
A portrait of Anabela Lemos, an older woman with long, wavy grey hair, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. She is wearing a white t-shirt. The background is a blurred green foliage.

Anabela Lemos,
Director of Justiça Ambiental
(Climate Justice) and
Per Anger Prize winner 2022

CAUSE OF DEATH: FARMER

WE
EFFECT

A photograph of a forest floor. In the center, a machete with a dark, worn blade and a wooden handle lies on the ground. Surrounding the machete are several cut tree stumps of varying sizes, some with fresh, light-colored wood exposed. The ground is covered in dry leaves, twigs, and small green plants. The background shows more trees and foliage, suggesting a dense forest environment.

***"The most pressing challenge facing
climate and environmental justice advocates
is the threat of violence."***

Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, United Nations
Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful
assembly and of association.

Photo: Claudio Vasquez Bianchi.

CAUSE OF DEATH: FARMER

Where does their bravery come from? _____	4
An ever-worsening threat _____	6
Recommendations _____	7
Those defending our planet are being murdered _____	9
Scope is shrinking for land rights and environmental defenders _____	15
Threats won't silence Anabela Lemos _____	19
"We're subjected to violence all the time" _____	21
Bibliography _____	23

*For the sake of the safety of the persons portrayed,
this report makes exception to We Effect's usual naming policy:
That everyone appearing in images should be named.*



Cause of death: farmer

Editor: Karl Lindberg

Report authors: Philip Krook and Karl Lindberg

Production and illustrations: Kólare Design. Printing: Planograf AB.

We Effect, Box 11148, SE-100 61 Stockholm, Sweden.

Phone: +46 (0)8-120 371 00. Website: www.weeffect.se

ISBN: 978-91-986651-2-3

This report has been published with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.
The publisher is responsible for the content of the report, and Sida has not been involved in its production.

Cover: Anabela Lemos. Photo: Edson Artur

WHERE DOES THEIR BRAVERY COME FROM?

It's not hard to understand why so many farmers, environmental defenders and human rights advocates are murdered every year. The simple explanation is that they challenge powerful interests.

Nor is it that hard to understand why more and more people are being murdered every year. As climate change progresses, the struggle for land and natural resources intensifies.

What is harder to understand is why there are so many people who choose to go on fighting, even though they're aware of the risks to themselves and the people they love. Where does their bravery come from?

What is it that makes Anabela Lemos of Mozambique carry on her fight against large-scale projects, year after year? Projects that would force smallholder farmers out of their homes if they went ahead. Why does she not give up, even when her life is threatened and her son is attacked? Where does she find the strength and the conviction to go on resisting?

Perhaps one reason is that Anabela Lemos – like so many other advocates of farmers' rights to the land they farm and all people's right to a liveable planet – can see that the struggle is producing results. Because even while many defenders of the environment are being threatened and murdered, there are also victories to celebrate. In Mozambique, thousands of smallholders have been able to stay on and carry on farming their land thanks to Justiça Ambiental, 'Climate Justice', the environmental organisation for which Anabela Lemos is the director.

To save our planet, we must be able to protect people like Anabela. As the recipient of the 2022 Per Anger Prize, this is not just a prize for her, but to all environmental defenders around the world.

For two decades, Justiça Ambiental has been obstructing the start of a major dam construction project that has few or no beneficial effects for the local population. As Anabela Lemos herself puts it: It is not about hindering economic development. It's about ensuring that the development is sustainable and inclusive, and does not take place to the detriment of people and the environment.

We Effect supports the organisation of farmers in cooperatives and other member-based organisations. We know from experience that an effective antidote to the threats, violence and murders is stronger support for the organisations that fight for the environment and the rights of farmers. Today, many organisations are on their knees, which means investments

that are detrimental to people and the climate can be made without organised resistance, and often without making serious headlines or receiving international attention.

Far too little funding from wealthy nations goes to civil society in developing countries. And of the funding that is provided, only a fraction goes to defending farmers', women's and indigenous people's rights to land and the environment.

