory.

The dominant development principles and practices, the discourse that legitimizes and rationalizes it, the knowledge, models and agents for development have mostly been influenced by the global north. Being led by rich and powerful economies the contemporary development discourse has assumed a hegemonic status. People’s voices from global south started questioning this hegemonic discourse on development - “Is this development or furthering appropriation under the guise of development?” The appropriation is blatant when military force is applied or corporations are
granted leases to mine in forest land. They are less obvious when the appropriation of resources happens through market mechanisms and trade deals.

**Development Aggression**

“Development is development aggression when the people become the victims, not the beneficiaries; when the people are set aside in development planning, not partners in development; and when people are considered mere resources for profit-oriented development, not the center of development . . . . Development aggression violates the human rights of our people in all their dimensions—economic, social, cultural, civil and political.” The Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates, as quoted in Ramon C. Casiple, “Human Rights vs. Development Aggression: Can Development Violate Human Rights?” *Human Rights Forum: Focus on Development Aggression*. Quezon City: Philippine Human Rights Information Center, 1996."\(^6\).

Swept by the forces of globalisation and market based economy, development instead of benefiting people competed with them in establishing control over resources. Economic compulsions began to upset the balance with the development of industrial capitalism. As factory production conquered local production and increasingly harnessed mechanical energy to augment phenomenally the capacity to produce, the demand for raw materials increased. A large supply of raw materials was needed to feed factories and at the same time large markets for selling industrial products because essential. Rising international economic competition led to search for cheaper raw materials in distant lands. Capitalism turned outward. At this stage imperialism became the defining face of capitalism."\(^4\).

In the name of development, there is relentless drive by most governments in the developing world to attract investment. Governments are pursuing economic growth through incentivising industry and the deployment of domestic and foreign private capital on a massive scale. Based on a belief that the market should be the organising principle for social, political and economic decisions, policy makers are promoting privatisation of state activities and an increased role for the free market. Land and natural resources are being targeted to facilitate the interest of the investors. These include among others ‘Special Economic Zones’ (SEZ), Special Tourism Zones (STZ) and Free Trade Agreements (FTA) to attract investment, ‘Private-Public Partnerships’ (PPPs) and ‘Build-Operate-and-Transfer’ (BOT) for infrastructure development, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD) as a mitigating mechanism for climate change, de-notification of forest areas for mining, dams and infrastructure projects and flexibility in labour markets and trade liberalization. To assist investment of private capital, apart from tax and duty concessions governments are diluting domestic regulatory mechanisms and government policies are calling for creation of “Land Banks” for private investments. The policies are encouraging governments to make land and natural resources available at desirable locations in low prices to private entrepreneurs and corporations. This has severely impacted the local communities, especially the indigenous people, across the world. Asian indigenous representatives informed the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) at its eighteenth session in 2000 that “conflict and development interventions had resulted in large-scale displacements, internal and external, and serious consequences for [indigenous] children and youth resulting from the implementation of inappropriate and non-consultative development projects”\(^5\).

The war goes on. Driven by the same hunt for natural resources, both post industrial societies and post colonial countries continues the aggression on resources. In post colonial societies, decolonisation merely changed the direction but not the goal of this violent hunt for natural resources. The more successful of the independent nations join the march of “development” only to become colonisers themselves. The formerly colonised countries are relatively new in the race, so the direction and the target of the hunt have changed. Regions inside the country are identified for hunt of natural resources. Imperialism turns inward. They wage war against their own citizens, but this time in the name of developing them\(^6\).

Experience across counties from Asia-Pacific region show that the benefits of such development aggression has failed to reach the most marginalised and the poorest, including the indigenous peoples of the world, who acutely feel the cost of impacts of such aggressions, namely environmental degradation and loss of traditional lands and territories.

*In the words of Colombian American anthropologist Arturo Escobar “Development has become the grand strategy through which the transformation of the not-yet-too-rational Latin-American/Third World subjectivity is to be achieved. In this way, longstanding cultural practices and meanings – as well as the social relations in which they are embedded – are altered. The consequences of this are enormous, to the extent that the very basis of community aspirations and desires is modified.”*\(^7\)
The following case studies are testimonies to such aggression in the region:

The story of land grabbing and forest destruction for mining in India - Two giant mining projects were initiated by two multinational mining corporations in the resource rich eastern state of Orissa in India – $1.7 billion Vedanta aluminium project and $12 billion POSCO steel plant. Both the projects were backed by state and central governments with the claim that they would rapidly transform the state; bring unprecedented prosperity and well being to its people without causing unconscionable destruction. The Vedanta project proposed six-fold expansion of the existing refinery and a fresh lease of mining bauxite in the Niyamgiri Hill – a sacred hill for the local Dongria Khonds, a “primitive” Scheduled tribe who number less than 8000. The POCSO steel plant, proposed to be built on 1,620 hectares (1 ha= 2.47 acres), including 1253 ha of forest land was publicised by the government as the largest foreign investment proposal in India.

