

Missionary Society of St. Columban

JUSTICE, PEACE, AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION

There are other weak and defenseless beings who are frequently at the mercy of economic interests or indiscriminate exploitation. I am speaking of Creation as a whole.

Pope Francis, (#20, Evangelii Gaudium)

[Earth] is our common home and the place of God's covenant with human beings and with all Creation. To disregard the mutual relationships and balance that God established among created realities is an offense against the Creator, an attack on biodiversity, and ultimately against life itself.

Conference of Latin American Bishops, (#125, Aparecida)

Extractive Industries

Columban missionaries see close-up the growing threat of a massive depletion of natural resources and destruction of the environment caused by Extractive Industries. We challenge the model of development promoted by many multinational corporations, governments and international financial institutions that is based on the intensive exploitation of natural resources, most of which are non-renewable, and creates conditions of dependency for countries from which the resources are extracted. This model of development commodifies the natural world which violates the relationship of balance and harmony intended for all of God's Creation and often generates social conflicts, violates human rights and endangers biodiversity.

Our mission experience of living with communities and the natural world that has been marginalized and exploited, along with insights from Scripture, Catholic Social Teaching, and empirical science impel us to seek ways to restore right relationships with Creation. Creation-centered theology helps us see that ethical behavior must no longer be confined solely to our relationship with God and other human beings, but must include our relationship with all of God's Creation.

Columban Concerns

A threat to water quality and access

Water is essential for life. Extractive Industries are increasingly destroying watersheds and demanding larger amounts of water for production, putting them in competition with prior human, agriculture and environmental needs. We see that water pollution as well as damage to and depletion of water basins, often create extreme vulnerability for both the natural and human world.

Expansion to new frontiers and loss of diversity

Growing demand for natural resources, along with the new technologies used for their exploration and extraction, high prices in the international markets, and economic and legal incentives for nations to grant concessions to multinational corporations, have created the conditions for Extractive Industries to greatly expand their operations to frontiers, such as headwater basins, glacier systems, forests, mountain tops, deep sea plateau, indigenous ancestral lands, peasant villages, and conservation areas. This endangers the life of pristine and unique ecosystems, local economies, traditional cultures, and



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water supplies. Fishing, farming and forestry are also transformed by new forms of Extractive Industries, with demand for biofuels or biomass, and fattened livestock in order to meet the demand for meat diets in traditionally and newly economically wealthy countries.

False solutions

Everyday access to minerals, oil, and gas is becoming more difficult. Their concentration is at deeper levels, under ground and sea, requiring more energy to extract them and leaving behind more waste. As technical difficulties with extraction and processing the resources become apparent, Extractive Industries develop new technologies and strategies to facilitate natural resource exploitation, such as hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”), desalination, and genetically modified mono-crops, all of which raise concerns due to their potential environmental impacts. These technologies require large amounts of energy and resources such as water, electricity and chemicals in order to operate. The consequences of these technologies are pollution to water supplies, higher carbon emissions, and increased socio-cultural stress on communities.

Extractive Industries’ attempts to “greenwash” their image by measures to mitigate human and natural damage, are often problematic. Measures such as Carbon Credits and Carbon Offsets, unless implemented as part of an integral carbon reduction strategy, allow corporations, governments, institutions, and individuals to continue harmful resource dependency with no policy or lifestyle change.

Laws “made-to-measure”

Extractive Industries benefit from legal systems often designed to facilitate their operations. Driven by recommendations from international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and through bi- and multi-national trade agreements, legal frameworks are altered to disproportionately benefit Extractive Industries. For example, in Chile and Argentina, mountain-top removal mining was forbidden until a bilateral agreement between the two countries, drafted by the Barrick Gold Company, was originally signed in 2000. This agreement known as Pascua Lama¹, allowed for a previously prohibited mining project in the mountains that affects glacier ecosystems, headwater basins, and places in jeopardy the health and well-being of communities downstream. Similarly, trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership create legal avenues for corporations to sue governments for loss of revenue which may result from applying national labor and environmental protections.

Cultures and Human Rights threatened

In many communities where Extractive Industries proliferate, inequality grows. Frequently, corporate executives receive high salaries at the expense of workers and local communities see their sources of income and local economies weaken. Often, violence, crime prostitution, and drug abuse grow, local solidarity networks are threatened, indigenous people and farmers are forced to move to urban areas when they lose their lands, their environment are polluted or destroyed and they cannot continue with their traditional livelihoods. Social conflicts increase, and in many cases governments and corporations attempt to silence opposition by criminalising legitimate protest, putting the lives of local leaders at risk.

