

Case studies: Renewable energy & human rights

Renewable energy

Indonesia: Demand for biofuel harms environment and locals

Country: Indonesia

In January 2019, 236 Indonesian NGOs and civil society leaders signed an [open letter](#) to the European Commission, warning that European demand for biofuels was driving “deforestation, land grabs, human rights violations, labour exploitation, corruption, socio-economic and political problems and ecological problems.” The letter raises concerns that the biofuel industry’s high land usage marginalizes small-scale farmers and contributes to ecological damage, highlighting how the industry infringes on both human rights and biodiversity

Sources: [Fast & fair renewable energy: A practical guide for investors](#)

Categories: [Renewable Energy](#) [Land rights](#) [Environment: General](#) [Beatings & violence](#)
[Corruption](#) [Indonesia](#) [Bioenergy](#)

Indonesia: Locals protest geothermal plant, express alarm over contamination, violence and threats

Country: Indonesia	Companies: PT Sejahtera Alam Energy (SAE)
<p>The Baturraden geothermal power plant in central Java is expected to generate 220 MW of electricity, making a significant contribution to Indonesia's sharply increasing energy demand. However, the project, developed by independent power producer PT Sejahtera Alam Energy (SAE), has faced several rounds of protests by local community members expressing alarm over the mud and debris contaminating local water sources, which was attributed to runoff from the construction of the geothermal power plant. Villagers were forced to filter the water before use and were concerned that the progressive muddying of local water would lead to a drop in tourist visits to the nearby waterfalls. In 2017, 24 protestors were detained and beaten by Indonesian authorities. With an estimated \$1 billion in project costs and a projected operational date of 2022, SAE's continued refusal to mitigate its human rights impacts or provide remedy for the harms caused presents risks to the overall success of the project.</p>	
Source: Fast & fair renewable energy: A practical guide for investors	

Categories: [Indonesia](#) [Geothermal energy](#) [Renewable Energy](#) [Land rights](#) [Intimidation & threats](#)

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	

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

Mexico: Farmers and academics denounce Nueva Xcala de Engie solar park

Country: Mexico	Company:Engie (formerly GDF Suez)
<p>Peasants, ejidatarios and academics denounced negative impacts of the Engie Company's Nueva Xcala Photovoltaic Park Project, which is being built in the San Antonio Calpulalpan ejido, in the state of Tlaxcala, and Emiliano Zapata, state of Hidalgo. Impacts include damage to the environment and cultural and historical heritage, as well as irregularities in land acquisition.</p> <p>Mount Malpaís of the ejido of San Antonio Calpulalpan which preserves Teotihuacan and Acolhua cultures, as well as remains of what may have been the first churches in the evangelization process, has been greatly affected by the construction of these solar parks. From an environmental perspective too, it has been detrimental to the community(s).</p>	
Response: Engie Responded	Source: Business and Human Rights Resource Center

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Mexico: Locals claim lack of access to information about new solar farm projects

Country: Mexico

In 2017, Mexico was among the top 10 countries in terms of renewable energy investment, recording \$6bn USD, an increase of 810% on the previous year. There has been particularly rapid expansion in the Yucatan peninsula, with 10 solar farms currently at different stages of development.

As projects develop, local communities have alleged lack of adequate access to information, disregard for indigenous rights (including self-determination and autonomy), and threats against human rights defenders. In the case of a solar farm in Valladolid, a judge suspended the project, due to alleged human rights violations, including that the company did not take a Sacred Cenote into account.

In the case of SunPower's Ticul A and Ticul B solar farms, which entail deforesting 603 hectares, there have been continuous allegations of death threats, attacks, and defamation against community members. There are also allegations that the consultation process was deceitful regarding the use of land, that there were no independent specialists involved, and that opposing opinions were not adequately recorded. In 2018, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples reported the initial contracts "... undermined the freedom of the consultation process and caused divisions and tension within the community."

The planned renewable energy projects in Yucatan are estimated to require more than 12,000 hectares of land close to protected areas, local populations, or sacred and archaeological sites. Many projects are on social property land, or ejidos. Although environmental and social assessments have been conducted for individual projects, there is not a Strategic Impact Assessment for such a concentrated installation of multiple energy projects.