We Effect works directly alongside organisations like Justiça Ambiental. We see how farmers are oppressed, threatened and murdered when they try to defend their rights to land, water and other natural resources. These rights are crucial to combat poverty, climate crisis and inequality. Arable land and water are needed in order to put food on the table. The world's farmers are crucial. No one should have to be a farmer with their life at stake. Together, we have to break the silence. For the sake of our own future and that of the planet.



Anna Tibblin
Anna Tibblin, Secretary
General of We Effect



Lotta Folkesson
Lotta Folkesson, board member of the
Federation of Swedish Farmers, and
Chairperson of We Effect



We Effect operates in 20 countries on four continents.

AN EVER-WORSENING THREAT

Climate change in combination with large-scale economic interests is increasing global pressure on land and natural resources. At the same time civic space is decreasing, and those standing up for human rights and the environment are being threatened and murdered. Those hardest hit include women, smallholder farmers and indigenous peoples. During the Covid-19 pandemic, many activists have been arrested as regimes have banned demonstrations, citing the risk of spreading infection.

We Effect works in four of the world's countries where there are the most killings of land and environmental defenders: Colombia, the Philippines, Guatemala and Honduras. We are working with organisations in these countries for women, smallholder farmers and indigenous peoples. In each of these nations, farmers are today essentially environmental and human rights defenders, as they defend their right to the land they farm and protect the environment they live in. In 2020 we launched the first ever *Cause of death: farmers* report, in which the farmers described their persecution and we reported on the threats and violence associated with their work. This updated report shows that the situation has become even more serious.

331 human rights defenders were murdered around the world in 2020, and those defending their land and environment are among the most vulnerable, accounting for just over two-thirds of the murders. In Honduras and the Philippines, links between multinational companies, national government, the legal system and the military have been identified in murder investigations. Indigenous peoples and women farmers are especially vulnerable.

The right to land is crucial to combat poverty and inequality. It is frequently the cause of the conflicts that lead to threats and violence in the countries examined in

this report. The situation in Latin America, where the land is more unequally distributed than anywhere else in the world, must be particularly highlighted. Colombia alone accounted for more than half the murders in 2020, and several other Central and South American nations are among the most dangerous in the world. Land is also a central issue in conflicts leading to threats and violence against women, smallholder farmers and indigenous peoples in the Philippines. In many other countries there are fewer murders, but other kinds of persecution are common. In Mozambique for instance there are many threats, although to date there have been a limited number of cases involving death.

The right of women to own and control land is a necessary requirement in order to achieve gender equality. In many developing countries, women make up the majority of the workforce in agriculture. Despite that fact, women only make up 13% of the farmers who own or have secure access to the land they farm. Women's lack of ownership and control over land puts them in a poorer position to adapt to climate change.

Women fighting for land rights are double losers as pressure on land increases and civic space shrinks. Women face the same oppression as men, and are at higher risk of being subjected to sexual violence. New threats are coming from conservative activists who act aggressively particularly against the rights of women and indigenous peoples, often in collusion with corrupt power figures.

Biodiversity is threatened when mining industries, energy companies and agricultural corporations want to access land being used by indigenous peoples or smallholder farmers. These have an essential role to play in preserving species, ecosystems and genetic diversity, but are threatened by monocultures and exploitation of natural resources by big business.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Today, smallholder farmers, indigenous peoples and women are essentially environmental and human rights defenders as they defend their right to the land they farm and protect the environment they live in. To improve the situation and bolster their organisations and cooperatives, We Effect calls for the following actions:

EU Member States should:

- ▶ Strive to ensure that the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive:
 - Clarifies that the parent company should be held accountable for violations throughout the value chain, unless they can prove that all measures have been taken to prevent the damage from occurring;
 - Assures meaningful and continuous engagement and dialogue with affected stakeholders such as environmental and human rights defenders, in line with OECD and UN guiding principles on business and human rights;
 - Includes environmental and human rights defenders as an interest group in legal text and ensures the respect for free, prior and informed consent
 - Clarifies that complaint mechanisms are to be designed in such a way that affected parties do not fear reprisals for raising their voices;
 - Provides for collective redress and reverses the burden of proof;
 - Clarifies compensation mechanisms in line with OECD guidelines for due diligence which enables redress in proportion to the scope and significance of the negative impact.

