



re-imagining aid & development
through solidarity and justice



**ANNUAL
REPORT**

2020



AID/WATCH Inc.

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ABOUT AID/WATCH

Our Purpose

For nearly 30 years, AID/WATCH has been Australia's independent watchdog on aid, trade and debt. We campaign against the use of Australia's aid budget and foreign policy practices to further Australia's national economic and security interests that undermine the ability of local communities to protect their collective rights, lands and livelihoods, and determine their own futures and development alternatives.

Working in solidarity with local communities, organisations, and movements in Australia and the Global South we monitor, research, advocate and campaign against a narrow vision of economic development to hold the private sector and Australia's commercial interests account for their practices that direct disadvantage the environment, and local communities in the Global South.

Our Vision

A thriving global justice movement, based on mutual solidarity where trade, aid and debt no longer exploit people and the environment, but instead promotes social, economic and environmental justice. A world free from structural inequalities, where people can determine their own futures within a global framework of mutual respect for the environment and for one another.

Our Values

We believe in solidarity not charity

We are committed to global justice and equality. We campaign as much for our futures as for the futures of others. We are respectful of the different approaches and views of others in the movement for global justice. We acknowledge and aim to strengthen the power and agency of communities.

We are independent and fearless

We are a member-based organization. We do not take funds from governments or corporations. We respect diversity of ideas. We are free to make critical comment and are uncompromising in advocating for social and environmental justice. We are principled and where necessary pugnacious. We are never afraid to say what we think.

We are informed and transformative

Our campaigns are grounded in experience and our research is thorough and constructive. We believe in building alternative futures, founded on experience and on community-level capacity. In this respect we are innovative and creative.

We are activist and movement-based

We are a member-driven activist organisation, working as part of the wider global justice movement. Our campaigns provoke public debate to generate engagement with development issues, and to inspire public participation in efforts to transform development policies and practices.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Global Justice or Pandemic Nationalism

At the end of 2019 the world was witnessing what was said to be one of the largest global mobilisations in history, of 6 million people protesting for climate justice. At the end of 2020 the COVID pandemic was underlining global injustice as never before. The advent of 'vaccine nationalism', with Big Pharma defending taking their cut, and rich countries hoarding what they could, spelt disaster for vast swathes of humanity.

While some authoritarian governments wilfully put their own populations at risk, many low-income countries have been left powerless. Vaccines were either bought-up, or prohibitively expensive. Through 2020 there was very slow free access to vaccines through the COVAX initiative under the World Health Organisation, almost as an after-thought.

There is also access for some through bilateral aid, where vaccine 'generosity' becomes a new tool of diplomacy - not least for Australia. The wider aid industry continues to promote public-private delivery, including user-pays health, undermining capacity to deliver services when they are most needed.

It took a concerted global campaign to force a halt to global debt repayments under the pandemic, and the campaign to lift intellectual property restrictions for the global vaccines is still ongoing. Even Biden has pledged to support this obvious measure - Australia continues to protect pharma profiteering.

The 2020 pandemic response profoundly demonstrated how global capitalism and dominant states inflict injustice on the world. The charade of petty nationalism and faux humanitarianism will surely be viewed as producing one of the most confronting failures of the international system.

Pandemic nationalism is now unravelling, exposed as a negative sum, negating protection. Australia's border fantasy demonstrated the hubris. No country is an island when it comes to multiplying COVID strains. In past decades the world has defeated communicable viruses exactly on this principle (polio as the exemplar).

Panic COVID nationalism is unravelling - there is a revolt against authoritarian denialists, from Trump to Bolsonaro. Meanwhile the Delta strain is ending complacency among the vaccine-rich. And there is evidence that 'enlightened' self-interest is gaining ground.

Global justice movements are at the forefront of these intensifying global COVID struggles. As outlined in this Annual Report, for 2021 AidWatch is refocusing on the emerging global justice agenda - solidarity with people struggles against authoritarianism is at the centre of this, along with exposing aid-fuelled development aggression, and greenwashed extractivism. Join us in intensifying the pressure at this crucial time.

James Goodman
Chair, AID/WATCH
July 2021

REPORT FROM CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR

Foundations for a radically different and better future for all



2020 began with a global wave of forest fires and flooding highlighting the need to develop new ways of addressing the economic, social, environmental, and climate crises we currently live in. If that wasn't enough the world has been hit by a global pandemic increasing the need for aid and solidarity around the globe, especially for the most fragile and vulnerable societies, often who have been hollowed-out by environmental injustices, neoliberalism and/or military conflict.

Only months before the fires, floods and the global pandemic we saw a wave of mobilisations across the world led by an ardent climate youth movement. New types of leadership and organisations emerged, with hundreds of thousands of peaceful protesters spilling onto the streets.

At the same time, demands for a transformed climate policy in the form of a Green New Deal, gained traction in a variety of contexts. By March 2020 this was halted as a global pandemic gripped the world. Mobilisations,

organising, coming together was drastically changed as most of our lives moved into virtual spaces.

Locked down, self isolated, jobs lost, anxieties rising, not sure where the pandemic was going, or how long for, another movement re-emerged. This movement opened the space to re-imagine a new world in which racial, economic, gender, environmental, health and climate justice could not be separated - that these issues have always been intersectional.

The death of George Floyd in the US and the response from the Black Lives Movement became global. From the streets of Australia where First Nations Peoples voiced the shame of the continued and dire situation of Deaths in Custody, to the INGO international aid and development sector now forced to confront the reality that their own work is steeped in structural racism and whiteness.

At Aid/Watch we have survived and are still here. Working in the 'virtual space' has taken its toll but the fire in our belly to reorientate

not just aid and development policies but also the wider structures of the global economy still burns bright.

Whether it has been monitoring Australia's response to the pandemic in our region, demanding a just recovery or joining 'virtual' arms with partners and communities around the globe to expose development aggressions hiding under the veil of Covid, Aid/Watch has not stopped. In fact as we move into our 30th year we are feeling stronger and more united with our members, supporters and all our inspiring and deeply committed partners.

Our work, now and into the future, demands decoloniality in our approach, processes and everyday social relations - as an organisation, we still have a way to go. For this reason, AID/WATCH is still very much committed to working collaboratively and in solidarity with our partners and networks in the Global South for equality, liberation and global justice so we can lay the foundations for a radically different and better future for all.

We can't do any of this without the ongoing support of our **Funders, Partners, Members, Supporters** and the **Aid/Watch Committee of Management**.

