EnergyBridges – a project for more energy justice

The aim of the EU project „EnergyBridges – Sustainable Energy for Poverty Reduction“ is to increase public awareness of the energy inequality that exists between countries of the North and South of the globe. The Climate Alliance partners, European municipalities and indigenous peoples of the Amazon rainforest want to work together to promote the fair use of energy through public awareness and educational programmes, lobbying and project support.

The EnergyBridges project contributes to improving access to environmentally friendly and renewable energies, to reducing poverty and to promoting sustainable usage of the Amazonian environment. This is in line with the millennium development goals of the UN. At the same time responsible energy generation and usage is being spurned in the industrialised countries.

Millennium Declaration

In the year 2000, 189 heads of state or government signed the Millennium Declaration in New York. The three central themes covered within this document were the establishment of peace, fight against poverty and environmental protection. Upon signing the Millennium Declaration, the UN Member States commit themselves to fulfil eight development targets by 2015.

The targets outlined in points seven and eight of the Millennium Declaration play a decisive role in the attainment of energy justice between the countries of the North and South: ensuring environmental sustainability and building up a global partnership for development. These two points make clear that a worldwide energy supply based on sustainable, ecological principles can only be realised through international cooperation.

The EnergyBridges project operates in exactly this field. In cooperation with European municipalities and indigenous peoples of the Amazon...
The work of art created during the European Development Days by 35 students from the partner cities of Strasbourg and Stuttgart in collaboration with the artist Michael Arantes Müller is almost six square metres in size. In four of the single pictures, the young people have depicted the themes of energy sources, energy production, energy (in)justice and visions for the future.

The local nature of development formed the focus for the third European Development Days, which took place in Strasbourg from 15 to 17 November 2008. Climate Alliance organised the student art project and was – as in the previous years – represented at a stall that proved to be of great interest to many of the 5,000 event participants. The North-South activities of the Climate Alliance and the EU project EnergyBridges in particular were presented.

The youngsters and their teachers were very enthusiastic about the project. One teacher said they considered it the most successful exchange programme yet, as the students were able to exchange ideas through the joint project as well as practice their language skills.

At a celebratory hand-over ceremony, the Lord Mayors of the cities of Strasbourg and Stuttgart, Roland Ries and Dr. Wolfgang Schuster, were each receive one of the four pictures from works of art to thank them for their support. It is also planned that one of the remaining two pictures shall be given to the French Foreign Ministry that supported the action and one to the Directorate-General for Development of the European Commission during the International Climate Alliance Conference due to take place in Brussells in April 2009.

### Solar partnerships – solar lamps in the Peruvian rainforest

In Peru, 35 percent of the population does not have access to the public electricity supply. Particularly the rural and indigenous population in remote villages in the Amazon region are affected.

The most common fuel for the production of energy and light is petroleum, but this unfortunately has severe negative side-effects: smoke and soot are released in the combustion process, which cause health problems amongst the families and sight problems due to relatively poor lighting also develop over time. The CO₂ that is released damages the environment and has a negative impact on the climate. There are also problems obtaining and paying for the petroleum: it must be transported to the communities and, depending on the distance to the near city, costs can...
be extremely high and access not guaranteed. One solution to this problem has been the introduction and distribution of solar lamps in the form of small, decentralised photovoltaic energy saving lamps. Apart from the electric lamps’ greater efficiency, there are also clear advantages for the environment and health. They also help improve living conditions.

In 2005, a workshop for the manufacture of mobile solar lights and modules was built in Iquitos, capital of the Loreto Province that lies in the northern Amazon region of Peru. The project is run in cooperation with FORMABIAP, an education and development programme for the training of indigenous teachers. Sale of the lamps is enabled for all interested parties through the possibility to make payments for the equipment in instalments.

Another important aim of the project is the integration of the theme of resource usage into the indigenous teachers’ training programme. The solar lamps (as a tangible alternative) act as a practical example and as a topic of discussion throughout the training programme. The teachers not only gain theoretical knowledge; they also receive practical training in the construction of solar lamps.

In Peru, the political position of the indigenous peoples has deteriorated. The current president, Alan García Pérez, is attempting – even publicly – to disparage and discredit the indigenous peoples. They are not only being accused of not putting the natural resources to good use themselves but also of trying to prevent the population from using them. The background to this dispute lies in the sustained access to oil and natural resource reserves located in the rainforests – and that even within indigenous regions. The training programme has also been attacked with this propaganda and, at the beginning of the year, was refused official permission to train indigenous teachers. This led to the programme chiefly being preoccupied with crisis management in the first half of 2008.