UN Member States should:

- Strive to ensure that the commitments in the UN resolution on the rights of environmental and human rights defenders are implemented at the national level, without delay.
- Work for a binding UN Treaty on Business and Human Rights which ensures access to justice.

Companies and investors should:

- ▶ Follow UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and, in line with these, conduct risk and impact analyses with respect to human rights, as well as ensure that this is done throughout the supply chain.

National agricultural organisations should:

- ▶ Demand that their national governments, regional and global cooperation agencies support and protect farmers who are working to defend their rights and the environment.
- ▶ Ensure that human rights are respected within members' operations and in their production and supply chain.

Official development assistance should:

- ▶ Prioritise rural development that strengthens the economic, social and political empowerment of smallholder farmers, as well as initiatives for fairer use of and access to natural resources such as land.
- ▶ Support targeted measures to improve the situation of smallholder farmers who are environmental and human rights defenders.
- ▶ Increase the percentage that goes to civil society organisations in countries where human rights defenders are most vulnerable.



Photo: Claudio Vasquez Bianchi.

THOSE DEFENDING OUR PLANET ARE BEING MURDERED

We Effect works in four of the world's countries where there are the most killings of people who defend their land and environment: Colombia, the Philippines, Guatemala and Honduras. 237 of the 331 murders of human rights defenders in the world documented in 2020 took place in these four countries.¹

People who defend land rights, environmental rights or the rights of indigenous peoples are a particularly vulnerable group. This is due in part to the fact that conflicts over land and natural resources often take place in inaccessible areas where big companies and their front men can act without transparency.

In 2020, there were as many as 227 reported fatal attacks on people defending their land, their water and other natural resources from being exploited. That equates to more than four killings a week, and is the highest

number of registered fatal attacks to date. The most dangerous region of all is Latin America, which has seven of the top ten countries with most murders of land and environmental defenders.²

During 2021, the scope for civil society to take action declined in several countries. In 2021 CIVICUS, which works for and monitors civil society around the world, moved one country up to a higher category on a scale from Closed to Open, while 13 countries were moved down. These included Mozambique, where developments led CIVICUS to move the country from Obstructed to Repressed.³

As the climate crisis worsens, violence against those who defend their land and our planet is intensifying. This is noticeable in the increasing number of murders year on year since 2018, with twice the number now compared to 2013. But it is also evident in the rising scope of other forms of persecution, from death threats and surveillance to sexual violence.⁴

Farmers, indigenous peoples and women are hugely vulnerable when conflicts arise over land or other natural resources that economically strong players want to exploit.⁵ Local people are essentially human rights defenders, as they defend their right to the land they farm and protect the environment they live in. The offenders are often international companies acting with the knowledge of the national government or with their direct support. Clear links between a corrupt state and big companies violating human rights have been identified in Honduras⁶ and the Philippines.⁷ Mining and agricultural industries are the sectors most often involved when it comes to threats against human rights defenders in connection with large-scale exploitation.⁸



¹ Front Line Defenders, 2021

² Global Witness, 2021

³ CIVICUS, 2021

⁴ Global Witness, 2021

⁵ SNC, 2019

⁶ GAPE, 2017

⁷ Global Witness, 2019

⁸ BHRC, 2020

The coronavirus pandemic has affected farmers, indigenous peoples and women in various ways. Their scope for providing for themselves is further worsened due to poorer access to seeds, difficulties accessing markets and a weakened social economy. At the same time, it is also clear that states have used the crisis to introduce, and for far too long maintain, restrictions on freedom of association and freedom of expression, along with unjustified increased surveillance aiming to silence opposing voices. Many regimes have banned demonstrations, citing the risk of spreading infection. These bans have led to many thousands of activists being arrested during 2020. During the pandemic, many regimes have also introduced laws obstructing freedom of expression, under the guise of fighting disinformation.⁹