Special thanks goes to **The Christensen Fund** and **Silicon Valley Community Fund** for supporting our work on global justice issues and allowing us to collaborate with our partners in Papua New Guinea, especially **Project Sepik**, to build up the Save the Sepik Campaign.

To the **Tucker Foundation** for having faith in us to support our research and advocacy in preparation for our OECD complaint against Australian corporation Lynas Rare Earth who is leaving a radioactive toxic legacy in Malaysia.

We have been fortunate to have both Aid/Watch co-founders come back to us, **Lee Rhiannon** in her role on the Aid/Watch Committee of Management, and **Carol Sherman**

who has shown generosity in sharing her wisdom and ideas as Aid/Watch moves towards its 30th year.

A huge shout out goes to our **Committee of Management**, who despite being all busy people doing very important work in their own right, remain committed to Aid/Watch.

As the sole worker since late 2016, I have been forever grateful that we found the resources to bring on **Mara Bonacci**. Mara joined Aid/Watch in early 2020 bringing over 25 years experience as a grassroots campaigner, researcher and exceptional whiz at operations, governance and finance. She may be our Research Coordinator but she is doing so much more to keep the engine of Aid/Watch efficient and effective.

To **Lee Tan**, Committee of Management member who has been leading our campaign to hold Lynas Rare Earth accountable, liaising between Australia and Malaysia CSOs, scientists and other experts to build the OECD case.

And finally a huge thank you to our **Chair, James Goodman** who will be stepping down from this role at the 2021 AGM. James has been a life force in Aid/Watch for many years. He has been a mentor to myself and staff before me, always there with sharp political analysis and strategic thinking, and most importantly, he has never given up on Aid/Watch even when we thought we weren't going to survive.

Thankfully, because of people like this, and people like you Aid/Watch strives forward as we head into our 30 Year Anniversary!

Nat Lowrey
Campaign Coordinator
July 2021

CAMPAIGNS & ADVOCACY

The Vision for a Just Recovery

In the context of the climate crisis, COVID-19 pandemic and the global uprising for racial justice and equity, AID/WATCH moved quickly in 2020 in adapting our existing mandates to include the immediate and pressing question of a post-Covid recovery centered in justice.

With the Australian overseas aid program continuing to be merely an adjunct to private interests and diplomatic objectives including 'Covid-related' aid, the prospects of AID/WATCH influencing and changing the overseas aid and development agenda with our partners and allies continues to be an uphill battle.

Australian CSO Interventions for a Just Recovery

Throughout 2020, AID/WATCH collaborated with Australian partners and participated in existing networks to build a Global Justice response to the pandemic.

Deeply concerned about the potential impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on sovereign debt for the world's poorest countries Aid/Watch joined a coalition with other Australian CSOs including Jubilee Australia, **Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA, ACTU, Oxfam, AFTINET, Tax-Justice Network, ActionAid** and **IWDA**. In a [joint public statement](#) the coalition called on the Australian Government to use its influence via its significant role in the IMF and the World Bank, the Paris Club, and on the G20 to push for: the cancellation of all external debt payments to be made in 2020; provision of emergency additional finance which does not create debt; and the Establishment of a UN-led Permanent Mechanism to Resolve Future Debt Crises.

Despite the urgency and scale of human suffering, the Australian government, along with other Global North governments, international institutions and the international community have failed to move into the emergency mode needed for people and communities. In October 2020 Aid/Watch joined the international campaign for Debt Cancellation in a [public statement](#) calling for more than debt relief and demanding debt justice.

This united voice of an Australian CSO coalition further urged the Australian Government in a [joint letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon. Marise Payne](#) to push for urgent action at the international level to create a Global Social Protection Fund. Understanding the vital need for Global North countries like Australia to support the world's poorest countries to deal with the health, economic, and social consequences of the pandemic a Global Social Protection Fund would address the social protection gaps in the world's poorest countries.

With the majority of the world's people having no social protection - 55% have no access to social protection, and a further 20% have little coverage of essential services or income measures - Aid/Watch and Australian CSO partners are acutely aware that leaders of wealthier countries like Australia, as well as international institutions, must take immediate and decisive action to address this looming crisis.

People's Resistance to Pandemic Profiteering

With the COVID-19 pandemic severely affecting the global economy and public health the global mining industry including the big mining corporations - especially those in the Top 50 - have persisted to continue their operations and aggressiveness in the extraction of the world's mineral resources at the expense of people's rights and health, workers' safety, and the environment. In 2020 Aid/Watch became a part of the **Global Coalition on Covid Mining** that has monitored the mining industry and states that are profiting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Global Coalition on Covid Mining

Joining over 300 organisations globally Aid/Watch collaborated and signed onto an [open statement](#) that condemned the ways the mining industry and numerous governments have taken advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to manufacture new mining opportunities and enhance their damaged reputations. The statement, based on a global analysis of over 500 sources, identifies four major trends in how the mining industry has abused the pandemic to turn a profit and advance their interests, putting land and water protectors at greater risk of harm.

Trends are explored in-depth in an accompanying report produced by the **Yes to Life No to Mining network** (Aid/Watch is an active member) and other organisations. Entitled [*Voices from the Ground: How the Global Mining Industry is Profiting from the COVID-19 Pandemic*](#) the report revealed how and why these trends pose an immediate threat to the health and safety of communities and organisations who have been struggling to defend public health and their environments against the destruction and devastation of mining extractivism for decades, as well as to the safety of workers in the mining sector.

Exposing the pandemic profiteering of the industry the report highlighted four key trends, all of which are condemned by Aid/Watch and the **Coalition on Covid Mining** as acts of aggression that exacerbate the threats and risks that affected communities, Indigenous peoples, land defenders and mine workers face on a daily basis. The four trends are:

- Mining companies are ignoring the real threats of the pandemic and continuing to operate, using any means available.
- Governments around the world are taking extraordinary measures to shut down legitimate protests and promote the mining sector.
- Mining companies are using the pandemic as an opportunity to whitewash their dirty track records and present themselves as public-minded saviours.
- Mining companies and governments are using the crisis to secure regulatory change that favours the industry at the expense of people and the planet.

Australia is are not excused from these aggressions. From the creation of the National Covid Coordination Commission stacked with members from mining, gas and energy backgrounds and headed by ex-Fortescue CEO Nev Power to Australian miner Newcrest donating \$1 million Australian dollars to the University of Queensland towards developing a COVID-19 vaccine, \$AUD20 million dollars for a "community support fund" to fight the virus, and 55,000 test kits to be used at its operations despite being accused of committing serious violations against community public health, the environment and human rights.

