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Introduction

I attended the CAUX FORUM for human security in Switzerland from the 10th to the 18th of July 2011. This was indeed a life changing encounter as I came across ordinary people doing incredible work in their countries and making change in the lives of the people.

Lessons Learnt

1. Information Technology

Since January we have been glued to our TV sets following mass uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East. Until the Caux Forum I had not come across individuals who played a role in these uprisings. Having the opportunity to listen to men and women from Egypt and Tunisia narrate their heroic stories was something special. The systems of governance that were overthrown in Egypt and Tunisia resemble the situation in Zimbabwe. In these two cases I learnt about the power of information technology in initiating change. This is a lesson that I am trying hard to implement in Zimbabwe. Though our focus is not to initiate any revolution or uprising, we hope to make use of information technology to make more people understand our cause and join our struggle to ensure that natural resources in Zimbabwe are governed properly for the benefit of the poor.

2. Inclusive Leadership

The Centre for Research and Development (CRD) does research and documentation in the extractive sector in Zimbabwe where communities are excluded from decision making and profits sharing. This has become a major source of conflict between communities living in and near resource rich areas on one side, and the companies and government on the other side. Cases of violence have been documented where companies assault locals when they engage in artisanal mining. The topic on **Leadership that Builds Community** was very interesting as it addressed some of the structural issues hindering good governance of Zimbabwe's natural resources. This was augmented by the topic on **the struggle for just governance – national and international** where the Australian ambassador to Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia spoke on the challenges facing Zimbabwe. I talked with the Ambassador and he expressed interest in knowing more about the work of the CRD in Zimbabwe. I am now setting up a meeting with Ambassador Matthew Neuhaus to discuss CRD initiatives in detail.

3. Changing resource curse into blessing

One such initiative is the Natural Resource Dialogue Forum which brings together faith-based organizations, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations (CBOs) in Manicaland Province to discuss ways of making government and extractive industries account for natural resources such as diamonds, gold, tin, chrome etc which are being extracted across Zimbabwe with little if any benefit to the local communities. The issue of 'resource curse' was thoroughly discussed by a panel of activists and experts from Africa which included myself and the common denominator in

all presentations was that African resources, be they in DRC, Mali, Uganda or Zimbabwe, are benefiting extractive industries and political elites at the expense of the poor majority.

I left the Caux Forum with determination to move forward the Natural Resource Dialogue Forum in Zimbabwe. Upon arrival home I organized a meeting with the National Association of Non Governmental Organizations (NANGO) and the German Development Service (DED) to discuss collaboration in the Natural Resource Dialogue Forum. Both NANGO and DED bought the idea and agreed to support CRD in mobilizing resources for future forums, even beyond Manicaland Province.

NANGO pledged to finance the next Dialogue Forum, to be held on the 24th of August. DED also asked CRD to submit a concept note for the Forum for possible funding. I will also contact Nombulelo Khanyile, IofC South Africa, as we plan to expand the Natural Resource Dialogue Forum. I met with Nombulelo at the Caux Forum and we discussed possibilities for collaboration. I also had fruitful discussion with delegates from Kenya, Uganda, Burkina Faso, DRC, Mali, Egypt and South Africa at which we agreed that it was important to establish an African Forum to advocate for a review of mining policies so that the poor can benefit. At this meeting we agreed that it is important to identify resource areas in Africa, evaluate the resources and engage relevant stakeholders armed with hard facts.

The purpose of the Natural Resource Dialogue Forum is to create a platform where organizations share their field observations regarding natural resource extraction in outlying areas. The Manicaland Forum is poised to establish Forums in Matebeleland, Masvingo and Harare provinces in the coming months. Funding has not yet been secured for these provinces despite the invitation from Matebeleland CSOs and FBOs for assistance in launching the Matebeleland chapter. It is hoped the forum will be able to compile a national report of extractive industries across Zimbabwe.

Whilst at the forum I listened to moving stories of how ordinary people can make a huge difference in the lives of people. What quickly comes to mind is the story of Yacouba Savadogo of Burkina Faso. Rather than sitting idle and crying about the fast pace of desertification, Yacouba took it upon himself to re-green the desert, earning the title, The Man Who Stopped The Desert. Yacouba's story teaches us that you don't have to have lots of money to be an initiator of change. Rather than telling yourself that someone out there will do something, why not tell yourself that you are that someone and if you do nothing you are letting down future generations.

Conclusion

I learnt that if we can all do something positive, in our limited capacities, the world will never be the same again.