The experiences gathered during the cooperation with FORMABIAP have prompted interest in other regions. The indigenous municipality of Sarayaku in Ecuador has requested a similar project be set up. Furthermore cooperation with other organisations active in the region are also being initiated. Thus Pro Vita Andina e.V. has already sold some lamps to other regions and is considering building another workshop for the manufacture of lamps. The project has been supported by the city of Magdeburg, amongst others, for several years now.

**Victory for indigenous peoples – Peruvian Member of Congress reports**

This time round they were successful: two weeks after thousands of indigenous men and women began demonstrations, road blockades and protests, the Peruvian congress retracted the two criticised acts on 22 August 2008. The directives had been enforced to facilitate the sale of indigenous land to oil and mining companies. The government of Alan García Pérez lost by 29 votes to 66 – a significant defeat for the Peruvian president.

The president of the indigenous rights organisation AIDESEP, Alberto Pizango Chota, asserted that the indigenous peoples are not against development. However this must take place in a respectful manner towards them and their territories. The oil and mining companies generally disregard the indigenous peoples’ rights and contaminate their environment. They do not bring wealth to the impoverished population, but often cause even greater poverty and take away their land.
After protests began, the government called a state of emergency in three Amazonian regions. The situation flared and injuries were sustained on both sides when the police attempted to break up the blockades. García defended the government’s initiative with the argument that they wanted to promote the development of the Amazon region. The affected population, which includes over 350,000 indigenous persons, was not asked.

Retraction of the acts represents a victory for the indigenous Amazon population; the pressure on their land has not been averted however: over 70 percent of the Peruvian Amazon region, an area covering 52 million hectares, has already been divided into development blocks. The 151 blocks include nature protection areas and land belonging to indigenous peoples. Not even areas in which indigenous people live without contact to the outside world have been spared.

The representative Oswaldo Luizar Obregón who represents the region of Cuzco in the Congress reported about the dispute between the government and indigenous peoples during a conference held in Schwerte (Germany) that had been co-organised by Climate Alliance.

**Ecuador: Leave the oil in the ground**

In June 2007, the government of Ecuador presented its proposal for the so-called ITT oil fields located within the Yasuní National Park: they are prepared not to extract or explore the oil fields if the international community agrees to compensate Ecuador half of the anticipated revenue from the sale of the oil.

**The ITT oil fields**

Over a fifth of Ecuador’s oil reserves are deposited in the oil fields of Ishpingo, Tambococha, Tiputini (known collectively as ITT), which are situated in the low-lying region of the Ecuadorian Amazon. A total of 412 million barrels have been proven to definitely exist whilst a further 500 million barrels are thought to also be deposited there. Half of Ecuador’s total export income has originated from the sale of oil for 35 years now – the country has obtained over a third of its national budget from this. Exploitation of the ITT fields could provide 100,000 barrels a day for 13 years, which would earn the country an annual net income of 720 million US dollars.

**Yasuní National Park**

The ITT oil fields mainly lie within the Yasuní National Park, which includes almost one million hectares of tropical rainforest, an area four times the size of Luxembourg. Featuring around 4,000 types of plants, 173 species of mammals and 610 species of birds, the zone offers the greatest biodiversity in the world, thus UNESCO has declared it a Biosphere Reserve. The southern section of around 760,000 hectares is also a so-called “undisturbed zone”, meaning it is the retreat of the Tagaeri and Taromenane, two people of forest nomads who refrain from contact with the outside world and live in “voluntary isolation”. The living environment and ways of life of these communities would inevitably be destroyed by exploitation of the oil reserves. The indigenous Huaorani and Kichwa also live within Yasuní National Park.

**Ecuador’s proposal**

Ecuador has offered to forgo the income that could be obtained from the exploitation of the ITT oil fields should the international community agree to pay half of the amount that they estimate could be earned – 350 million US dollars – for ten years. The amount of CO₂ emissions that could be avoided should the
area not be exploited and the oil burned is estimated at 436 million tons. This equates to the amount of CO₂ that Luxembourg would produce in 30 years. Ecuador has, however, set a deadline of the end of 2008 for the definitive acceptance of this proposal.