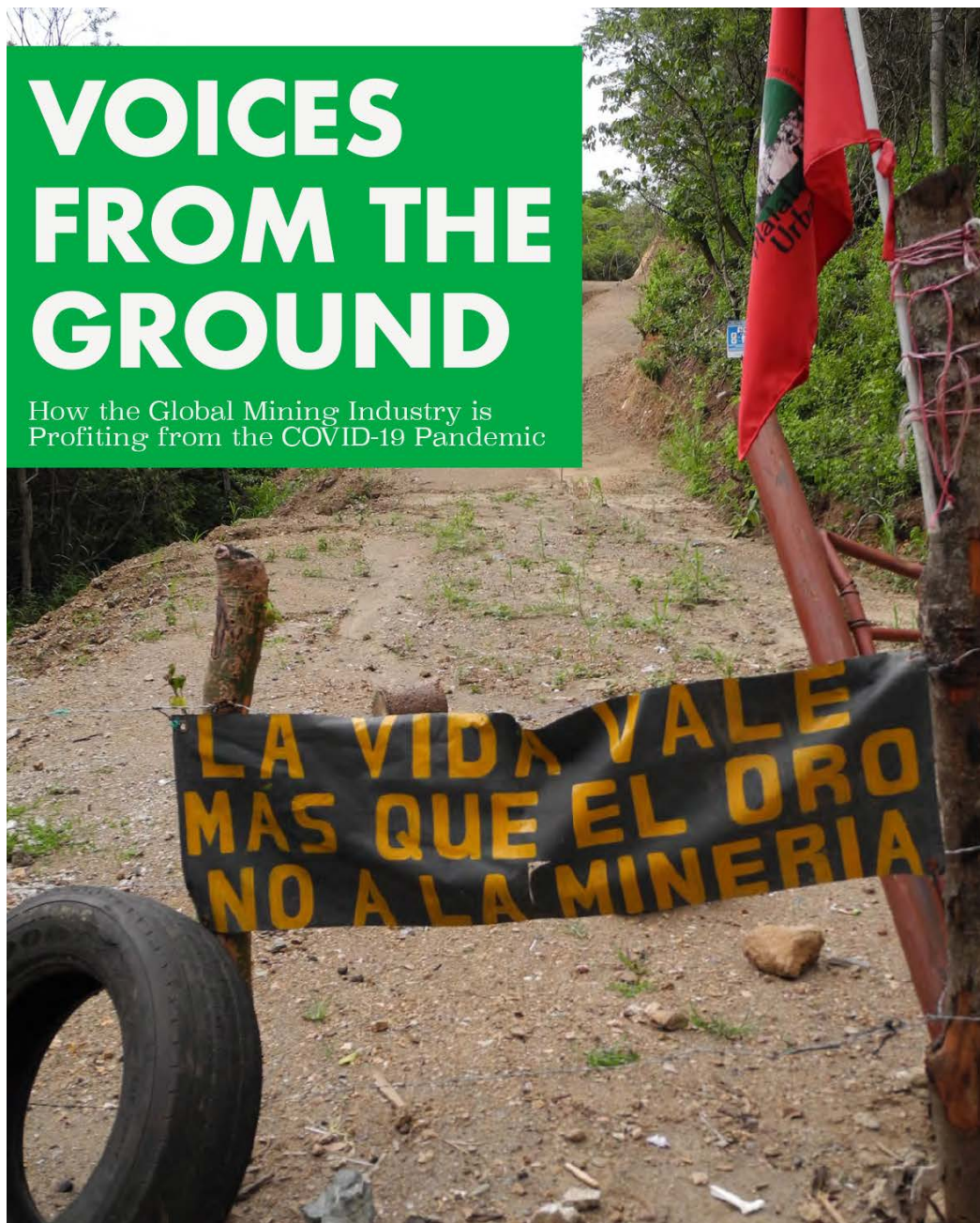
In June 2020, following the release of the global statement and report, Aid/Watch facilitated and co-hosted [a webinar](#) with the **Asia Pacific**

Network of Environment Defenders (APNED), International People's Conference on Mining (IPCM), Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN), International League of People's Struggle (ILPS), and Yes to Life No to Mining (YLNM) global network.

Aid/Watch campaign coordinator, Natalie Lowrey presented the trends and analysis on the global mining industry under the COVID pandemic and the webinar showcased

grassroots level resistance and community actions against mining.

Aid/Watch continues to be an active member in the Global Coalition on Covid Mining and will be producing three case studies from Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific with community partners in late 2021 as part of the global research and advocacy project.



Guardians of 'Avisak', the Mighty Sepik River

The Sepik River, Avisak in Yatmul language, runs at 1126 km in length and covers an area of 7.7 million hectares in the East Sepik region of Papua New Guinea. As one of the world's greatest river systems, the mighty Sepik River is the largest unpolluted freshwater system in Papua New Guinea and among the largest and most intact freshwater basins in the Asia Pacific - it is often referred to as the Amazon of the region.

It has been under threat by a large-scale extractive mining project, the Frieda River mine, run by Frieda River Ltd, a subsidiary of PanAust a Chinese-owned, Australian registered and incorporated company. The project is described as one of the largest known undeveloped copper and gold deposits in the world. In terms of tonnes of ore and waste rock produced, the mine would be the size of the entire PNG mining industry combined.

Until now the mine has not gone ahead due to the fierce organising and opposition from the Aid/Watch partner Project Sepik and the Guardians of the Sepik River - the Indigenous Peoples who have lived along this mighty river system for thousands and thousands of years.

Launch of the Save the Sepik Campaign

Since 2019 Aid/Watch has proudly partnered and collaborated with local Papua New Guinean organisation Project Sepik along with Jubilee Australia to raise awareness of the Frieda River mine.

In March 2020 we officially launched the Save the Sepik campaign to further amplify the resistance of the Sepik people in Papua New Guinea who are opposing the mega-development in the protection of their culture, land, waters and livelihoods.

In parallel with the launch of the [Save the Sepik campaign website](#) there was a call for

public submissions to Papua New Guinea's Conservation and Environment Protection Authority (CEPA) [to reject PanAust's Environmental Impact Statement \(EIS\)](#) for the Frieda River mine.

Led by Project Sepik, the campaign was joined by the Centre of Environmental Law and Community Rights (CELCOR) in PNG and the Environmental Defenders Office NSW International team resulting in [ten independent expert reports](#) and over 2500 submissions made rejecting the EIS.

The Supreme Sukundimi Declaration: 'Dismantling the Frieda Mine'

Project Sepik understood that business would continue as usual despite the pandemic. The miners would just continue to push the development forward behind closed doors. Therefore they continued to be engaged as much as they could be, ensuring that wherever and whenever the Frieda Mine Project was being pushed, the grassroots campaign was there.

