

Case studies: Renewable energy & human rights

Hydropower & dam projects

Chile: Bardon, Chillan 1 and 2, Futaleufu, Puelo and Huechun hydroelectric projects impacts communities in Patagonia

Country: Chile	Project name: Bardon, Chillan 1 and 2, Futaleufu, Puelo and Huechun hydroelectric projects
Capacity: 2,151 (14 + 17 + 40 + 750 + 1,330) MW	Companies involved: Previously Endesa Chile (part of Enel), now owned by Enel
<p>Positive Steps: In Chile, six dams were planned to be developed in the Patagonia region. However, local communities and affected people strongly opposed the creation of the dams for social and environmental concerns, and the impact the projects would have on tourism. Many of these people depend on tourism for their livelihoods. Following social and environmental impact assessments, Endesa announced that it has rescinded their water rights to develop the projects, regardless of the fact that they had already invested US\$52 million. International Rivers commends Endesa for listening to community concerns.</p>	
<p>Further Information: International Rivers has aided in the campaign to stop the development of dams in the Patagonia region</p>	

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Ethiopia: Gibe III dam impacts indigenous people in Lake Turkana and Omo River region

Country: Ethiopia	Project name: Gibe III dam
Capacity: 1,870 MW	Companies involved: Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation (EEPCo) , Salini Impregilo, Dongfang Electric
<p>This section briefly summarises key concerns about the projects. See below for companies' responses to those concerns, wherever available:</p> <p>In 2006, Salini Impregilo began construction of the Gibe III dam, impacting the lives of 200,000 indigenous people. Human Rights Watch found that the indigenous people's grazing lands had been cleared without adequate consultation, and that they had not received any compensation. The people in the Omo River and Lake Turkana region rely on regular flooding for their crops, livestock, and fishing. However, the dam has cut this flood off, leaving 100,000 people in hunger.</p> <p>In July 2008, 2 years after the beginning of construction, the environmental and social impact assessment was approved. The report, published in 2009, stated that the impact of the dam on the environment and indigenous people were negligible and even positive.</p> <p>In March 2016, Survival International lodged a complaint with the Italian National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines against Salini Impregilo over its construction of the Gibe III dam on behalf of the tribal peoples of the Lower Omo in Ethiopia and of Lake Turkana in Kenya. The complaint is currently awaiting initial assessment.</p> <p>The Italian NCP first accepted the complaint for mediation in November 2016 and then published the Initial Assessment on 12 January 2017. On 8 June 2017, the Italian NCP issued the Final Statement. The NCP examined the case and consulted with experts from the Institute of International Law Studies of the National Research Council in the matters related to international law. The NCP said the case is dated and since the completion of the project in 2016, the request by Survival to carry out a new ESIA to remedy the alleged violations of the Guidelines cannot be taken into account. In terms of having Salini use its leverage to obtain free, prior and informed consent, the Italian NCP stated that "it is legitimate to doubt that the enterprise has the power and the real chance of exercising its influence in seeking to obtain some sort of informed consent of the population of a State which is not the one with which it has signed the contract."</p> <p>Finally, the NCP made the recommendation to Salini to use continue to provide the needed technical support and to do everything it can, so that "EEPCo carries out the activities foreseen in the Artificial Flow Release Plan according to the recommendations for the follow-up and , in particular, ensuring all over the process, the consultation of the downstream communities." By doing so, the NCP states that Salini can use its leverage to monitor the status of downstream communities and foster the implementation of the mitigation measures in a manner consistent with the 2011 Guidelines and the UN Guiding Principles.</p>	

<p>Company responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● EEP Co response (Apr 2016)● Salini response (May 2012)● Dongfang Electric non-response (Jun 2011)	<p>Further information:</p> <p>A film by International Rivers documents the impacts of the dam on the livelihoods of 500,000 people, which could be exacerbated by climate change.</p>
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Guatemala: Santa Rita Hydroelectric Plant impacts indigenous people in Alta Verapaz