The Dongria Kondhs protested the bauxite mining plans by Vedanta. Their concerns were that the project, proposed to be situated on their traditional sacred lands and habitats, would result in violations of their rights as indigenous peoples to water, food, health, work and other rights to protection of their culture and identity. The already existing refinery at the foothills had created environmental havoc, polluting the air and natural streams.

In August 2010, under tremendous resistance from the local tribal communities, opposition from tribal rights activists & environmentalists and based on the report of the Saxena Committee appointed by the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF)\(^8\), the Vedanta project was rejected clearance. As for POSCO, the same Saxena Committee and the majority report of another committee set up by MoEF\(^9\) put a spoke in the wheel. The reports confirmed that the POSCO project is illegal and that all of its clearances were obtained by breaking the law. The Committee reports also pointed that the project has potentially very dangerous impacts on issues like water, air pollution, and the coastline, and none of this was properly evaluated. Inspite of two reports submitted by two different Committees a conclusive decision is yet to be taken on POSCO. The Forest Advisory Committee (FAC)\(^10\) of MoEF still dilly-dallying about calling off the project.

Monopoly in Corporatisation of Agriculture and the food crisis - The WTO Agreement on Agriculture, which promotes export competition and import liberalization, has allowed the entry of cheap agricultural products into countries thereby compromising their sustainable agricultural practices, food security, health and cultures. The view has been put forward that small-scale subsistence production, which characterizes many local economies, does not contribute to economic growth. That “economic growth will only come about if subsistence lands are rapidly converted into large-scale, capital intensive, export-oriented commercial production”\(^11\). Thus, small-scale farm production is giving way to commercial agri-business furthering concentration of ancestral lands in the hands of a few agri-corporations and landlords. The conversion of small-scale farming to cash-crop plantations has caused the uprooting of many community members from rural to urban areas.

The WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) requirements for the liberalization of agricultural trade and the deregulation of laws which protect domestic producers and crops has resulted in the loss of livelihoods of indigenous corn producers in Mexico because of the dumping of artificially cheap, highly subsidized corn from the USA. Indigenous vegetable production in the Cordillera region of the Philippines has been similarly devastated by the dumping of cheap vegetables. The drop in commodity prices of coffee has impoverished indigenous and hill tribe farmers engaged in coffee production in Guatemala, Mexico, Colombia, and Vietnam and India. All these are made possible due to high export subsidies and domestic support provided to agribusiness corporations and rich farmers in the United States and the European Union\(^12\).

Tourism and displacement: - Examples of land being grabbed either forcibly by the state using the principle of eminent domain or under the lure of quick cash has resulted in diversion of significant amounts of land for mega tourism projects. In order to facilitate this, government tourism policies speak about the creation of land banks, and changes in legislation\(^13\) are veering towards state led acquisition of land to facilitate greater industrialisation and development. The governments have encouraged acquisition of land for tourism development and granted incentives for growth and expansion in many cases resulting in forced displacement of local communities in complete violation of the rights of the local people. Kevadia in Gujarat is one among many such cases. Kevadia, in the Narmada Valley of Gujarat, is the site of the controversial Sardar Sarovar Dam where over 250,000 people were forcibly displaced to make way for the dam. Those displaced are still awaiting permanent resettlement and compensation. Now a new tourism project is triggering a fresh round of displacements in Kevadia. The original 1777 acres of land that was acquired under the “public purpose” clause for the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam in 1961-63, has turned out to be far more than was needed for the project: 1400 acres has remained unused. According to government
policy, tribal land that is not being utilized for ‘public purpose’ for which it had been acquired needs to be given back to the community. However, the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Limited (SSSNL), a government owned corporation and the newly constituted Kevadia Area development Authority (KADA) claim that they are the official owners of the 1400 acres. Even amid widespread protests, the SSSNL is going ahead with what its website calls an “ecotourism” project. It boasts that the project will “present the dam site in its pristine and natural glory, with hotels, cottages, water-parks, amusement parks, golf courses, nature trails, convention centre, water sports activities and cruises in the 150 km stretch of dam reservoir.” Tourism is slowly and surely gaining hold in Kevadia and surrounding areas. People’s resistances against such move are also growing. The protests by the local communities in these villages are not only against the issue of the State government auctioning and leasing out land for commercial activities like tourism that communities depended on for livelihood and sustenance but also the process of negating their decision making rights through the constitutionally approved process of local self governance that has been handed over to Kevadia Area Development Authority (KADA).

