

Summer 2010

interact

The magazine of PROGRESS!O

A man wearing a black cowboy hat with a gold "CODEO" logo and a yellow button-down shirt is smiling broadly in a forest. He is gesturing with his right hand, palm facing forward. The background consists of tall, thin trees.

**How to
stop illegal
logging**



Illegal logging is a destructive trade that wreaks devastation on people's lives, says Progressio's Executive Director Christine Allen

How to stop illegal logging

Illegal logging is the most pressing environmental issue for those whose communities, natural resources and livelihoods are dependent on forestry. Putting legislation in place to prevent illegally logged wood finding its way into mainstream markets is a very clear opportunity we can't miss – see page 4 for how you can help this happen.

This legislative support goes hand in hand with the direct support we are providing to forestry communities who seek to protect their resources and their lives and livelihoods. The combination of the practical and the political is Progressio's way of doing things. And we know it works!

Our campaigning has contributed already to the EU's decision to have a vote that could prohibit importation of illegally felled wood. The next vote, then, is more than just a piece of European bureaucracy that the tabloid press can get het up about. It's an important sign of our solidarity with those who are living with the injustice that is illegal logging.

We work with farmers and communities who struggle to make a living from their land because of the impact of deforestation, who face violence and intimidation from the loggers and who battle with the corruption of officials who turn a blind eye. All this is possible because there is a demand and market for the wood.

The communities in Honduras and elsewhere are a long way away, a vote in Europe may feel a long way away, but the two are intimately connected. And you help make that connection.

Now that's solidarity.

Christine

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Cover: "One day when you least expect it they come to cut down your trees," says Alberto Granados, a farmer in Honduras. See page 4 for the full story.

Photo: Omar Banegas/
Progressio

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focus

The Huares or 'protectors of the water' (right) at a water harvesting ceremony in Tupicocha in the Peruvian Andes. "It is beautiful to see how this celebration unifies the villagers of Tupicocha, and increases their sense of responsibility as well as their motivation to protect and manage the water resources," writes Progressio development worker Cindy Krose. For the full story, see Progressio's *From the ground* blog at www.progressio.org.uk
Photo: Cindy Krose/*Progressio*





Stop the illegal loggers



"If illegal loggers keep sawing down our trees we will end up with nothing but a desert," says David Amador, a farmer from Olancho, Honduras.



It ruins lives and livelihoods, destroys ecosystems and contributes to global climate change – but we can put the brakes on illegal logging by banning illegal wood in Europe, writes Keith Ewing

"I feel rage when I think that Europeans might be sitting on chairs made with illegally logged wood from our community," says David Amador, a 38-year-old small-scale farmer from Olancho, Honduras.

The father of two surveys a thick copse of pine trees in the community where he farms, an area that for decades has been under siege from illegal loggers. "People in Europe need to be more aware of illegal logging," he says. "If illegal loggers keep sawing down our trees we will end up with nothing but a desert."

David and his neighbours are at the sharp end of the fight against illegal logging, which supplies between 20%-40% of the world's wood production. It is a sharp end that involves powerful elites, drug cartels, corruption, connivance from military and police, threats to farmers and the killings of activists who oppose the loggers.

Consumer power

Far away from these stark realities, in Europe, a lack of legislation means that consumer demand is helping to drive a trade which brings 3 billion euros worth of illegal wood onto our markets and into our homes.

But now a potentially historic decision to ban illegal timber from Europe is close: in July, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will be asked to vote on an outright ban on importing illegal wood.

Please act now

One year ago such a law was already within Europe's grasp. The European Parliament voted for a strict ban on trade in illegally logged timber, but the Council of Ministers watered down the proposals. Now MEPs on the Environment Committee have fought back, proposing tough new measures which will go to a full vote in July.

Progressio supporters have already got involved, emailing MEPs on the Environment Committee, and writing to Caroline Spelman, the new DEFRA (Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs) minister, urging strong backing from the UK for an outright ban.

Please go the final yard and tell our politicians that we don't want illegal timber in the UK or Europe. Go to www.progressio.org.uk and take action before 5 July!