Women who defend human rights and those who advocate women's rights are particularly vulnerable.¹⁰ In Latin America especially, women climate activists are the most widely threatened defenders of human rights. As well as murder, they are subjected to smear campaigns, physical abuse and sexual assault. Fundamentalist movements in Latin America particularly attack sexual and reproductive rights, and women's bodies are also increasingly becoming the subject of controversy.¹¹

***"On social media we're depicted as an armed group."* HONDURAS**

Another particularly vulnerable group is indigenous people: although they make up just 5% of the world's population, they represent more than one-third of the people murdered for defending their land and our environment.¹²

Climate activists are also exposed to other kinds of attacks aimed at bringing them under public suspicion. The attackers want to use disinformation and mudslinging to undermine the activists' position and claim their actions are illegal. Climate activists are accused of being criminals, extremists, communists and terrorists. These accusations are generally backed up by an unholy alliance of government representatives and influential groups such as fossil energy companies and mining corporations.¹³

***"We are subject to violent attacks when we demonstrate."* GUATEMALA**

In order to provide a more in-depth picture of the situation in the 20 countries where We Effect operates, we conducted a survey among 13 organisations we work with. These are member-based farmers', indigenous peoples' and women's organisations and the questions relate to threats and violence linked to their work. The survey was conducted in January 2022 and was anonymous to ensure the safety of the participants. The anonymous quotes in this section come from members of the 13 organisations who participated in the survey.

Civil society is shrinking in all the countries. Five of the 13 organisations questioned view this trend with concern, and a further seven are deeply concerned. Seven organisations say that their members and staff are threatened due to their efforts to protect rights to land for growing crops.

Several organisations single out representatives of government and local authorities, police and military, as well as private companies, as those who threaten and

⁹ CIVICUS, 2021

¹⁰ CIVICUS, 2021

¹¹ UN, 2021

¹² Global Witness, 2021

¹³ UN, 2021



Photo: Philip Krook.

prevent them from carrying out their work. The organisations bear witness to how their leaders and members are subjected to threats, violence, harassment, attacks, smear campaigns and surveillance. One organisation in Guatemala says that its leaders are being persecuted after taking part in public demonstrations, and an organisation in the Philippines says that several cooperatives have withdrawn their support for a petition to the government for fear of reprisals.

"Farmers are accused of being communist rebels." THE PHILIPPINES

The majority of the organisations mention that new security laws restrict their freedom of expression, and that these laws are making it harder for them to fulfil the mandate their members have given them. Several of the organisations also describe a situation in which rules and restrictions are making their job harder. The situation has deteriorated further during the pandemic. For example, one organisation in Uganda says that travel restrictions mean they cannot reach some villages, that village organisations are being banned from holding meetings, and that the police are even cancelling village



meetings at the last minute as they do not deem the premises to be safe.

The majority of the questioned organisations in Africa and Asia do not express the same concern that their members and employees will be subjected to violence, as the organisations in Latin America. However, they do feel that government and local authorities are increasingly putting obstacles in the way of their work. The authorities carry out unannounced inspections and set up bureaucratic obstacles to slow down their operations. One organisation in Uganda explains that all public



One of the people murdered in 2021 was Arnoldo Medina Ulcue, in the Cauca Department of Colombia. He was a signatory of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas, and a member of a farming cooperative supported by We Effect.

Photo: ECOMUN

activities require approval from the police, that it takes a long time to obtain the necessary permissions from different state authorities, and they are unable to work in some districts without signing a contract with the local authorities.

In recent years, legal changes affecting the ability of civil society organisations to operate have been discussed and voted through in several countries. These laws give authorities greater powers to disband organisations for ‘administrative offences’, for example. In their responses, several organisations make reference to newly established public order and anti-terrorist laws that are impeding their work. One organisation in the Philippines says that a new anti-terrorism law makes it far more difficult for them to run campaigns for land rights, and against major infrastructure projects that are a danger to the environment.

