

On World Humanitarian Day 2018: multinationals have to assume responsibility for crises they are perpetrating upon humanity

Call by German NGO Sign of Hope

Case in point: Petronas' contamination of water, lives and environment in South Sudan

August 19th is World Humanitarian Day. On it, the world pays tribute to the persons and organizations who and which strive to solve the crises affecting humanity.

Many of these crises are caused by such multinationals as Petronas. This Malaysian oil giant has helped create one of the world's most devastating environmental and human rights crises: the contamination of water and land in South Sudan. At least 600,000 people, millions of livestock and thousands of hectares of farmland and of such precious habitats as the Sudd wetlands have been negatively and dramatically affected by this contamination.

Sign of Hope has dedicated itself to helping these victims. To that end, and on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day 2018, this Germany-based NGO will step up its rehabilitation of boreholes deep enough to provide the people of South Sudan with what they so urgently need: an adequate supply of clean water.

Sign of Hope's urgent plea on World Humanitarian Day 2018: Petronas and other multinationals have to assume responsibility for the crises they have helped create – by taking the measures so desperately needed to alleviate them.

"We are taking World Humanitarian Day as the occasion to make the world aware of the responsibilities towards humanity borne by globally-operating companies. We demand of such companies, who profit from global markets, that they live up to the accompanying global humanitarian responsibilities. Comprised in this call are the world's policy-makers. They have to come up with regulations capable of calling such "bad global players" to justice for their misdeeds. These are enabled by the freedoms to operate on a transnational scale. The consequences of this freedom – when not accompanied by effective monitoring and corrective legislative – are such crises as those gripping South Sudan," states Klaus Stieglitz, human rights expert and Deputy Chairperson of Sign of Hope.

Since 2008, Sign of Hope has been calling the world's attention to the ever-greater crisis in South Sudan, in which oil companies have poisoned more than 600,000 people. Sign of Hope and its team of scientists used samples of hairs taken from local residents to prove that South Sudanese living in and near oil fields had been contaminated with such toxic materials as lead and barium. These contaminants stem from the oil pumped and processed by Petronas, China National Petroleum, India's ONGC Videsh and others.

SKala initiative: supporting Sign of Hope in the rehabilitation of deep boreholes

Sign of Hope and its local partner UNIDO (Universal Intervention and Development Organization) are conducting the "Improved access to safe drinking water, South Sudan" project. Its objective is to restore eight deep boreholes. These are located in South Sudan's states of Northern Liech and Southern Liech. Doing such will provide up to 25,000 people living in areas contaminated by the oil industry with clean water.

Sign of Hope's project "Improved access to safe drinking water, South Sudan" is supported by the SKala initiative. SKala is an initiative of the entrepreneur Susanne Klatten, in partnership with PHINEO, the non-profit analysis and consulting company. SKala has budgeted a total of €100 million for the period ending in 2020. These funds are going to 100 non-profit organizations that have demonstrated the impact of their work upon society. This work is in the areas of inclusion and participation, commitment and skills development, building bridges between generations, and forgotten crises.

Reimund Reubelt, Chairperson of Sign of Hope: "We are greatly honored by having been chosen by SKala. Its support will enable us to pursue the provision of humanitarian assistance to persons devastated and damaged by the misdeeds of the oil industry in South Sudan. We are especially gratified by what this donation means:

recognition for our more than ten years of fighting for the suffering in South Sudan and for their right to have clean water. Our project will improve the lives of the people in South Sudan. We regret that this support hasn't been forthcoming from the companies responsible for this mess – in this case Petronas and its corporate allies, which include Germany's Daimler."

Seven million South Sudanese – well over half the country's population – are dependent upon humanitarian assistance to survive. Such assistance has been provided since 1994 by Sign of Hope. This has comprised the supplying of food and other supplies needed to survive, medical treatment, and the identification of human rights abuses. The latter has entailed the waging of an international campaign against such abuses.

Further, in-depth information on the situation in South Sudan is available from Klaus Stieglitz (stieglitz@hoffnungszeichen.de).