"We should not be restricting illegal timber entering Europe, we should be banning it"

Many consumers in Europe would be shocked to know that they might be unwittingly buying illegally-logged timber products.

Lizzette Robleto, Progressio's policy officer on illegal logging, says the EU must take responsibility for the fact that the consumption patterns of European companies and citizens currently encourage illegal logging in less developed regions of the world.

"Without legislation, there will be no impetus for the timber industry to behave more responsibly," she says. "Appropriate laws will ensure that EU consumers can purchase timber from sustainable and well-managed sources."

A failure to approve tough legislation would mean the EU was also failing to support the most vulnerable communities affected by illegal logging in poor countries – "especially those who are making efforts to control illegal logging within their own borders," she says.

"We must set a strong example for timber producing countries," says Lizzette.

It is a sentiment summed up succinctly by David Amador (in green shirt) as he surveys a hillside devastated by illegal loggers: "People in other countries should always buy legal timber."

"Together we can preserve Honduran forests"

Alex Melendez, deputy mayor of Campamento, feels he is keeping his side of the bargain in doing all he can to reduce illegal logging in his part of Honduras. Now he wants European consumers to play their part.

By his own admission the Campamento Council used to rely on wood for 35% of its income. "Today that figure is 0%," he says proudly.

A combination of measures, from better tax collection leading to better council services



Article and interviews by Progressio's Communications Director Keith Ewing. Photos by Omar Banegas.

so people cut down fewer trees, to networks of community consultative committees through which local people manage their own environment in partnership with the council, have meant that this part of Olancho is less popular with the illegal loggers.

"The forests here no longer have to be sold in order for people to survive," he explains. "It is important that Members of the European Parliament understand that together we can work to preserve our forests. We must ensure efficient management of our exports of wood, but we must also stop the demand for illegal wood."



"I have known trees my children will never know because they have been cut down"

"One day when you least expect it they come to cut down your trees," says 56-year-old father of eight Alberto Granados (pictured, in hat).

A farmer all his life, Alberto is the centre of resistance to illegal loggers in his local area of La Libertad, Campemento, in the forests of Olancho, Honduras.

"I have a mobile phone and when we hear the chain saws of the illegal loggers I call the other men from the community and we try to stop it.

"It is dangerous and many times I have been threatened. When I tell them to stop they say: 'We will kill you', but so far they have not because we are a strong community here.

"Once we chased some loggers away, but we ended up stuck on a hill for eight days protecting the wood we captured and waiting for the police to arrive. We had no food or water and we were too scared to leave the timber in case the loggers came back. We gave the wood to the mayor to help build a local school.

"It is very important that people in other countries help us to preserve our forests by not using illegal wood. I would like voters in Europe to support this ban on importing illegal wood as it will serve our children – they will inherit the results.

"But unless something is done quickly we will be in even worse trouble."

Act before 5 July to ban illegal timber

Illegal logging is a disaster for poor communities.

All over the world it condemns people to poverty, encourages corruption, degrades the environment, damages water supplies, drives climate change and harms biodiversity. Illegal logging makes poor communities even more vulnerable.

And an estimated 20% of illegal timber ends up in Europe.

After intense negotiations, proposed legislation passing through Europe is at a crucial stage. MEPs will be asked to vote on tough new rules on 5 July. It's an historic opportunity. This is our chance to act.

Please support David, Alberto, and people and communities around the world being damaged by illegal logging – go to www.progressio.org.uk and ask MEPs to stop the illegal loggers now!

Biodiversity action day in Peru

2010 is the UN International Year of Biodiversity, and in the Cajamarca region in Peru, Progressio's partner organisations SER and CENTRO IDEAS, assisted by Progressio development workers Laura Lucio and Sonja Bleeker, have been involved in developing the regional biodiversity strategy – as well as playing an active part in celebrating Biodiversity Action Day in May. The focus of the day was the Tara, a Peruvian native plant that has become an alternative source of income for approximately 20,000 small producers. A presentation on the economic, social and environmental benefits of the Tara will also be made at the UN General Assembly in New York in September.