“Under a new law, organisations have to practise self-censorship.” UGANDA

Three out of four questioned organisations in Latin America say they are deeply concerned about the situation being faced by their members and employees. One organisation responds that it feels some concern.

The threats, persecution and violence not only affect the individuals being exposed to them, but also the organisations themselves, and ultimately the changes they are striving to bring about.

In addition to threats and violence, the survey responses indicate the occurrence of targeted propaganda campaigns. In the media and on social media the organisations are represented as agitators preventing growth and development or, in the worst case, as terrorists. Women are particularly vulnerable. Three out of four Latin American organisations say the attacks they have suffered have led to losing some of the public’s trust.

“Our members are abused and arrested by the police.” KENYA

All the organisations demand greater international presence. They want the international community to call upon their governments to live up to the laws, agreements and conventions on human rights that they have signed up to. They are also looking for more resources for a development cooperation that focuses on cooperatives and other models for self-help.



Photo: Jesper Klemmedsson.



SCOPE IS SHRINKING FOR LAND RIGHTS AND ENVIRON- MENTAL DEFENDERS

In many countries, civil society has declined in recent years, even though organisations have managed to halt several attempts to restrict democratic rights and freedoms. According to We Effect's partner organisations, threats, persecution and violence have become everyday realities for anyone who organises themselves and fights for their human rights. Farmers who defend the land they cultivate and the environment they live in are a particularly vulnerable group. The threats come from regimes, corporations, and armed forces.

The threats and violence take different forms in the 20 countries where We Effect works. Even so, there are some recurring patterns. The following examples are all taken from reports compiled by We Effect's regional offices, on how civil society has developed in the years 2018–2020.

In Kenya, the state has reduced the scope of farmers' cooperatives and other organisations using surveillance, scare tactics and protest bans, and by introducing far-reaching requirements to report on who is providing funding. In Guatemala, Honduras and Colombia, private companies are using their own security forces which work outside the law, and carry out various kinds of attacks in rural areas with impunity. Harassment, threats and violence have resulted in hundreds of deaths.

In Honduras, activists have been imprisoned after protesting against plans to lease land to domestic and foreign investors, where they can create states within the state with their own laws, administration of justice and security forces. According to the activists, the plans represent a threat to the Garifuna people.

In the Philippines, the organisation PAKISAMA has supported the Dumagat-Remontado indigenous people, whose land is under threat from construction of the Kaliwa dam. The organisation's leaders have received

visits from military intelligence, interrogating them on their alleged links to revolutionary armed groups.

In many countries, new laws have been introduced which restrict organisations' freedom of action. This has often been done with reference to an alleged need to fight terrorism. Several regimes have used the pandemic as an excuse for further curtailing democratic rights and freedoms. In some countries, organisations that have joined together and campaigned have managed to stop this kind of legislative proposal.

In Tanzania, the right of individuals and organisations to bring complaints against the republic in court has been abolished. In Uganda and Tanzania, the regimes have frozen the accounts of several organisations and put a stop to their activities.

In Palestine, a law has been adopted which means that anyone disturbing "the public order", the "national cohesion" or the "social peace" can be sentenced to prison for up to 25 years. In Zimbabwe, the work of organisations is hindered by the fact that field visits always have to be made in the company of a government representative, who can exercise control and thus limit freedom of expression. Zimbabwe's government is also attempting to push through an addendum to a law regulating organisation activities, under the guise of preventing foreign involvement in domestic politics. The addendum would limit organisations' freedom of action.

In Mozambique and Sri Lanka, organisations have run campaigns and managed to stop the introduction of new laws, or addenda to existing ones, that would restrict organisations' freedom of action and have negative consequences for citizens' right to exercise their democratic rights and freedoms.

In many countries, the introduction of restrictive laws has been followed by threats, arbitrary arrests and rigged indictments against activists defending human rights. Under these circumstances, organisations are forced to look for new ways to exert an influence. Rather than openly criticising, they choose to try to have an effect through dialogue when a company establishes an operation that could reduce opportunities for farmers to make a living. When it is no longer possible to try to prevent farmers being forced to leave their land, the struggle then is at least to ensure they are adequately compensated.