¹ For more information, Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros de America Latina:
http://basedatos.conflictosmineros.net/ocmal_db/?page=conflicto&id=4



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Columban Response

Solidarity with Communities in Conflict

Columbans live and work in countries impacted by Extractive Industries and see firsthand the human and environmental abuses associated with mining. Columban missionaries have been threatened along with other religious, Indigenous and Community Leaders with whom we partner as a result of challenging Extractive Industries. In extreme cases, this challenge has led to the killing of religious, indigenous and local community leaders. We support local communities by assisting in education and mobilization activity, and connecting with our international community via advocacy and other solidarity efforts. Columbans have repeatedly witnessed how community leaders, often Indigenous, are targeted with death when they speak out against mining companies.

Advocacy for change

Columbans also live and work in countries where mining corporations are headquartered and trade agreements are negotiated. Our presence in countries impacted by Extractive Industries and in countries where policies and practices are determined, offers a unique opportunity to bring the voices of local communities, our lived experience and that of our partner organizations to boardrooms and legislative bodies. We are committed to working for structural change as part of an integrated strategy for addressing the root causes of economic and environmental injustice. Through dialogue with government agencies, public policy makers and corporations we seek to impact systemic change as well as empower impacted communities to tell their own stories through advocacy and education.

Interreligious Cooperation

We seek out people and groups of other faith traditions who are actively involved in environmental issues, including resistance to Extractive Industries, in order to increase the effectiveness of our efforts. The combined efforts of those inspired by religious values gives greater conviction, access to greater numbers of people and added credibility to advocacy work.

Faith Formation

Inviting people and communities of faith to understand and act on social and environmental issues through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching is an integral part of Columban mission. Formation happens in a variety of contexts including parishes, schools, universities, mission centers, short term mission service, and online and print publications.

Socially and Environmentally Responsible Investing (SRI)

As a Missionary Society we are called upon to use the resources entrusted to us for the life of the world.² Through the ethically and socially responsible use and investment of financial resources, we commit to a variety of approaches, including Positive Impact Investing and the divestment³ of our

² 2012 Columban General Assembly, *Called to Communion*, p.17.

³ See Society Socially and Environmentally Responsible policy for further explanation of Society strategy on Divestment.



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financial resources in companies, particularly fossil fuel companies, Extractive Industries, and arms companies that exploit the natural world and disrespect the dignity of human life.

Columban membership of the U.S.-based *Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility* and participation in the UK-based *Ecumenical Center for Corporate Responsibility* serve as outlets for our wider engagement in Socially Responsible Investment and Corporate Advocacy.

Publications / Raising awareness

Through online and print publications, Columbans invite critical thinking, action and prayerful reflection. The following are examples:

- *Philippines: Mining or Food? Report*: www.piplinks.org/miningorfood
- *Stations of the Forest* video: www.columban.org.au/about-us/columban-videos/stations-of-the-forests/
- *Grace of the Earth* Lenten Reflection: www.columban.org.au/assets/files/pej/columbanmissionthegraceofearth.pdf

Networking

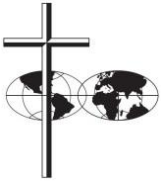
C Columbans participate in a number of national and international networks and partnerships that address Extractive Industries.

International

- The *Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Commission's Extractive Industries Working Group* of the Union of Superiors General and Union of International Superiors General: www.jpicroma.org/#!mining/cfm6
- Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM): *Department for Justice and Peace* www.celam.org/d_justicia.php
- *Red Ecclesial Pan-Amazonica* (REPAM): www.redamazonica.org/
- *Iglesias y Minería* (Churches and Mining Network)
- *Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros de America Latina*: www.conflictosmineros.net/

National

- Australia
 - Jubilee Australia: www.jubileeaustralia.org
 - Faith Ecology Network: www.faithecolony.net.au
 - EcoMission NSW Network
- Britain
 - London Mining Network: www.londonminingnetwork.org/
 - Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility: www.eccr.org.uk
 - Philippines Indigenous Peoples Links: www.piplinks.org
- Chile
 - Coalición Ecumenica por el Cuidado de la Creación: www.cecudadodelacreacion.wordpress.com/



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- Movimiento Social por la Recuperación y Defensa del Agua: www.aguaenmarcha.cl/wp/
- Coordinadora por la Defensa del Agua y la Vida: www.derechoalagua.cl
- United States
 - Interfaith Working Group on Extractives: www.columban.org/14530/columban-center-for-advocacy-and-outreach/extractive-industries-principles/
 - Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility: www.iccr.org

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