Land grabbing and forest destruction for production of Palm Oil in Indonesia - Global industrial demand for palm oil, used for bio-fuels and cosmetics, among other things, continues to drive the destruction of massive tracts of the Indonesian rainforest. Around 67 percent of the land taken for palm oil plantations is controlled by just 5 companies- Socfin Group or Socfindo (Belgian), London-Sumatra or LONSUM (formerly British, now Indonesian, Wilmar (Singapore) and the massive conglomerate Sinar Mas, where Nestle has a considerable stake. About 80 percent of the palm oil produced in Indonesia is exported to Europe.

Local communities who have lived on the land for generations are forced into urban slums, or else they become low-paid labour for the large palm oil producers themselves. This also includes small-scale farmers. As they have no official certificate for the land, large corporate enterprises which are either foreign-owned or suppliers of foreign multinationals claim it is their land. Small farmers are forced to switch from their own crops to producing palm oil. The police and military are involved in such forced expropriation and in the last two years 15 farmers have been shot. Other human rights violations include intimidation and wrongful imprisonment.

In 2006 there was a presidential decree stating that production would increase, and [the Indonesian government] would guarantee distribution. With this, palm oil plantations in the country underwent a 1.3 million-hectare expansion. Although Indonesia has not signed a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the European Union (EU) yet, in 2009 a Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) was made. Since then, Indonesia has been flooded with zero tariff wheat and sugar exports from Europe, undercutting and threatening the livelihoods of small farmers, while wheat-based, processed noodles are promoted as part of a so-called “food diversification plan” (despite the fact that rice is the staple food in Indonesia). Moreover, the EU Commission agreed on a biofuels policy in which they explicitly said it is better to produce in tropical countries because of cheap labour and resources.

Water as a commodity: PAM Lyonnaise Jaya (Palyja) entered Jakarta water service as a private partner when the water utility PAM Jaya privatized its water service in June 6, 1997. It is now owned by a multinational corporation Suez Environment, Astratel, and Citigroup. Since then, Palyja has a sole right to serve the west part of Jakarta. More than a decade after that, it’s not hard to see that Jakarta water is not getting better as it was expected when the privatization undertaken.

This is not a case in exception. The policies of the multilateral funding agencies promoted privatisation of water. The 2001 Asian Development Bank (ADB) “Water for All” Policy clearly illustrates the Bank’s wide-ranging agenda in commodifying Asia’s water from resource management to provision of piped water services. Essentially, the policy promotes full cost recovery in water pricing, and steps up the entry of private investments in the water sector. ADB takes parallel efforts with the World Bank and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) in pushing for privatization in the region and even takes step further by emphasizing on the concept of “tradable water rights”. By using loans as leverage, ADB forces national governments to put in place requirements for profitability to facilitate private takeover of public services. The Review of ADB’s Water Implementation Policy in 2005 has simply affirmed the need to accelerate privatization by more than doubling the Bank’s investments in the water sector. The ADB’s new Water Financing Program targets US$ 20 billion annual investments for 2006 –2010 in making water a “core business area of ADB operations”.

The exploitation of human labour - For nearly a decade, the people in Philippines are being plagued by the pro-market policy of the government. With its pro-market orientation, the government has reduced budget support for agriculture to a minimum and has radically brought down tariffs on both agricultural and manufacturing imports. Over
the years, the country was turned from a net food exporter to a net food importer. Abandoned to global market forces as the administration embraced the ideology of globalization, the economy was channelled to the massive export of labour, export-oriented low-value-added manufacturing, particularly of electronic components, and providing personnel for the outsourced operations of transnational corporations (TNC) like call centers. According to the labour movements in Philippines, the effects of neoliberal restructuring are still being felt in the Philippines. As a result of neoliberal globalization, the Philippines, like many other countries have undergone massive industrialization, and informal or temporary employment has outstripped the amount of formal work, putting millions into a perpetual state of insecurity. The effect of temporary work on people is devastating, especially for youth, who are the hardest hit. Having their survival tied to only 3 month contracts means they can never plan or build lives, families and communities. As a result of the temporization of work, the poverty level has risen significantly, especially in sprawling urban poor communities. There are a lot of health problems (less that 1 percent of the national budget is spent on health care); there is limited access for most people to medicine and children cannot attend school - further limiting their chances to secure work when they are young adults.

The story of development aggression does not end here. The spectrum of appropriation of resources for private profit in conflict to people’s right to access and use of such resources continues to grow. Widespread destruction of natural resources and environmental degradation has led to serious climate change impacts. Increasing urbanisation, an offshoot of globalisation, has resulted in increasing over-dependence of people’s lives on commodities. There has been tremendous increase in demand for power. The impact is seen across the world - rivers are being dammed to produce hydro electricity – a form that has been labelled as greener than other forms of power production. The story of dams and its impacts are similar in most places. The Bakun Dam in Malaysia is reported to have caused the forced displacement of 5,000-8,000 indigenous persons from 15 communities by clear-cutting 80,000 hectares of rainforest. Indigenous peoples in Arunachal Pradesh and other states in North-East India, are suffering similar fate caused by the building of numerous hydroelectric dams. In India, the government does not have figures of people displaced by large dams since independence. This is the biggest sign of the fact that displacement and resettlement of people is the least concern of large dam builders. This is particularly clear when we see that India is the third largest dam builder country in the world. Development aggression has also impacted people’s access to basic public health system, education and access to life saving drugs medical drugs at affordable prices.