Country: Guatemala	Project name: Santa Rita hydropower project
Capacity: 24 MW	Companies involved: Hidroeléctrica Santa Rita
<p>This section briefly summarises key concerns about the projects. See below for companies' responses to those concerns, wherever available:</p> <p>In 2008, the Guatemalan Government gave Hidroeléctrica Santa Rita the license to construct the Santa Rita dam. Since its inception, the project has been linked to human rights concerns including rights of indigenous peoples, land rights, displacement, loss of livelihoods, and security concerns including killings. Maya Q'eqchi and Poqomchi indigenous communities in the area claim that their right to free, prior, and informed consent was not respected. Local communities have held peaceful protests and blockades.</p> <p>Security concerns include an employee of Hidroeléctrica Santa Rita allegedly shooting and killing two Mayan children while reportedly looking for the children's uncle who was an activist against Santa Rita dam (Aug 2013); one community member's death and 5 injuries during community meeting (Aug 2014).</p> <p>On 10 October 2014, representatives from local human rights organizations wrote a letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to request support for the threats they face due to the Santa Rita Dam.</p> <p>In October (2017), the private sector lending arm of the World Bank Group (International Finance Corporation, IFC) confirmed the cancellation of a controversial Santa Rita hydroelectric project in Guatemala, approved under the UN's carbon offsetting scheme Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The announcement follows a report by the IFC Ombudsman which found serious failings in the project planning, and the withdrawal of support by the Dutch Development Bank (FMO).</p>	
<p>Letter from local community leader to CDM (March 2014) Response to letter by Hidroeléctrica Santa Rita (May 2014) Letter in response from local community leader (May 2014)</p>	<p>Further information: ECC Factbook; EJOLT Atlas; Carbon Market Watch</p>
<p>Registered under the UN Clean Development Mechanism</p>	

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Honduras: Agua Zarca Dam impacts indigenous people by Gualcarque River

Country: Honduras	Project name: Agua Zarca
Capacity: 21.3 MW	Companies involved: Project developer: Desarrollos Energéticos (DESA). Contractor: COPRECA (former contractor: Sinohydro). Turbine provider: Voith (partly owned by Siemens). Funders: Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), Finnfund, FICOHSA, FMO, USAID, COPRECA.
<p>This section briefly summarises key concerns about the projects. See below for companies' responses to those concerns, wherever available:</p> <p>In March 2016, Berta Cáceres, human rights defender and indigenous leader opposed to the Agua Zarca dam, was assassinated. She had been actively leading her community's resistance against Agua Zarca, a dam project which has previously been linked to the killing of Tomás García, another human rights defender, in 2013. Both defenders were leaders of the indigenous Lenca community which alleges that the Agua Zarca dam would significantly impact their livelihoods and that they had not been adequately consulted according to the international standard of free, prior & informed consent. Berta's assassination elicited an outcry from the international community, including calls for foreign investors to withdraw from the project. The Dutch and Finnish development banks have announced that they are suspending their activities pending further investigations into the killing. As of May 2016, two people linked to the project developer, DESA, have been arrested in connection with the killing. The community continues to face security concerns. FMO and Finnfund declared to withdraw from the project, and their exit was finalised in July 2017.</p>	
<p>Company responses:</p> <p>Entities reportedly involved in financing Agua Zarca dam project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) ● Finnfund statement & FAQ ● FICOHSA did not respond ● FMO statement & FAQ ● Siemens statement ● USAID statement ● Voith statement <p>Companies reportedly involved in project development & implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● COPRECA statement (only available in Spanish) ● Desarrollos Energéticos (DESA) did not respond ● Desarrollos Energéticos (DESA) response to questionnaire on renewable energy companies' approach to human rights 	

India: Hydel Based Power Unit impacts communities by River Jatashankari, Chhattisgar