The Zambia Land Alliance supported a dialogue between Silver Shell Mining Limited and farmers in the Nyimba district of Zambia. The company put a stop to its operations after residents in the district and other stakeholders pointed out how an investment in mining would affect them.



Women activists and organisations that defend women's rights are particularly exposed to harassment, threats and violence. The kind of treatment they suffer is often also different from that experienced by men. It could entail attacks on their bodily integrity, threats against their children, and attempts to shame women and undermine their reputation by claiming they are behaving in a way that goes against moral or religious values.

In Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Moldavia, attacks against activists who defend women's rights are common. The attacks often take place on the internet, and include offensive comments on the women's appearance, threats of rape, and more.

Murders 2020 per capita

1.	NICARAGUA
2.	HONDURAS
3.	COLOMBIA
4.	GUATEMALA
5.	PHILIPPINES

Confirmed murders of land and environmental defenders 2020. Source: Global Witness, 2021

Murders 2020 in absolute figures

1.	COLOMBIA
2.	MEXICO
3.	PHILIPPINES
4.	BRAZIL
5.	HONDURAS

Confirmed murders of land and environmental defenders 2020. Source: Global Witness, 2021

Wilma Mendoza. Photo: Carlos Torrez.



The work of Anabela Lemos has led to greater legal protection for tens of thousands of people. What's more, her activism has opened the eyes of the world to several climate-harmful projects. Photo: Edson Artur.



THREATS WON'T SILENCE ANABELA LEMOS

As a climate activist, Anabela Lemos of Mozambique is used to threats and persecution. But the people who want to stop her don't leave it at breaking into her office and stealing hard drives, or sabotaging her car brakes. They also target her family. One of her sons has been severely assaulted.

"Yes I'm worried about my family and colleagues. But we have to carry on, we can't give up," says Anabela. Anabela Lemos is head of the environmental organisation Justiça Ambiental, and she has been a driver in the protests against natural gas extraction in Cabo Delgado Province. Justiça Ambiental, literally 'Climate Justice', works partly through mobilisation and protests, but also through advocacy. The organisation supports a legal process against multinational companies like Total (France) to stop the financing of the natural gas project, arguing that exploitation violates the rights of local people, does irreparable damage to the environment, and contributes to climate change.

"We must change the balance of power and push for system changes. The current system is simply too unfair for billions of people on this planet," says Anabela.

The natural gas project, which has been described as the biggest foreign investment in Africa, has forced hundreds of families to leave their homes. Even more are likely to have to follow their example when the project gets going. There are also links to Sweden. The Swedish Public Pension (AP) Funds have invested some 12 billion Swedish kronor in the companies managing and financing the natural gas project. That figure does not include investments in companies which, like ABB, are providing products and services for the project.¹⁴

"European companies must take account of human rights and the environment through the entire global value

chain – and they must be able to be held responsible when they don't. This is why Swedish decision-makers should now work for robust legislation on a European level, which enables stronger rules on corporate responsibility and the ability to bring them before European courts," says Anabela.

Justiça Ambiental's work against coal mining companies in central Mozambique has led to increased awareness and reduced environmental consequences of open pit mining. In 2020, the organisation took the company to court for having polluted the air and water, and the case has yet to be settled. The organisation's campaigning has helped to halt a large-scale agricultural programme that would have displaced millions of smallholder farmers in northern and central Mozambique.

Thanks to persistent efforts, the organisation has also brought an appeal against construction of the Mphanda Nkuwa dam in Tete Province, due to the environmental impact of the project and its violation of local people's rights.

The dam construction poses a threat to the environment and people's livelihoods throughout the Zambezi River Delta, and heavy rainfall could lead to the dam flooding. Even so, the government keeps insisting on building the dam, so the fight to stop it continues.

"I am absolutely convinced that whatever is wrong and unjust must be changed. We cannot stay silent when we see injustice, see human rights being violated or our environment destroyed. If we don't raise our voices in times like this, or do what we can to stop these crimes, we are part of the problem," Anabela Lemos concludes.