The most powerful voice in opposition of the mine has been the [Supreme Sukundimi Declaration](#). The Project Sepik team spent weeks making the long journey into villages on the Sepik River. The cultural significance and importance of this work has been central to the campaign in which traditional governance and decision-making processes forged the foundations of a movement that has grown provincially, nationally and internationally.

Through this work 28 Haus Tambarans - "spirit houses" - [representing 78,000 people](#) along Papua New Guinea's remote Sepik river formally declared [they wanted the mine rejected](#).

Project Sepik took this statement, along with the [Project Sepik Briefing Paper](#) to deliver it to PNG parliament and national media in Port Moresby.

The Supreme Sukundimi Declaration: 'Dismantling the Frieda Mine'

In May 2020, [Ten UN Special Rapporteurs](#), along with the UN Working Group on Human Rights and Transnational Corporations, wrote a joint letter to the PNG Government to raise their concerns about the proposed Frieda River mine and the risk of failure of its proposed tailings dam. The letter was also sent to the Australian, Canadian, Chinese governments as well as Frieda River Limited and Highlands Frieda Limited

Collaborating with **Walking Fish Productions** the Save the Sepik campaign also launched a [short Save the Sepik video](#) that went viral in Papua New Guinea and internationally.

The success of our partner, Project Sepik in their strategic, committed and culturally driven organising, campaigning and advocacy is highlighted in their [Seven Success Stories report](#) in 2020 report in which:

1. Sepik villages united their voice to ban the mine
2. The campaign received wide support across Papua New Guinea

3. The East Sepik government voted to reject the Frieda River mine EIS
4. The West Sepik government voted to reject the Frieda River mine EIS
5. Governor of East Sepik, Allan Bird has threatened the Conservation and Environmental Protection Authority (CEPA) with legal action
6. UN Special Rapporteurs supported the Save the Sepik campaign
7. The movement to Save the Sepik grew exponentially

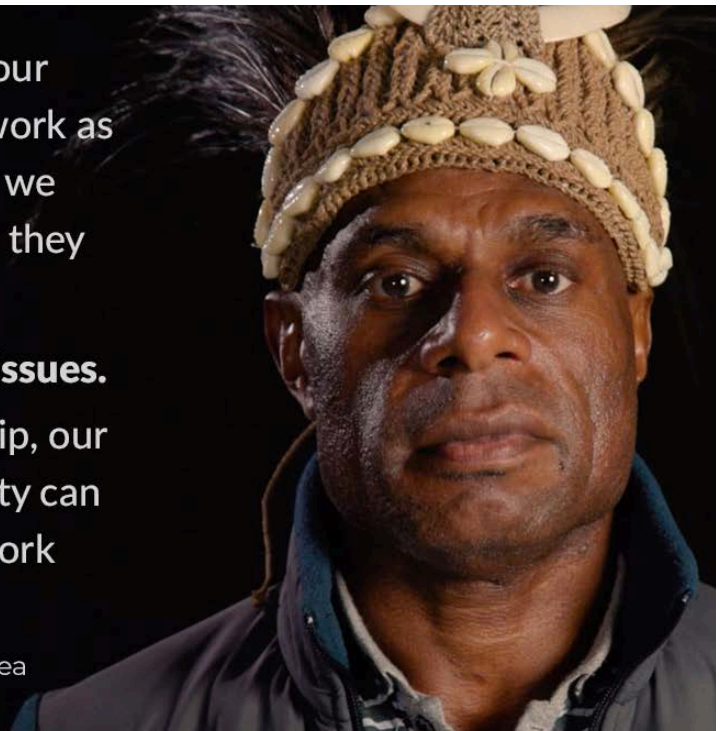
Whilst the fight is not over, the mine has definitely stalled. Project Sepik and the communities along the Avisak continue to stand up and say NO to the Frieda River mine.

At Aid/Watch we are very proud and honoured to be partners with Project Sepik and support through communications, media and international solidarity. Project Sepik founder and coordinator, Emmanuel Peni speaks to the importance of the relations we have:

"With AID/WATCH we know that if our lives are threatened because of our work as Indigenous environmental defenders we could easily call on them for support, they would be there.

Our relationship is like connective tissues. It is very empowering. Our partnership, our collaboration and our mutual solidarity can be seen in the effectiveness of our work over the past two years."

Emmanuel Peni, Project Sepik, Papua New Guinea



Greenwashing Extractivism and A Radioactive Legacy

Since 2014 AID/WATCH has supported the Australian-Malaysian campaign to hold Australian miner, Lynas Rare Earths (formally Lynas Corporation), accountable for imposing the world's largest rare earth refinery on Malaysians with no social licence to operate. With more than one million metric tonnes of toxic and radioactive waste piled up at the refinery, hundreds and thousands of Malaysians have been demanding Lynas resolve the issue of radioactive waste produced at its plant in Pahang before it is allowed to continue operations.

Rare earth elements (REEs) are essential for specialised magnets used in energy storage technologies, electric vehicles and wind turbines. They are often associated with critical or strategic minerals, because they are connected with the near monopoly that China has exerted over them, but extracting and processing rare earth comes at a massive environmental cost.

Whilst Lynas is lauded for shaking up the supply chain for rare earth metals nowhere in sight is there a path to supply chain justice in which our friends in Malaysian are not left with a radioactive legacy to deal with. The case of Lynas in Malaysia is one that highlights the need that a 'green' transition must be based on equity, justice, and a reduction of harm.

Demanding that all 'green' transition supply chains of metals and minerals to be clean, just and fair.

Aid/Watch Committee of Management member and long-term campaigner and researcher, Lee Tan has been leading Aid/Watch's work in late 2020 to file a complaint against rare earth Lynas through the Australian National Contact Point (AusNCP) for failing to adhere to the [OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises](#). The aim of the complaint is to:

- Compel Lynas to adhere to its signed undertakings to remove the toxic waste from Malaysia
- Stop Lynas from constructing a near surface disposal facility in Malaysia where its frequent tropical rainstorms will render any structure unstable give the massive soil erosion and landslides associated with such weather events
- Demand Lynas adhere to established international radiation safety measures in all its handling of its radionuclides bonded RE minerals be it in Australia or in Malaysia, instead of taking advantages of legal and law enforcement loopholes to race to the bottom
- Ensure that Lynas' RE supply chain is truly ecologically and socially responsible, just and ethical to satisfy its end uses in low-carbon green technological applications
- Test the AusNCP mechanism considering RE's strategic and critical geopolitical importance and with respect to the management of low-level long-live radiation materials; and
- Engage NGOs and CSOs from Australia, Malaysia, Japan and USA on the case because of their states and financial institutions interest in Lynas.