Elections in Somaliland

The long-delayed presidential elections were due to take place on 26 June – and according to the international monitoring team in which Progressio is playing a key part, everything was in place for the elections to go ahead. Michael Walls, a joint co-ordinator, said: "We hope to have around 70 international observers from a wide variety of countries, along with 800 local counterparts." And his colleague, Progressio's Steve Kibble, said: "We are encouraged by the overwhelming desire of the people of Somaliland to see a peaceful election, recognised as such both nationally and internationally. At this stage, we expect that such an outcome can be achieved." To find out what happened, go to www.progressio.org.uk



Get involved

Keith (communications chief) and Innocent (development worker) in Malawi.

Come along for the ride!

Visit our new website and join our online community!

From the views and stories of development workers in-country to hard-hitting comment on UK and international policy, www.progressio.org.uk has always been the very best way to stay in touch with our work. Now we've entirely redesigned the site and you can contribute too. Join our online community, comment on our work and contribute views of your own.

Be a part of it – because people powered development is up to all of us.

Become a fan

Progressio has a new Facebook page dedicated to people powered development. Become a fan of Progressio to keep up to speed with our latest news and take part in our urgent campaign actions! Just search for Progressio under 'Pages' and click 'Like'.

Stay in touch

Catch up with Progressio in 140 characters or less ... by following us on Twitter! Search for @ProgressioNews next time you log in.

We're 70!

2010 is our 70th anniversary year and like all big birthdays it's a time for celebrating, reminiscing, sharing stories and making plans.

And we're very keen to hear from friends old and new, members and former staff with their favourite Progressio, CIIR or 'Sword of the Spirit' stories and photos. To share your memories, please email 70@progressio.org.uk or write to 'Celebrating 70 in style' at the usual address.

We've got a few ideas up our sleeves about how to celebrate our 70th – we'll keep you posted!

Haiti: back down to earth

Five months after the earthquake, what is life really like for Haiti's people?
Interviews by Jo Barrett, Progressio's media officer

Noel Fanes, 29, and members of the comité in Henfrasa camp, Delmas, Port-au-Prince. The camp (for 7,000 people) is run by the Jesuit Refugee and Migrant Service who have been supported by Progressio development workers

This camp was set up on 13 January, the day after the earthquake. We never really had a constant distribution of food, and all aid stopped on 7 March. Instead we have organised ourselves – there is no government presence here. Nobody from the government has ever visited us, not even the mayor. It's a way of hiding from their responsibilities so that they don't have to face up to what is happening... There are all sorts of educated and professional people here – accountants, receptionists, nurses, teachers, but no-one has been able to find work since the quake. We need to start another life – we need places to live, we need jobs.

Francois Kawas, Director, CEDAR (Centre for Social Research), Port-au-Prince

People are very angry in the camps and I think there is a risk of violence. They don't have food, they have lost everything. The president now is very unpopular. We do not agree with the government's plan for reconstruction either, so we have proposed an alternative one. It includes things like economic decentralisation from Port-au-Prince, so that the government creates jobs in all of the departments, not just in the capital. We also want to see a reinforced peasant economy in the rural regions so we can start rebuilding our agricultural

industry. At the moment we have to import almost everything from other countries. There are no long term plans; everyone is just doing what they want.

Marc Dorvil, 38, Funeral Director, Leogane (one of the towns most affected by the earthquake)

All of the people in Leogane have been victims of this earthquake. Almost everyone has lost their homes, me too, but what can I do? The problem here is that the government is absent – it hasn't done anything. Look around you – look at the debris. They haven't done anything!

Jean Gaudy Cesaire, 27, Camp Lycee Anacoana, Leogane

Our reality here is quite different from Port-au-Prince. We don't receive food – and what do we get from the government? Nothing at all! We have no help, we have to do what we can to help ourselves, everyone is sharing between themselves. What you see here in this camp is what we have made ourselves from what we can find.

Adeline Julien, 56, Henfrasa camp, Delmas, Port-au-Prince

My house was destroyed in the quake – I lost everything. It would have been impossible to stay in my house. Now it's really hard to live in this tent because it's really hot – go in and you'll see what I mean. That means I have to spend the day outside in the open air. Without God I couldn't be here – I won't be here for long, I can't bear it.