Country: India	Project name: Hydel Based Power Unit on River Jatashankari, Chhattisgar
Capacity: 7 (2×3.5 MW) MW	Companies involved: Shalivahana Green Energy Limited
<p>This section briefly summarises key concerns about the projects: The project design document claims that the project would “not alter any environmental or biological attributes of the area”. However, according to Carbon Market Watch, the project had severe consequences for local communities’ access to water. This impact was especially acute as the local community relies on wells for water needs and also affected their agricultural production. The company made efforts to address concerns about replanting trees felled for the project site, but no information is available on the company’s actions in response to concerns about access to water.</p>	
Registered under Clean Development Mechanism	

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Laos: Dam collapse kills and displaces thousands

Country: Laos	Company: Xe-Pian Xe-Namnoy Power Company
<p>In July 2018, the Xe-Pian Xe-Namnoy dam in Laos collapsed, killing at least 40 people and displacing over 6,600. To some communities most acutely impacted by the disaster, this was seen as an outcome that could have been avoided if the companies involved in the project had heeded longstanding community concerns.</p> <p>From the outset, communication and consultation with potentially impacted communities was fraught and often seen by communities as inadequate. This pattern continued up to and following the 2018 dam collapse, with some reports contending the company saw warning signs of infrastructure failure days ahead of time but did not take necessary precautions to ensure civilian safety. The dam collapse sent shockwaves throughout the country, with the Laotian government blaming the collapse on “poor planning” and temporarily suspending all hydropower projects. The \$1.2 billion project remains stalled, and Xe-Pian Xe-Namnoy Power Company and other project stakeholders now face calls to compensate victims.</p>	
Source: Fast & fair renewable energy: A practical guide for investors	

Categories: [Hydropower & dam projects](#) [Renewable Energy](#) [Deaths](#) [Displacement](#) [Laos](#)

Laos: Nam Theun 2 dam impacts communities in Xe Bang Fai River region

Country: Laos	Project name: Nam Theun 2 Dam
Capacity: 1,075 MW	Companies involved: Formerly owned by international consortium Nam Theun 2 Power (EDF , Electricity Generating Public Company , and Italthai). Now sole owner is EDF . Funded by World Bank.

This section briefly summarises key concerns about the projects. See below for companies' responses to those concerns, wherever available:

In [November 2004](#), Friends of the Earth, Proyecto Gato, and 56 other NGOs filed a complaint to the French National Contact Point (NCP) against EDF for their non-compliance to the OECD Guidelines in their development of the Nam Theun 2 dam. The NGOs accused EDF of not conducting a detailed environmental impact assessment. [EDF responded](#) to this complaint, and stated that the dam would bring economic opportunities to the local population. The French NCP concluded that there was no violation of the OECD Guidelines but gave [recommendations](#) to EDF. The NCP encouraged the company to continue to implement compensatory measures, and suggested that when operating in countries with weak environmental and social laws, companies should apply internationally recognised good practices they abide by in their home countries. In [2007](#), EDF, the World Bank, and the Laotian government had promised to double the income of those families who were displaced by the dam, within four years.

However, [International Rivers](#) has since accused Nam Theun 2 Power for not properly consulting the affected villagers. The project was allegedly preventing the locals from accessing water and was destroying critical food sources. They also found that the 6200 people who were displaced, and though they now have better local infrastructure, still struggle from the loss of their traditional livelihoods. [Environmental NGOs](#) urged international development banks to review their support for the Nam Theun 2 dam. The [World Bank's](#) rating for the project's overall implementation progress is now "moderately unsatisfactory" and the level of overall risk is "high".

The [Resettlement Implementation Period](#) was closed in July 2018, following the recommendation of the Panel of Experts. The World Bank Nam Theun 2 Social and Environment project closed on December 31, 2017. The independent international Environmental and Social Panel of Experts visited Lao PDR for their 28th mission in June-July 2018.