AID/WATCH has continued to support our Malaysian partners Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM)-Friends of the Earth Malaysia and Save Malaysia! Stop Lynas! in their opposition to the Lynas proposal to construct a Permanent Disposal Facility (PDF) for its radioactive waste in a drinking water catchment. Research continues on the OECD complaint which we aim to lodge in late 2021.

LOOKING AHEAD

The lockdowns of 2020 provided an opportunity for Aid/Watch to reevaluate in these changing times and to refocus on the emerging global justice agenda. In 2021 and beyond, we are placing solidarity with peoples struggles against authoritarianism at the centre of our work, along with exposing aid-fuelled development aggression, and greenwashed extractivism.

International Solidarity with People's Struggles Against Authoritarianism

Unlike most overseas aid programs that start with an imposition, international solidarity is about allies in relationship with communities in the Global South together committed to global equality, peace and justice.

The delivery of aid whether by international finance institutions or small NGOs in the majority of cases has an inherent power imbalance. Too often the starting point for the delivery of development assistance is one of aid bodies imposing their programs rather than one of cooperation. How to provide assistance to communities without further exposing the Global South to neoliberalism and corporate greed remains a major challenge for the aid sector.

Despite the contradictions in the nature and delivery of aid, progressive movements have in the main supported international assistance programs. The debate has continued about how that can be achieved free of western privilege, arrogance and whiteness. Aid workers from the Global South are raising questions about how aid budgets should be used so they empower the recipients to fight for just causes and

provide practical assistance in their struggles for self-determination.

Aid/Watch will be working on the 'how international solidarity is undertaken' and believes this can provide practical and theoretical assistance for the aid sector at a time when it has to grapple with reshaping our societies in the face of the climate catastrophe, the pandemic, growing authoritarianism and the cruel policies of neoliberalism.

Exposing Development Aggression

Since the closure of AusAID in 2013, Aid/Watch has monitored and exposed how Australian aid has been increasingly directed towards national interests and private finance over developing countries' humanitarian and development needs for real aid.

We have seen aid become integrated with Australian diplomatic, strategic and military priorities that undermine the perspectives of communities in the Global South - many of whom are recipients of Australian aid. In many cases this has manifested as development aggression, a term used by indigenous peoples and frontline communities to refer to development projects that violate their human rights, lands and waters.

For Aid/Watch this has highlighted the unfinished business of decolonisation and that, now and into the future, there is an absolute need for decoloniality in our approaches, processes and everyday social relations. Therefore, Aid/Watch aims to focus on exposing fundamental changes in the landscape of aid through actions of solidarity with communities threatened by development aggression.

Greenwashing Extractivism

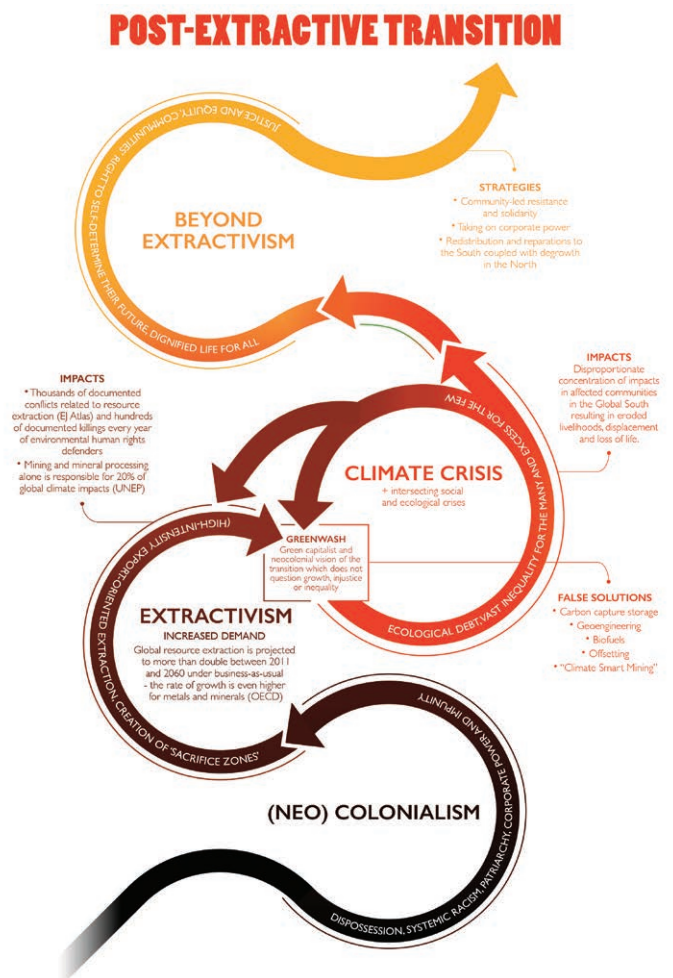
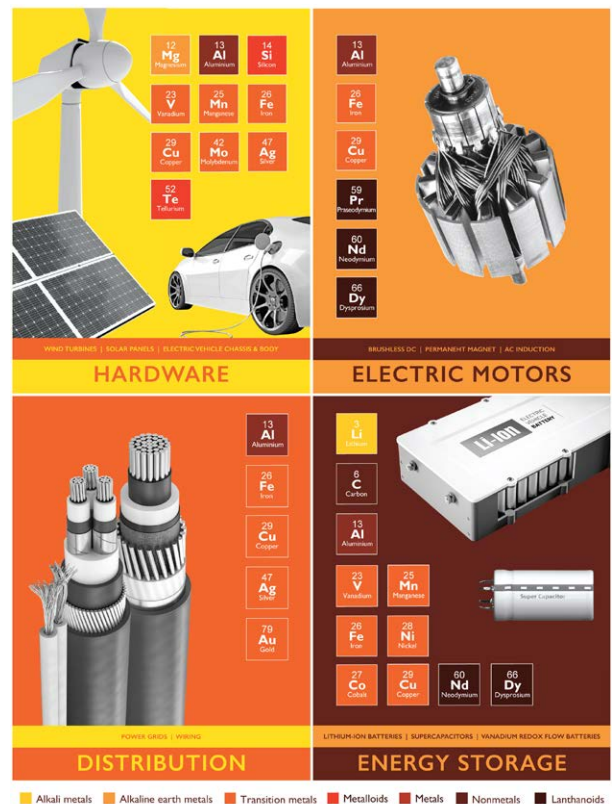
Intersecting with our work on Solidarity and People's Struggles Against Authoritarianism and Exposing Development Aggression is the need to hold to account extractive industries greenwashing crimes and to stop them from capturing the energy and digital transition narrative.