Criticisms

Counterarguments and questions about this proposal are being voiced both within Ecuador and abroad:
– Given that Ecuador desperately needs the oil for the social state, would it not be better to exploit the oil, but in an environmentally friendly, socially sustainable way?
– Who will guarantee and control the use of an alternative resource?
– The proposal would only protect the Yasuni National Park. Pressure on other development areas within the Amazon rainforest and around the world generally is increasing. At the end of the day, neither the rate of delivery nor CO₂ emissions would be reduced.
– The proposal could be taken as a precedent for support of further compensation claims for non-usage. It would be impossible to provide such payouts on a world-wide scale.
– Who will guarantee that the oil in the ITT oil fields will not be exploited in the future after all?

The Yasuni Green-Gold Campaign

The Yasuni Green-Gold Campaign was launched with the support of the government of the province of Orellana within which the ITT Block and Yasuni National Park are located and the local indigenous population. It supports participation of the local population and their organisations in the ITT proposal and the fundamental conservation of the national park, amongst other issues. They also aim to obtain an extension on the year-end deadline so that an international agreement may be reached.

International responsibility

The ITT Yasuni proposal put forward by the Ecuadorian government poses a fundamental political question to world politics, as the biosphere in Yasuni National Park is undoubtedly a habitat of global significance. To what extent should the international community contribute to the costs of a developing country for the fulfilment of global enviro-political goals? Those who preach “protect the rainforests” must follow words with actions and not just continue to request oil, soya, wood and ores from the rainforest regions. The Yasuni proposal could become a litmus test for the enviro-political and developmental sincerity of the international community, as it is the first time that a producing country offers to refrain from production.

Despite its shortcomings, it is worth seriously considering the proposal, improving the details and providing support as available options allow. The post-crude oil era will not simply come about by itself due to a gradual ebbing of fossil fuels, but instead requires the implementation of conscious political decisions and economic measures. Actions should not be naïve or made in haste—they must be taken however.

Climate Alliance Lëtzebuerg

Due to its many years of experience in the fields of environment and cooperation as well as on site in Ecuador, Climate Alliance Lëtzebuerg recommended that its government to take on the Ecuadorian government’s proposal. Climate Alliance Lëtzebuerg also stated it intended to participate in a work group of the Luxembourg government and in the Yasuní project within the scope of its organisational and financial means.
Negative effects of fuels from biomass

At their General Assembly 2008 held in Aachen, the Climate Alliance municipalities agreed to a resolution on biofuels that called for scrutiny of the social, ecological and economic effects of the greenhouse gases emitted by biomass. The number of reports about the negative effects of uncontrolled production is growing, confirming the fears voiced in the resolution.

In September of this year, the industry committee of the EU Parliament determined to retain the fundamental goal of incorporating biofuels into general use but suggested a move away from the agreed quota of 10 percent by 2020. Moreover, they determined that only biofuels emitting at least 45 percent less CO₂ than fossil fuels during production and use are to be permitted. This minimum value is to be increased to 60 percent by 2015.

Even though the figures and specialist discussions sometimes seem a little confusing and pedantic to non-experts, they do send out an important message to other countries. Particularly countries such as Brazil that build their hopes on major expansion in the production of fuels from plant sources orientate themselves strongly accordingly to the political decisions reached by the developed countries and strive to also influence these to their advantage.

The results of the most significant international study into biofuels have been summarised by the German Marshall Fund of the United States:

– Direct and indirect alterations in land use to produce plants for energy generation cancel out the reductions in greenhouse gas almost entirely or at least reduce them significantly.

– Biofuels were a key factor in the worldwide increase in food prices and the growing uncertainty in world food supplies in recent years.

– Political decisions and subsidies for the production of biofuels are very expensive instruments for the reduction of greenhouse gases.

– Biofuels save more CO₂ and energy when they are used for the generation of electricity rather than as a fuel.

– The EU plans for a 10 percent incorporation of biofuels should be rethought.

Climate Alliance resolution on biofuels: www.climatealliance.org/resolutions.html?&L=0


Position paper by Climate Alliance Austria: www.klimabuendnis.at/start.asp?ID=120315

Study by the German Marshall Fund: www.gmfus.org/publications/article.cfm?id=502&parent_type=P

Avoidance of deforestation in climate protection negotiations

Compensation for the avoidance of deforestation was discussed at the 2007 UN Climate Conference held in Bali as part of the international negotiations for a post-Kyoto agreement. This came after the impact of destroying forests on global climate change was not discussed at earlier international negotiations. This issue was presented as a central theme under the acronym REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) at the recent UN Climate Conference that took place in Poznan from 1 to 12 December 2008.