**Coq Michelet Staël, 34, St Louis
Gonzague camp, Delmas, Port-au-Prince
(7,000 people in the camp)**

My house was completely destroyed in the earthquake – I have been living here ever since. It's extremely difficult living in the camp and there are lots of problems: the hygiene, the toilets, no showers. Everyone wants to leave but there are many people who have nowhere to return to.

We haven't had much aid. There are days when we find food and water, but other days we don't. Some people find a little job here and there or they ask other people in the camp if they need something and people share. On the positive side, we have been organising ourselves well. We have set up a comité – a group of people who are in charge of organising different aspects of camp life.

**Fr Jean Denis Saint Felix, 37, Jesuit
Priest who has been working in
Henfrasa camp**

When I came to Port-au-Prince I was really struck by the gravity of the situation and I was also really shocked by people's way of organising themselves. I didn't know that we Haitians were that patient. I thought it

might have been more explosive. People have generally been organised and very kind to each other. I don't know how long this will last though. Many people have actually felt grateful because they are alive and many of them have said they are ready to learn from what happened. People here want a new and better future.

Letter from El Salvador



Young participants at a rally on World Water Day held at Finca del Espino, in the foothills of the San Salvador volcano, to draw attention to the ongoing destruction and deforestation of El Salvador's mountain ranges. The rally demanded that water be left out of free trade negotiations between Central America and the European Union, the Acuerdo de Asociación, and called for immediate approval of a law to protect water resources in the country.

Photo: Maggie Von Vogt/Progressio

There is a stretch of the Pan-American highway heading west out of San Salvador where each end of the socio-economic spectrum in El Salvador is vibrantly evident.

While moving on the 4-lane highway through the town of Antiguo Cuscatlán, to the right you see three massive shopping malls, bridged together by fast food restaurants. The enormous complex was built on top of what was once the Finca del Espino, a stretch of undeveloped land at the foot of the San Salvador volcano with diverse flora and fauna, and the site of the primary water tables that supply water to urban San Salvador.

Sometimes when I pass places like this, I feel like I am in the United States. But I'm not. I'm in El Salvador, where people face a completely different reality, including environmental crisis, lack of water, poverty, a long history of systemic violence, and the complications of a post-war society. I don't think the 17-dollar steak dinners at the mall's restaurants have much relevance to the majority of Salvadorans' lives.

Contrasts

Directly across the way from this concentration of shopping malls, on a tiny slice of land flanked on each side by the Pan-Americana west-bound and east-bound lanes, lies the squatter community La Cuchilla. The 150 families who reside in La Cuchilla live in shacks constructed from scavenged pieces of scrap metal, wood, and plastic, tightly packed on top of each other and on the edge of a ravine that cuts through it.

La Cuchilla is one of hundreds of squatter communities in the metropolitan area of San Salvador. People I have met from these communities tell me that most of them have come from rural areas to San Salvador to look for work. Unable to keep up with the costs of maintaining a household and a job (rent, electricity, water, and transportation) with the low wages they earn as vendors, house

cleaners, or retail clerks, they go to live in these communities to cut costs.

Some communities have electricity and share a communal water tap. Others have neither.

Action

It was precisely in this spot, between the massive shopping complex and La Cuchilla, where on the morning of 22 March 2010, more than 500 people convened to celebrate World Water Day and to call for a national political commitment to the protection and conservation of this invaluable resource.

The event was beautiful. People of all ages and various places came together with banners and flags, music and dancing to claim their rights to water. These are people who wait until the certain hour or day that water runs out of the communal tap, walk long distances to carry water in large plastic containers, and wash clothes by hand in the closest river.

A few weeks later, my co-worker from Unidad Ecologica Salvadoreña (UNES) went to Cochabamba, Bolivia, to attend the World People's Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth. She met with social movement leaders from throughout the global South to strategise and move forward in defence of the lands and natural resources of southern countries, in the face of the failure of international climate talks in Copenhagen.