Extractive industries, particularly mining, are advancing greenwashing tactics to promote themselves as part of the solution to climate change. Mining corporations are collaborating with institutions and governments to aggressively market their destructive and socially unjust activities as solutions to the climate emergency, further creating a resource crisis.

This includes Australian miners and financial interests, who are scouring the globe and expanding into new territories, including the deep sea and outer space, for new sources of 'strategic minerals', like lithium, rare earths, copper, nickel and cobalt. Just like coal mining, the mining and processing of what are being called 'critical minerals' for low-carbon technologies, renewables and green tech are equally problematic.

Aid/Watch will be holding 'green' industries that are promoted as solutions to climate change accountable and demand that all value and supply chains of metals and critical minerals are clean, just and fair.

Part of this work will be to continue listening to, learning from and acting in solidarity with, Indigenous Peoples and frontline communities who are leading the movements in pushing back the expansion of the extractive economy and simultaneously advancing solutions and development models that embody social, ecological and climate justice. We aim to create a dialogue and action in the Australian context that builds a pathway for a globally just energy future towards post-extractivism and circular societies.



Graphics by Aid/Watch Campaigner, Nat Lowrey for Yes to Life No to Mining, London Mining Network and War on Want report, *A Material Transition*

RESEARCH

Pacific Compact

In late 2020, Aid/Watch wrote a chapter for the Reality of Aid Report 2020-21 to be published in 2021.

Responding to the Australian Federal Government initiative of a seasonal worker program which aims to get Pacific seasonal workers working on Australia's farms during the coronavirus pandemic, the chapter contextualizes the proposed "Grand Compact for the Pacific" among the four existing compacts in the Pacific between Northern countries and Pacific Island states. The paper asserts that a compact agreement focused on Pacific Island nations must come from the perspective of social, environmental and gender justice and break away from extractive industries, development aggression and colonial practices currently impacting the region.

Aid/Watch believes that if a Compact between Australia and Pacific nations was established it should be a fair and balanced agreement that provides the labour Australia requires while improving quality of life and ensuring sustainable development in the Pacific nations involved.

Australian Aid & Militarisation

Under the Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) Aid/Watch was invited to submit a paper on Australian Aid & Militarisation in late 2019, with finalisation of the paper in early 2020. The paper *ODA, The Military, and Escalating Dynamics of Containment: Aspects of the Recent Australian Experience in the Pacific* focused on how Australian aid has become more closely integrated with Australian diplomatic and strategic priorities, including its military priorities.

From being deployed to counter what the Australian Government sees as a growing threat from China, to a new aid tranche used specifically to negate growing assertiveness and political confidence in the region as Australia's Pacific sphere of influence becomes increasingly challenged.

Using the key illustration of the use of aid to detain asylum seekers captured by the Australian military and held in offshore facilities in Manus Province, Papua New Guinea the paper points to Australia's offshore detention regime as a proxy for 'forward defense', not just against refugees but also the perceived strategic threat from China. The paper will be a chapter in an upcoming book produced by APRN to be launched in August 2021.

'Haus Bagarap, Hevi Kamap' Homes Destroyed, Livelihoods Lost

2020 saw the two-year Paga Hill Social Mapping project coming to its final stages. Fortunately, the field work was completed by our Campaign Coordinator Natalie Lowrey, Paga Hill community leader Allan Mogarema and community members prior to travel restrictions being enforced in early 2020.

The data from the social mapping research is part of a larger Paga Hill story, including evictions, the companies involved, activism, resistance throughout, the response of the companies, international law and recommendations.

The aim of the research is to amplify the voices of the Paga Hill community from the aftermath of evictions and displacement at Paga Hill. This will be produced into a report in collaboration with the Paga Hill Community, Aid/Watch and Jubilee Australia and to be launched in August 2021.

EVENTS

With restrictions caused by the pandemic, campaigning activities and events planned for the year had to be re-thought with much of our work moving online. For example the planned Yes to Life No to Mining YLNM global gathering to be held in Naarm/Melbourne in October 2020 that AID/WATCH would have hosted was postponed. While face to face events are on hold we have had to move events into virtual spaces.



Aid Talks Webinar Series

In 2020 Aid/Watch launched **Aid Talks** with our partner **Reality of Aid – Asia Pacific (RoA-AP)**. Aid Talks is a webinar series discussing the most pressing issues on aid and development cooperation today and the critical issues surrounding it.

The webinar series aims to inform the public on how the Official Development Assistance (ODA), commonly known as aid, provided by donor countries to developing nations and fragile states, is being utilized as 'aid investment' redirected to support private sector players and narrow security priorities over reducing inequality and poverty.

Despite the assertion of CSOs that ODA should enhance the quality of life of developing nations and fragile states, narratives from communities say otherwise. For example, ODA is leveraged for International Finance Institutions (IFIs)

such as the US-led International Monetary Fund-World Bank Group (IMF-WB), Japan-led Asian Development Bank (ADB), and China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). These IFIs collaborate with the private sector (usually multi or transnational corporations) to implement development projects.

Instead of paving the way for genuine, sustainable development, the corporate capture of development has only resulted in displacement, food insecurity, militarization, and worse, human rights violations in marginalized, vulnerable communities. All development actors involved in such injustice need to be accountable for their actions. Free, prior and informed consent and/or proper consultations are not always granted to communities whilst national governments side with corporations. Such developments are not guided by the needs of communities, allowing people to determine their own development pathways and priorities.

Our first Aid Talk was held in April 2020. Our panellists, from **The New Humanitarian**, **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**, **Aid/Watch Australia**, and **Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)** presented case studies and narratives about *The Fragile Case of COVID 19: How the outbreak exacerbates living conditions in conflict-affected, fragile states*.

The topic of our second Aid Talk, held in June 2020, was *Cancel Debt in Asia Pacific to Tackle Covid-19 Health and Economic Crisis*. The panellists, from **Eurodad – the European Network on Debt and Development**, **Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government**, **Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisation-PIANGO Pacific 2030**, **IBON International** and the **Bangladesh Working Group on External Debt**, discussed potential impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic

on sovereign debt for the poorest countries in the Asia Pacific region, in response to a growing regional and international call for the cancellation of all external debt payments.

With cuts to aid budgets and the debt crisis already prevalent in many countries in the Asia Pacific the COVID crisis has revealed that both low income and middle income countries are at risk. The financing needed to prevent both COVID-related health and an economic catastrophe will be immense.