¹⁴ Amazonwatch Sweden, 2021.



Wilma Mendoza. Photo: Carlos Torrez.

"WE'RE SUBJECTED TO VIOLENCE ALL THE TIME"

In Bolivia, women land defenders and indigenous people leaders are forced to suffer threats and pressure from all quarters. Opposing a mining project very often involves risking your life. Even so, Wilma Mendoza refuses to give up.

Wilma Mendoza reflects on how much of her life she has spent fighting for land rights and the rights of indigenous people. Now 46, she is chair of CNAMIB (Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas de Bolivia), a national indigenous people's organisation that works with women's rights issues for the various groups of indigenous peoples in Bolivia.

But her story begins far earlier than that. Wilma was born in the 1970s into a Mosetén family – an indigenous people from the Bolivian lowlands – who were farmers. Shortly after her 17th birthday she moved to the city, La Paz, to study agronomy. During this time she also developed an interest in politics, and she began getting involved in student protests and union issues. After seven years in La Paz, Wilma felt it was time to return to her village, and ever since then she has worked to defend indigenous peoples' territories and the rights of indigenous women – a task that now feels more urgent than ever.

"We are very worried about the mining policy that's being permitted on our territories, under the slogan of developing the country, and how indigenous peoples' land can then simply be confiscated," Wilma explains.

Extraction projects are not just a problem in Bolivia, but throughout Latin America. Mining and other exploitation of natural resources is leading, among other things, to entire communities being forced off their historical lands, to the surrounding environment like rivers and water-courses being polluted, and to the decimation of biodiversity. And for the people who, like Wilma, oppose these projects, the consequences are often severe.

"Being a female leader of an indigenous people out here in the territories is hard. We're subjected to violence all the time. Not just from the mining companies and the authorities, but also from many of the local male leaders of indigenous peoples," says Wilma.

According to Wilma, local male leaders of indigenous peoples often join with the very people carrying out the extraction projects, which leads to internal conflicts in the local communities. This in turn leads to further harassment, threats and other violent action, and particularly hits the women land and environmental defenders.

"It's a way of scaring and silencing us women indigenous leaders, so that we won't carry on exposing what's going on in our territories. And unfortunately, a lot of people let themselves be silenced. Several of my role models have said they choose to protect their lives, and that they must think about their children."

But Wilma herself says she is not prepared to give up. There is too strong an existential link to the land.

"Our land is everything to us, it is our life. We are nobody without our soil."



Wilma Mendoza. Photo: Carlos Torrez



Ensuring and defending the right of indigenous peoples and smallholder farmers to land is central to the work of Agenda 2030, which unites the UN's member states in striving to achieve the 17 shared sustainable development goals in order to eradicate extreme poverty, reduce inequalities and tackle the climate crisis. We Effect works

towards the following UN Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 1 No Poverty, Goal 2 Zero Hunger, and Goal 5 Gender Equality. Land rights, along with rural development, sustainable food production and robust farming methods, are pivotal to Goals 1, 2 and 5.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LAND FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Many smallholder farmers worldwide lack formal evidence that they own or have rights to the land that they make their living from, despite the fact that equal opportunities for owning and controlling land are a right under several international conventions. Who has access to or secure control over land is determined in many countries by means of informal agreements, or by political or economic interests.
- ▶ The right to land is crucial to several human rights, e.g. the right to a reasonable standard of living, the right to food and the right to economic development. Being able to prove ownership or secure control over your land is often a prerequisite when pledging security for a loan, and is a requirement for gaining access to advisory services.
- ▶ Indigenous peoples often have a special relationship to nature and the land they have traditionally farmed, which means that the land is of fundamental significance for the preservation and development of their culture. The respect among indigenous peoples for animals, nature and land is hugely important to their identity and also their spiritual values.