Knowing that people who are truly impacted by climate change and water scarcity are coming together, coordinating, dreaming, demanding, and organising, both here in El Salvador as well as in Cochabamba, gives me hope that we can construct a different reality for people in all parts of the world.

Maggie Von Vogt is a Progressio development worker in El Salvador. This article is extracted from Progressio's From the ground blog at www.progressio.org.uk

Innocent Ogaba is a Progressio development worker in Malawi. He works on sustainable environment initiatives including advising Environment Africa and the small-scale farmers they work with on adding value to, and marketing of, agricultural produce. Innocent is from Uganda.

Q: What made the biggest impact on you when you arrived in Malawi?

A: The statistics say Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world – so I thought the cost of living would be low, but I was surprised how expensive Lilongwe (the capital city) is! But the big bonus is that the people are incredibly friendly. During my first month here, I did not know anyone, but people would come up to me in restaurants and chat – it's been easy to make friends.

Q: What has excited you the most?

A: Going to the fields in the countryside recently, to a community where I ran training in marketing for women farmers, and being greeted by them singing songs about me by name. It made me feel part of them – included, welcomed and appreciated. It was a great feeling. It reminded me of perhaps the most important lesson about being a DW – doing your work with humility. This way you are accepted and the people really warm to you and accept you as one of them.

Q: What has been your main success?

A: To contribute my knowledge and know-how into helping set up environmental projects for Progressio in Malawi. I am proud of the fact that we now have three development workers working in the theme, and pleased with the work that is being done with the partners. I pushed for an agro-ecological focus – which I am pleased was taken up – and I am proud of getting involved and proving my relevance.

Q: What have you learned?

A: For me working here has meant great personal growth. I have both learned a lot and shared a lot. One exciting moment for me was sharing skills I learnt from my grandmother on how to preserve, cook and store sweet potatoes to enhance food security during the lean season. In general, the experience of being a development worker has sharpened my thinking and focus. You do not make your fortune doing this work, but the rewards are still impressive. For me it has been immensely satisfying.

Innocent Ogaba Malawi

Innocent Ogaba (centre) talks with farmer Betty Mkusa and Progressio's country representative in Malawi, Lloyd Simwaka.

*Photo: Marcus Perkins/
Progressio*





The power of transformation

During one of my prison visits,

I went to Mutare Remand. There I had an opportunity to address inmates. In all my presentations, after talking about what ZACRO does and the programmes it is running, I talked about the power of God in transforming lives. I said that being in prison gives them the opportunity to reflect upon their lives and rededicate their lives to God who has the power and means to give them a fresh start.



Marcus Perkins/Progressio

Teclah Ponde

After that presentation one inmate came to me and told me his story: "I was a pastor at a certain church, then I committed rape and was convicted to seven years in prison. I committed the offence and I deserve to be here. My

problem is that no-one can look after my family. My wife does not work and she has no means to send my children to school, or get access to food and basic needs. I need help even to have my relationship with God."

I took time to talk to him and encouraged him to use his gift as a pastor to minister to other inmates, preaching and reaching out to them

about God's ability to forgive and to give people new beginnings. I told him that in his nature God was a faithful God and a God of provision, and would provide for his children and family if he [the pastor] was prepared to rededicate his life to him and turn back to him.

This man was so happy after my talk to him. He told me that I had given him a purpose to live during this time of incarceration. He was going to start preaching again. This reassurance was what he needed, that God still loved him despite what he had done, as long as he asked for forgiveness and asked for God's grace never to commit the same sin again. He had lost hope that God could forgive him after what he had done.

Even I was glad that a 10 minute talk could transform someone and bring hope to a seemingly hopeless situation. Faith is a powerful tool in realigning people's thought processes, giving comfort in harsh, cold and difficult environments such as prisons. Without faith, it is very difficult to operate in prisons and keep your faculties together, therefore I thank God for Jesus Christ who gives me hope and encouragement and renews my strength daily to continue despite the challenges that I meet every day.

Teclah Ponde is a Progressio development worker with ZACRO (the Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of the Offender).