We read with interest your blog celebrating women environmental defenders for International Women’s Day.

However, we are writing to express concern about some serious errors and misleading information in the way the Nicaraguan context is portrayed in your piece on Francisca Ramirez.

According to your 2017 information on the killings of environmental defenders, there were ‘patches of progress’ and you quote Nicaragua – where four of the 197 killings happened - as being one of these ‘patches’. On this basis of this information how is it possible or logical to conclude that ‘Nicaragua remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for environmental defenders’?

These four killings all happened in the remote north east region of Nicaragua and were related to land conflicts between the indigenous population, logging interests and settlers moving to the region from other parts of Nicaragua. There were no killings last year or ever related to the proposed Canal.

In the next paragraph you claim that ‘the enormous project wasn’t preceded by any environmental impact reports.’ There are two serious errors in this statement.

Firstly you write as if the ‘enormous project’ is actually going ahead. This is very misleading as there are a number of factors that indicate that it is extremely unlikely that the project will ever come to fruition. The reasons are as follows:

* There is no indication that it would be economically viable;
* HKND, the Hong Kong Chinese Company, holds the Canal concession and committed to building and financing the project. However, questions were raised about the structure of that finance when its CEO, Wang Jing, lost a reported 80-85% of his fortune as a result of the Shanghai Stock Market crash of 2015;
* In 2017 the Panamanian government signed an agreement with China for investment in major port expansion at either end of the Panama Canal;
* The melting of the polar ice cap could mean the opening of the Northwest Passage as an emerging trade route making expansion of canal capacity in Central America redundant;
* One pretext for the construction of the Nicaragua Canal was to accommodate mega container ships too large to use the Panama Canal. However, patterns of world shipping are changing and these ships travel from South East Asia via the Suez Canal and Europe to the eastern seaboard of North America.

Secondly there is another error in the same sentence where you state that there was no environmental impact study and no consultation with local people. In 2013 HKND contracted a British Company Environmental Resources Management to carry out an Environmental and Social Impact Study (ESIA). This involved consulting 16,500 people from a very broad range of different sectors of society at national and local level focusing on the potential social and environmental impact of the Canal - including land rights-and mitigation measures. The 11,000 word ESIA was published in 2015. See <http://hknd-group.com/portal.php?mod=view&aid=293>

We completely understand the need to communicate strong clear messages in your advocacy work but we would urge you to check the factual accuracy of the information you publish.

We would be very happy to meet with you at your convenience to discuss some of the points further and to provide you with further information.