

PRESS RELEASE

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

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 drilling of wells 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 need 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.

Klaus adds: “The world's business community is fond of using the term “stakeholders”. These companies need to realize that the people affected by and suffering under their actions in the countries in which these companies procure resources are indeed their stakeholders – ones whose needs have to be dealt with.”

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: providing support to Sign of Hope's drilling of wells

Sign of Hope and its local partner UNIDO (Universal Intervention and Development Organization) are conducting the “Improving the Potable Water Supply in South Sudan” project. Its objective is to restore eight wells. These are located in South Sudan's states of Northern Liech and Southern Liech. Doing such will provide 25,000 people living in areas contaminated by the oil industry with clean water.

The project is receiving support from SKala. The “S” and “K” are the initials of Susanne Klatten, one of Germany's leading entrepreneurs. In setting up her initiative, she has been joined by PHINEO, a specialist in public benefit analysis and consulting. SKala has donated up to €100 million to some 100 non-profit organizations. These funds will be expended by 2020, and are going to projects in the areas of inclusion, participation, commitment and skills-building, and the building of bridges between generations. Each of the organizations supported has proven – to PHINEO – its capabilities to conduct projects demonstrably benefiting society on a major scale.

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 greatly 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, and (including photographs) under the following link (English?)