Company responses:

- EDF [response \(Oct 2016, in French\)](#)

Further information:

- [International Rivers](#)

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Malaysia: Murum Dam impacts indigenous people in Sarawak

Country: Malaysia	Project name: Murum Dam
Capacity: 944 MW	Companies involved: Project developer: Sarawak Energy. Contractors: China Three Gorges, Sinohydro
<p>This section briefly summarises key concerns about the projects. See below for companies' responses to those concerns, wherever available:</p> <p>The Murum Dam has been linked with concerns around the rights of indigenous peoples, primarily related to resettlement affecting livelihoods.</p> <p>The dam required the resettlement of over 1,500 people, mostly of Penan origin. Sarawak Energy holds that it carried out consultations on the project as well as the resettlement plans. However, when the company's resettlement plans were leaked in 2012, indigenous peoples claimed the terms did not provide them with adequate compensation and would significantly affect their livelihoods.</p> <p>Indigenous peoples organised peaceful protests on a periodic basis, some of which included blockading the dam site halting construction for over a month. In 2013, Human Rights Watch and other NGOs raised concerns about intimidation and arbitrary detention by armed police during peaceful protests by Penan people.</p> <p>As of late 2015, according to International Rivers indigenous peoples claim not to have received the land they were allocated and are now living with poor access to social services, lack of food security, and poor economic opportunities.</p>	
<p>Company response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarawak Energy response (Dec 2013) • Sarawak Energy questionnaire response (Apr 2016) 	<p>Further information: International Rivers, Survival International, "Broken Promises" documentary</p>

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Mexico: Cerro de Oro Dam impacts indigenous communities near Santo Domingo River

Country: Mexico	Project name: Cerro de Oro dam
Capacity: 15 MW	Companies involved: Project developers: Electricidad del Oriente and Corporacion Mexicana de Hidroelectricidad (Comexhidro). Funders: Overseas Private Investment Corporation (via Conduit Capital Partners & Latin Power III Fund)
<p>Positive Steps: In November 2010, indigenous communities filed a complaint to the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC)'s Office of Accountability concerning the impact of the Cerro de Oro dam on their safety, access to water, and fishing areas. Following the complaint, OPIC set up dialogues between the affected communities and the companies in charge of the project. Mexican civil society organizations, communities and the company reached an agreement to suspend the construction of the project, and to develop alternative projects that took key community concerns into account. In November 2011, the alternative project design was rejected by three communities after hearing about the dam's safety issues. As of August 2014, the project remains suspended and the company continues to respect the rights of the communities to reject the project.</p>	
Further information: Accountability Counsel	

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Myanmar: Mong Ton Dam impacts Shan communities by Salween River

Country: Myanmar	Project name: Mong Ton Dam
Capacity: 7,000 MW	Companies involved: Consortium developing project: China Three Gorges, Sinohydro, China Southern Grid, EGAT, International Group of Entrepreneurs. Consultancy undertaking impact assessment: Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation (SMEC)
<p>This section briefly summarises key concerns about the projects. See below for companies' responses to those concerns, wherever available:</p> <p>The Mong Ton Dam is one of several dams planned for the Salween River. The project has been linked with concerns around inadequate consultation on the human rights impacts of the dam, which Shan villagers claim would flood and destroy 100 communities. Villagers have held protests against the Australian company Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation (SMEC), which was commissioned to assess the potential environmental and social impact of the dam. Villagers claim SMEC is helping to push the project ahead without proper public consultation.</p> <p>In January 2015, 16 Shan organizations issued a statement in Bangkok warning that the project could fuel conflict in an already unstable region. The letter also claims that SMEC surveyors gave villagers "gifts" which the villagers saw as bribes, in order to get them to sign documents they didn't understand. SMEC denies these allegations and continues to defend its role in the project. In a statement in June 2015, it holds that it continues to reach out to local civil society organizations without success.</p>	
<p>Company responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMEC response (Jun 2015) 	<p>Further information: Salween Watch factsheet (March 2016)</p>

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