The essence of the criticisms to the current form of development regime is that they exist not to support the development of the poor countries but primarily to maintain imperialist hegemony and serve the interest of the developed world and the international finance, which includes the profits and gains by the transnational corporations. It does not help the countries to progress but help in plundering of their resources, increasing the miseries of the people and making development another tool of aggression.

Our role as members of civil society
The experiences from across the countries echo similar ravages caused by aggressive development practices. Possible issues that we can look into for our collaborative research are the following:

- Documenting the existing and emerging forms of development aggression from the region – sector specific case studies from each country
- Documenting success stories of communities’ struggles that have resisted and stopped onslaught of development aggression (learning from experiences of people)
- Economic crisis and economic vulnerability - the impacts; lessons learnt; precautionary steps for future and the points of advocacy with governments.
- Development induced displacement – both internal (within the boundaries of nation states) and external (across the boundaries of nation states).
- Documenting Land Struggles - documenting the phenomenon of land grabbing, appropriation of land by governments for private use, change in pattern of land ownership, the issue of landlessness and struggles by local communities.
- Informalisation of work - Rights and threats to Migrant workers, Domestic workers, contract workers, the vanishing labour rights
- Documenting the regressive gender distributive effect of development aggression – changing equations and emerging social, economic and political constraints.
- The increasing threat of food crisis - lost of self sufficiency
- The role of civil society in resisting development aggression
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EQUATIONS is a research, policy advocacy and campaigning organisation working on tourism and development issues in India since 1985. Working closely with communities impacted by tourism it aims at influencing people centred forms of tourism that are non exploitative, sustainable, equitable, democratic in their decision making and ensure significant local benefits.

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End Notes

4 "Recognising This Face" by Amit Bhaduri, Economic and Political Weekly, November 20, 2010, Vol XLV No 47.
6 "Recognising This Face" by Amit Bhaduri, Economic and Political Weekly, November 20, 2010, Vol XLV No 47.
8 A four-member committee was constituted by MoEF under the chairmanship of N C Saxena, member of National Advisory Council to look into the issue of diversion of 660.74 hectares (1632.66 acres) of forest land for Vedanta bauxite mining project and diversion of 1253 ha forest land for the POSCO project and the implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (FRA).
9 This Committee was subsequently formed by MoEF headed by former Environment Secretary Meena Gupta to investigate violations of all laws, government procedures and rules.
10 A statutory body formed under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 for assessment of forest clearance proposals received by the central government involving forest area of more than 20 ha.
12 Ibid
13 While the country was already witnessing widespread protests against the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Act 2005, the National Tourism Advisory Council (NTAC), a think tank under the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) floated in November 2006 the proposal of establishing Special Tourism Zones (STZs) on the lines of (SEZs) to boost tourism and increase investment, employment and infrastructure in the country
14 A para-statal central body taking over the administrative rights of the region from the hands of the district authorities and the local self-government institutions like the Panchayats.
15 Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd, [http://www.sardarsarovardam.org/]
17 Interview extracts of Elisha Kartini who works for the Indonesian Peasant Union. It is part of the series of interviews that looks at the work of activists from Asia who came to Brussels in October 2010 to participate in the Asia Europe People’s Forum (AEPF8). Refer [http://www.tni.org/article/activists-across-asia-explain-how-eus%252B%2520free-trade-agenda-affects-them-1-indonesia-and-china]
18 Water Justice, Resource Centre on alternatives to privatisation, [http://www.waterjustice.org/?mi=1]
19 Water privatisation & struggles in Asia, [http://www.tni.org/events/water-privatisation-struggles-asia]
20 Temporary work status and threats from militia make it hard for Filipino workers to organise – An interview excerpts of Oshua Mata, Secretary General of the Alliance for Progressive Labor (APL), Philippines- a national labour centre that recognizes, organizes
and mobilizes all types of workers and unions, with a commitment to social movement unionism – which goes beyond a narrow wage-earner focus to address also the social costs of oppressive political-economic systems. Refer http://www.tni.org/article/activists-across-asia-explain-how-eu%E2%80%99s-free-trade-agenda-affects-them-3-labour-rights-phili-0

These topics emerged during the discussion amongst APRN members during the Annual General Body Meeting in July 2010 in Baguio, Philippines. It was discussed that the following issues unite all southern block countries. These are not all inclusive.