Source: International Land Coalition (ILC), UNDP

HOW WE EFFECT DEALS WITH LAND ISSUES:

- ▶ We Effect works to promote sustainable rural development and to combat poverty by increasing equality. Together with local farmers' and indigenous peoples' organisations, We Effect focuses on sustainable production methods, food security and adapting to the effects of climate change. These efforts combine cooperative methods for revenue-raising projects with social, economic and environmental sustainability.
- ▶ Through its activities We Effect supports the rights of land rights and environmental defenders to employ peaceful means to demand accountability. These efforts focus on women and indigenous peoples.
- ▶ In several countries in which We Effect operates, we support our partner organisations in negotiations with local decision-makers, the national government and foreign investors, since secure and just land ownership, as well as protection of informal land rights, is vital to We Effect's target groups. This has proven difficult in Latin America and parts of Asia, but in several African countries, e.g. Tanzania, it has been a successful model.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Afrikagrupperna. "Fröer", 2018.
- Amazonwatch Sverige. 2021.
- BHRRRC. "Human Rights Defenders & Business, January 2020 Snapshot", 2020.
- CIVICUS. "The CIVICUS Monitor", 2021.
- Committee on World Food Security (CFS). "Principles for responsible investments in agriculture and food systems", 2014.
- Council on Hemispheric Affairs. "Human Rights Violations in Honduras: Land Seizures, peasants' Repression, and the Struggle for Democracy on the Ground", 2014.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). "Gender and Land Rights: Understanding Complexities; Adjusting Policies", 2010.
- FAO. "The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security," 2012.
- FAO. "Realizing Women's Rights to Land in The Law. A Guide for Reporting on SDG Indicator 5.a.2", 2018.
- FAO. "Biodiversity for Sustainable Agriculture", 2018.
- FAO regional office for Latin America. "Panorama of Rural poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean 2018," 2018.
- Federal Court of Accounts of Brazil. "The Coordinated Audit for the Sustainable Development Goals", 2018.
- Front Line Defenders. "Front Line Defenders Global Analysis 2020", 2021.
- Global Witness. "Last line of defence", 2021.
- Global Witness. "Defending the Philippines", 2019.
- Guatemala Human Rights Commission (GHRC). "Crushed by injustice", 2018.
- International Land Coalition (ILC). "SDGs and Land Rights, The elephant in the room", 2019.
- Indepaz. "Todos los nombres, todos los rostros", 2019.
- International Advisory Group of Experts (GAIPE). "Dam violence", 2017.
- IPBES. "Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services", 2019.
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). "Climate Change and Land", 2019.
- International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL). "Coronavirus and Civic Space", 2020.
- Landesa. "Women Gaining Ground: Securing Land Rights as a Critical Pillar of Climate Change Strategy", 2015.
- Land Matrix. "International Land Deals for Agriculture. Fresh insights from the Land Matrix: Analytical Report II", 2016.
- Naturskyddsöreningen (SSNC). "Environmental defenders under attack", 2019.
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). "The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights", 2011.
- OHCHR. "Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment", 2018.
- Oxfam. "Unearthed: Land, Power and Inequality in Latin America", 2016.
- Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC). "The 2030 Agenda and Ecosystems", 2016.
- UN. Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, 2021.
- UNDP. "Human Development Report for Latin America and the Caribbean 2016", 2016.
- UN Women. "Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", 2018.
- World Bank Group. "Afro-descendants in Latin America: Toward a Framework of Inclusion", 2018.
- World Resources Institute (WRI). "The Wealth of the Poor – Managing Ecosystems to Fight Poverty", 2005.

Climate change and global crises in combination with large-scale economic interests are increasing global pressure on land and natural resources.

At the same time civic space is decreasing, and those standing up for human rights and the environment are being threatened and murdered.

We Effect works in the world's deadliest countries for those defending land rights and the environment.

We are working with member organisations for women, smallholder farmers and indigenous peoples.

In each of these nations, farmers are today essentially environmental and human rights defenders, as they defend their right to the land they farm and protect the environment they live in.

The report '*Cause of death: farmer*' aims to bring their voices to the fore and has charted the threats and violence linked to their work.