The fundamental idea behind REDD is simple: an economic value should be attributed to the CO₂ stored within the forests. By recognising the emissions
resulting from the deforestation of tropical forests, economic incentives for forgoing deforestation can be established. Most questions regarding methodology remain unanswered however, and very little time actually remains until the 2009 UN Conference due to be held in Copenhagen at the end of the year where a follow-up agreement to the Kyoto Protocol – and thus also REDD – is to be negotiated.

For Climate Alliance, protection of the tropical rainforests is a central concern. The partnership with indigenous peoples of the Amazon region inherently links conservation of the rainforest with the upholding of the rights of indigenous peoples. Conservation of the tropical forests forms the basis for the rights of indigenous peoples, for the preservation of the forests’ biodiversity and for climate protection. An immediate stop to deforestation and replanting of native plants and trees has always been an urgent, independent task that also helps protect the climate. The general consensus that this should NOT be used to buy one’s way out of the duty of reducing greenhouse gases retains widespread support. Political standpoints and financing tools must reward protection of the forests. Climate Alliance believes that additional funds from which rapid, cost-effective measures for the protection of the forests could be financed could represent an alternative to REDD. The securing of land rights for the indigenous and local communities must be a central concern of every tool.

Accordingly, for the indigenous partners of Climate Alliance, represented by the coordinating body of indigenous organisations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), recognition and enforcement of their traditional land and usage rights are a basic requirement for every forest protection policy. From 7 to 9 August 2008, COICA’s first “Workshop on Climate Change in the Amazon River Basin” took place in Quito, Ecuador. The aim of this conference was to discuss the topic of climate change and subsequent effects on the Amazonian rainforests, a decisive issue for the indigenous peoples. Criticism was voiced for the lack of consultation with the indigenous peoples of the rainforest at any point regarding tools such as REDD. They pointed out that “apart from the moral and legal duties to include legitimate indigenous organisations in decision-making processes relating to climate change and REDD, it doesn’t make sense to develop solutions for climate change without the full and effective participation of the indigenous peoples. Given that the indigenous peoples hold both the absolute and usage rights to their territories and the forests lying within these, approaches that leave indigenous knowledge and priorities out in the cold will simply not work”. They also emphasised that “it will not be necessary to name the thousands of projects which were imposed upon the indigenous peoples and consequently failed”.

For this reason, the European Secretariat of Climate Alliance supports COICA’s request for full, effective and timely participation at all stages in the decision-making process at an international level (such as the UNFCCC) as well as at national and local levels with regards to laws and regulations concerning biodiversity and climate change.

**Project GREEN in the Brazilian rainforests**

The federal state of Acre is located in the far northwest of Brazil on the border with Peru and Bolivia and is half the size of Germany. Almost all of Acre is covered in rainforests and countless rivers flow through the region. Part of the population is of indigenous heritage and lives in extreme poverty. In cooperation with Climate Alliance and indigenous organisations, medico international e.V. is running a socio-medical project, which was first launched in 2003 with the setting up of training courses for midwives.

**Background**

The inspiration for Project GREEN was brought back from Amazonia by artist Michael Müller who was invited to the area in 1994 by the former cultural attaché of the Brazilian embassy in Berlin, Francesco Chagas Freitas. Fascinated and moved by the natural environment and indigenous cultures, Michael Müller returned to Brazil several times over the subsequent years. One particular phenomenon impressed him: the many different words for the world of greenery originating from the different perception of nature and the mythological, holistic mentality of the Amazon indigenous peoples. These are the complete antithesis of the approach to organising the natural world taken in western science and the patenting of their usage for commercial purposes. In the “green world” of the Amazon peoples, the word “Apaniradhadi” exists to describe a rain-drenched leaf.
that is shimmering in the sun and “Ccajonapode” for trees that used to exist earlier. The poetry of these words, their seemingly abstract sounds, etymology and significance greatly interested the artist. Indigenous languages generally don’t express any abstract hues of green but describe the Amazonian cosmos in relation to natural phenomena and experience. The destruction of traditional indigenous concepts through Christianisation and integration into the national community mean the languages, terms and even their significance become meaningless. Loss of language leads to a loss of unique knowledge and human culture.

The work of art

Artist Michael Müller created 100 pictures of one square metre in size for Project GREEN, which together forms an impressive patchwork. Each picture relates to a word from the Kaxinua, Kulina, Dení or Zuruahá languages, which are spoken in the Brazilian state of Acre and in South Amazonia. Each term also features on the picture in Latin script as a design element. The diversity of the pictures and terms for which additional descriptions are provided create an interlinking cosmos. The aim of the work of art is to encourage reflection about different world views; a search for new concepts could then ensue.