The Aid/Talks webinars are posted on [YouTube](#) and also available as [Podcasts](#) and will continue through 2021 and beyond. Special thanks to RoA-Asia Pacific for partnering with Aid/Watch to make the Aid Talks webinar series possible



Earth Laws Asia Pacific: Earth, Sea, Fire, Spirit

The **Australian Earth Laws Alliance**, a fellow member of the **Yes to life No to Mining global network**, held a [3-day online conference](#) from 14-16 October 2020. Aid/Watch co-hosted and facilitated a conversation between **Emmanuel Peni**, **Project Sepik** and **Fleur Ramsay** the **Special Counsel for the International Program at Environmental Defenders Office** in Sydney and **Chair of the First Nations and Indigenous Peoples Program Working Group**.

Manu and Fleur discussed the significant threat the proposed Frieda River copper/gold mine would have on the Sepik River and the Indigenous peoples that live along it and how

the people of the Sepik maintain a rich and vivid spiritual connection with the river, waterways, forests and animals.

With the Upper Sepik River Basin been tentatively listed for World Heritage Status, due to its incredible biodiversity and rich cultural heritage Manu spoke of what the river means to his people as a living entity and how international law can play a role in protecting the environmental and cultural significance of this very important part of the world.

ACFID Oceania Connect Conference

From 27 - 30 October 2020, the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), regional conference, in partnership with the Council for International Development, New Zealand (CID) and the Pacific Island Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) delivered their first virtual, regional conference Oceania Connect 2020.

Aid/Watch partnered with Papua New Guinean partners **Project Sepik** and **Alliance of Solwara Warriors** to co-host and facilitate a session on *Melanesian Resource Governance for Sustainability of our Lands, Rivers and Oceans*.

The 1.5 hour session explored how traditional Melanesian knowledge and practices play a significant role in the sustainable use of resources in PNG. With some of the world's last living and intact biodiverse forest, rivers and ocean, the presenters **Emmanuel Peni**, **Project Sepik** and **Jonathan Mesulam**, **Alliance of Solwara Warriors** identified how their traditional Melanesian sustainable practices can conserve these resources as they have done for generations.

The session illustrated how Melanesian knowledge systems, traditional governance and cultural practices are vital for sustainability and conservation today. They centered the need for customary landholders to hold the decision-making powers on what developments can take place, that this should not be left in

the hands of foreign interests, alienated elites and the PNG government bureaucratic and administrative systems.

ACFID Oceania Connect Conference

From 5-7 November the **ASEAN Peoples Forum (APF) 2020** was to be held in Vietnam, due to Covid-19 the conference was held online. The APF2020 covered a variety of issues including Peace and Security; Human Rights and Access to Justice; Ecological Sustainability; Labour and Migration; Alternative Regionalism; Transformative and Solidarity Economy; Trade, Investment, and Corporate Power; Life with Dignity; Culture and the Arts; Innovation, New and Emerging Technology, Digital Rights; Racial Discrimination and Religious Extremism.

Aid/Watch was invited by our partner the Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) to facilitate a webinar workshop on **Climate Emergency Action in Post-Pandemic ASEAN within the Ecological Sustainability convergence space**. Presenters from Myanmar, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines spoke on COVID-19 and the ecological crisis, challenges from different perspectives including food sovereignty, Indigenous rights and human right defenders (HRD), and the need for Climate Emergency Action.

With an attendance of over 200 participants the workshop outlined the key impacts of the ecological crisis on the different sectors and how these were worsened under the COVID-19 pandemic and the opportunity to share recommendations to address these challenges moving forward.

NETWORKS

At Aid/Watch we greatly respect and treasure the network we are involved with, some of whom have been for decades. This is a small of our regional and international networking

in 2020 despite it all happening at often odd hours and in a virtual space:

- **Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) People's Research Training** - Aid/Watch participated in the APRN People's Research Training.
- **APRN Workshops** - Aid/Watch will be collaborating with Pacific Network on Globalisation to produce an instructional video on Public Communications for APRN Advocacy and Engagement Training
- **Yes to life No to Mining (YLNM)** - Aid/Watch participated in the YLNM 2-day strategy meeting on 26 & 29th October
- **Reality of Aid (RoA) Observatorio Workshop** - Aid/Watch collaborated with Zahra Bazzi from Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) on a virtual workshop in November 2020 on *Dissemination and Popularization* for the launch of the *CSO Aid Observatorio Training Handbook 2020: Advancing Human Rights & Development Effectiveness*
- Participated in the **Reality of Aid Observatorio Training** ahead of contributing two case studies to the Observatorio CSO-initiated and maintained database of development projects funded through the Official Development Assistance (ODA) or funded by International Finance Institutions (IFIs). The Observatorio will show on-ground narratives and evidence-based analyses of development projects in fragile nations and developing countries.

PEOPLE & PARTNERS

Staff (part-time contracted)

Natalie Lowrey, Campaign Coordinator (part-time from November 2016)

Mara Bonacci, Research Coordinator (from April 2020)

Committee of Management (volunteer)

The Committee of Management is elected from the AID/WATCH membership. Throughout 2019, the following members gave generously of their time by serving on the AID/WATCH Committee of Management:

- James Goodman (Chair)
- David McGill (Treasurer)
- Jemma Bailey (Public Officer)
- Natalie Lowrey (Campaign Coordinator)
- Mara Bonacci (Research Coordinator)
- Ken Davis
- Lee Rhiannon
- Lee Tan

International and Regional Partners & Networks

- YLNM - Yes to Life No to Mining global network
- Mines & Communities
- Asia Pacific Gathering on Human Rights & Extractivism
- RoA - Reality of Aid Network
- APRN- Asia Pacific Research Network
- MET - Mining & Energy Transition network

Partners & Networks in the Global South

The backbone of AID/WATCH's work are our partners in the Global South. Special thanks to the below groups:

- Paga Hill Community (PNG)
- Project Sepik (PNG)
- CELCoR - Centre for Environmental Law & Community Rights (PNG)
- Save Malaysia! Stop Lynas!
- Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM)- Friends of the Earth Malaysia
- Melanesian Indigenous Land Defence Alliance (MILDA)
- mmP - mines, minerals PEOPLE (India)

Partners & Networks in Australia

AID/WATCH could not do the work we do without the Australian networks and organisations we collaborate and partner with. Special thanks to the below groups:

- Rainforest Action Group (Melbourne)
- Friends of the Earth Australia
- AELA - Australian Earth Law Centre
- APHEDA-Union Aid Abroad
- Stop Lynas Campaign
- Blockade IMARC
- ActionAid
- Jubilee Australia
- ACAN - Australian Corporate Accountability Network
- Philippines Australia Solidarity Association (PASA)
- ACTU - International Solidarity
- AFTINET - The Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network
- EDO- Environmental Defenders Office NSW

FINANCIAL REPORTS

TREASURER'S REPORT 2020

AidWatch remains in a satisfactory financial position as at 31 December 2020. Total income for the year of \$43,322.86 exceeded expenses of \$42,142.65, resulting in a surplus of \$1,180.21. AidWatch's activities in 2020 were funded primarily through public donations and a grant from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

As at 31 December 2020 AidWatch held Net Assets of approximately \$8,000, primarily comprised of cash at bank, offset by unearned grant revenue (liability). Unearned grants comprise approximately \$74,000, which includes \$25k from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, \$36k from the GAIA Foundation and \$12.5m from the Tucker Foundation. With this grant funding confirmed, it is expected that AidWatch will return a modest surplus in 2021.

David McGill – Treasurer
13 June 2021

Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet)

As at 31 December 2020

Accrual Basis	AUD \$ 2020	AUD \$ 2019
Assets		
Current Assets		
Chequing/Savings		
Bank Aust -Fund	2,411.46	576.58
Bank Aust – Grants	74,155.99	0.00
Bank Aust – Operating	3,628.51	8,184.41
Westpac -Cash Reserve	0.00	0.00
Westpac -Fund Account	1,085.44	1,085.44
Westpac -Operating Account	930.28	930.28
Total Chequing/Savings	82,211.68	10,776.71
Receivables		
Grant funds receivable	0.00	51,532.23
Total Receivables	0.00	51,532.23
Total Current Assets	82,211.68	62,308.94
Fixed Assets		
Equipment at cost	0.00	5,944.00
Equipment at cost less Acc Dep	0.00	(5,944.00)
Intangible Assets at Cost	0.00	3,000.00
Intangible Assets less Acc Dep	0.00	(3,000.00)
Total Fixed Assets	-	-
TOTAL ASSETS	82,211.68	62,308.94

LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities

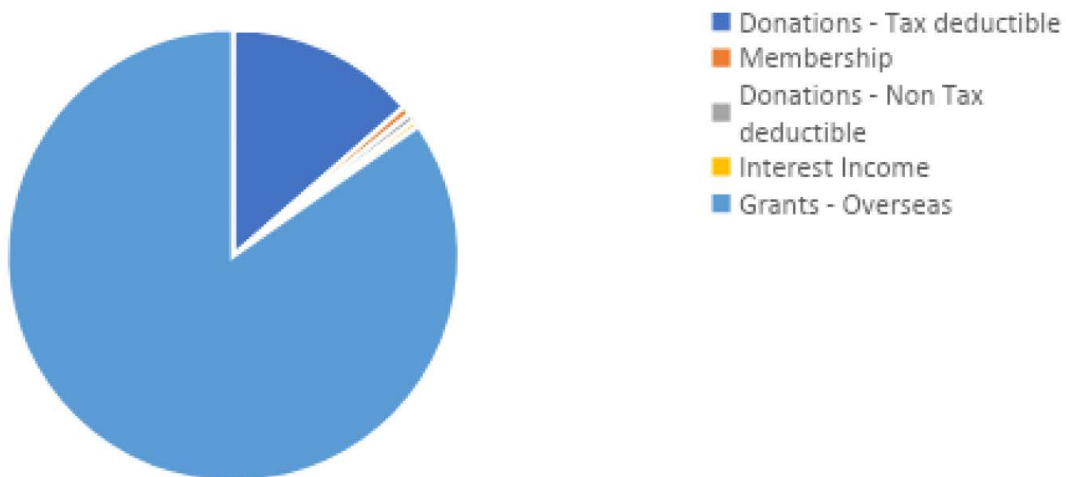
Unspent Grant -Malawi	0.00	0.00
Total Other Current Liabilities	74,038.31	55,315.78
Total Current Liabilities	74,038.31	55,315.78
TOTAL LIABILITIES	74,038.31	55,315.78
NET ASSETS	8,173.37	6,993.16
EQUITY		
Retained Earnings	6,993.16	12,517.62
Net Income	1,180.21	(5,524.46)
TOTAL EQUITY	8,173.37	6,993.16

Statement of Comprehensive Income (Profit and Loss)

For the year ending 31 December 2020

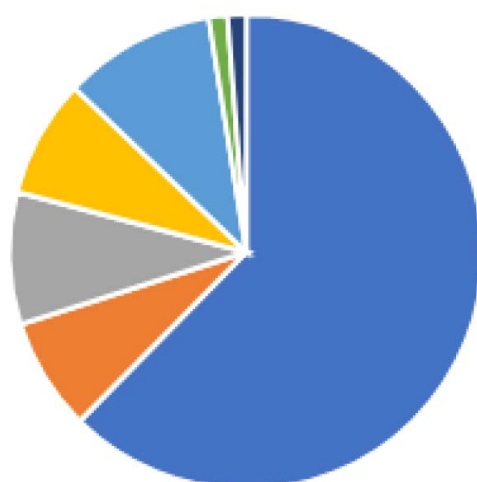
Accrual Basis

	AUD \$ 2020	AUD \$ 2019
INCOME		
Drawdown on Donations	0.00	4,014.90
Donations - Tax deductible	5,894.81	6,977.15
Membership	275.00	285.00
Miscellaneous Income	0.00	0.00
Donations - Non Tax deductible	250.00	312.00
Interest Income	192.05	214.54
Grants - Overseas	36,711.00	2,646.50
TOTAL INCOME	43,322.86	14,450.09



Accrual Basis
EXPENSES

	2020	2019
Grant Expenses	0.00	6,525.64
Grant Expenses -Silicon Valley	26,303.62	0.00
Grant Expenses -GAIA	3,232.89	0.00
Grant Expenses -Malawi	3,783.55	0.00
Grant Expenses -APRN	3,390.94	0.00
Contracting Expenses	4,360.98	11,910.70
Subscriptions	535.67	1,168.21
Business Insurance	535.00	370.00

TOTAL EXPENSES
42,142.65
19,974.55
TOTAL SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)
1,180.21
(5,524.46)
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
-
-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME / (LOSS)
1,180.21
(5,524.46)


- Grant Expenses - Silicon Valley
- Grant Expenses - GAIA
- Grant Expenses - Malawi
- Grant Expenses - APRN
- Contracting Expenses
- Subscriptions
- Insurance



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