The partners – Climate Alliance and medico international

The “green pictures” have meanwhile been purchased by various municipalities, institutes and private individuals and the income from these used to support different projects for indigenous midwives. medico international e.V. assumes the technical assistance and implementation of these projects in Amazonia. The socio-medical aid organisation has been active in many countries in South America since 1968 and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for its determined opposition to the use of land mines. Partners in Amazonia include various indigenous organisations, particularly the organisations for indigenous women. The aim of Project GREEN is the development of a bond between the European cities active within the Climate Alliance and the indigenous peoples of Amazonia. It aims to bring together partners who link the environment and art with upholding cultural identity and social fairness.

GREEN highlights the responsibility of Europe in the conservation of the cultural and natural diversity of Amazonia. The name of the city that purchases a particular picture is written in the spot it previously occupied in the work of art meaning that a social sculpture with a concrete background – a story – and all the participating cities become a part of the work of art.

The socio-medical project

In addition to conserving traditional medical practices, the provision of basic and primary medical care (prevention, hygiene, health talks) are the most urgent needs of the indigenous communities in Acre. The scattered nature of the community presents a significant problem, hence not only preventative and curative health campaigns but also the training and instruction of health promoters is of great significance; they can then provide decentralised primary health care. Healthy living conditions aren’t only determined by doctors, medication and hospitals however. Development opportunities for individuals and for social groups as a whole, a living culture and equal social rights – primarily adequate nourishment and humane environmental conditions – are also essential components for the provision of health care. medico international e.V. offers socio-medical assistance to all “folks of the forest” as indigenous communities, rubber tappers (seringueiros) and river dwellers (riberinhos) pursue collective interests and have access to equally poor medical care.

http://www.gruenprojekt.de

DORI – one of the few remaining green pictures

This picture – number 23 of 100 – has been named DORI by artist Michael Müller. This word is used in the Kulina language to describe plants that emit positive energy and absorb negative energy. A beautiful, refreshing meaning for a picture.

Should you be interested in acquiring this picture, please contact the European Secretariat of Climate Alliance.
Climate Refugee Camp –
an action by artist Hermann Josef Hack

For two days in October 2008, artist Hermann Josef Hack set up a symbolic climate refugee camp comprising 350 miniature tents beneath the Euro symbol located in front of the European Central Bank in Frankfurt. The art action was realised in cooperation with the Frankfurt Book Fair, the city of Frankfurt am Main, Hesse political development network (Entwicklungs-politisches Netzwerk Hessen) and Climate Alliance.

www.hermann-josef-hack.de

Climate refugees around the world

Shortly after being elected in October 2008, the president of the Maldives Mohamed Nasheed announced that part of the income earned through tourism would be used to purchase a new living space for the 400,000 inhabitants when their current homeland, which lies just a few metres above sea level, is lost beneath the sea.

In July 2008, the heads of governments of the pacific islands of Kiribati (93,000 inhabitants) and Tuvalu (11,000 inhabitants) travelled with the request to New Zealand to accept climate refugees from their countries.

In terms of the sheer volume of people, the coastal region of Bangladesh is the region most affected by global warming. The homes of 15 million inhabitants living on the low-lying flood plains of the Ganges delta are at risk from the rising sea level.

The United Nations estimates the number of people having to leave their home because of climate change at around 25 million. In just a few decades, this figure could already have reached over 200 million. This estimate hasn’t really yet been taken in by the political world and general public.

A study of climate refugees conducted by the Institute for Political Science of the University of Hamburg in 2007 stated: “The international community is creeping slowly but surely towards a humanitarian disaster of proportions yet unknown. Climate warming caused by humans is further damaging the natural ways of life of several millions of people. For many, no other option remains but to flee. Where fertile land was once cultivated, a desert landscape now prevails; paradisiacal islands are being swallowed by the sea; entire settlements are sinking into the mud of melting permafrost. Around 30 of the world’s least developed countries risk falling into ruin in the coming years”.
The "Climate Alliance of European Cities with Indigenous Rainforest Peoples / Alianza del Clima" is Europe’s largest city network dedicated to climate protection. The member municipalities have entered into a partnership with indigenous rainforest peoples to protect the world’s climate. The city network was founded in 1990 with the mission to elaborate and implement local climate protection measures especially in the fields of energy and mobility and to cooperate with indigenous peoples to protect the tropical rainforests. Cooperation partner is COICA, the Coordinating Body for the Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations of the Amazon Basin. The Climate Alliance represents 50 million citizens in Europe.