Source: [Fast & fair renewable energy: A practical guide for investors](#)

Categories: [Indigenous peoples](#) [Intimidation & threats](#) [Access to information](#) [Free, prior & informed consent](#) [Beatings & violence](#) [Mexico](#) [Solar energy](#) [Renewable Energy](#)

Mexico: Lubricant fuel spills in Juchitan, Oaxaca

Country: Juchitan, Oaxaca, Mexico	Companies: EDF (developer), Acciona SA (developer), Gamesa Corp Tecnologica SA (turbine manufacturer)
Project : Wind turbines in Juchitan, Oaxaca, Mexico	
<p>The smell of lubricating fuel used for wind turbines is a common complaint among local communities in Oaxaca, Mexico. In 2017, a lubricant leak from a wind turbine operated by EDF in Juchitan reached ground level. According to a Bloomberg article reporting the incident, the company cleaned the turbine, removed contaminated soil and compensated the landowner. Similar problems have been encountered by other companies operating in the area, with turbine manufacturers noting that lubricating fuel leaks are relatively common and can often be cleaned before reaching ground level depending on weather conditions. Civil society argues that the accumulation of small lubricant leaks in Oaxaca, due to the number of turbines (around 2,000) poses a threat to the quality of soil and water in the region. Civil society organisation ProDESC has observed poor turbine maintenance in the region, and shared that local communities had noticed a decreased in the numbers of fish arriving in local lagoons in the last five to six years, although couldn't confirm whether there was any correlation between the two.</p>	
Sources: Mexico's Wind Farms Brought Prosperity but Not for Everyone , Even Clean Energy Has Its Little Oil Spills	

Categories: [Wind energy](#) [Renewable Energy](#) [Agriculture & livestock](#) [Mexico](#)

Norway: Indigenous people oppose offshore wind farms

Country: Norway	Company: Statkraft
<p>The Norwegian state energy company, Statkraft, began construction of Norway's largest onshore wind project, Fosen Vind, in 2016 with electricity production estimated to begin in 2020. The local Southern Saami reindeer-herding community oppose the project, filing complaints with national authorities and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. They argue that the project would result in a loss of 44% of their winter pastures, forcing many families to abandon their traditional trade of reindeer herding. Statkraft has already been the target of an OECD complaint filed by the Saami people in 2012 relating to the impacts of multiple wind farm projects built on traditional lands in Jämtland, Sweden. The National Contact Points in Sweden and Norway had provided recommendations to Statkraft to work in a manner that promotes indigenous people's rights. In 2018, Statkraft faced renewed opposition from the Saami people, this time in Norway. The Saami people filed a complaint with the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In December 2018, the Norwegian Petroleum and Energy Ministry refused to suspend the Fosen Wind project while the Committee examined the complaint, stating that "after careful consideration...there is no basis for stopping the building of Storheia wind turbines."</p> <p>On 16 January 2020, the Society for Threatened People (STP) filed a complaint with the Swiss National Contact Point against energy company BKW for investing in a wind farm project in western Norway.</p>	
More on Statkraft and complaints filed against it: Sweden	

Categories: [Wind energy](#) [Renewable Energy](#) [Norway](#) [Indigenous peoples](#) [Agriculture & livestock](#) [OECD Guidelines](#) [Europe & Central Asia](#)

Sweden: Collective ownership leads to positive results

Country: Sweden

Lantmännen Agroetanol is part of an agricultural cooperative collectively owned by 25,000 farmers in Sweden. It is also the largest biorefinery in the Nordic region. The company has a strong policy commitment to community consultation and access to remedy, including grievance mechanisms, as well as integration of human rights criteria into its Supplier Code of Conduct. Lantmännen Agroetanol [publicly reports](#) on its supply chain and project risks, including human rights risks. Its cooperative model centers the company's operations and policies around worker concerns and facilitates transparent decision-making and [growing dividends](#) for cooperative members.

Source: [Fast & fair renewable energy: A practical guide for investors](#)

[Sweden Bioenergy Renewable Energy](#)

USA: Solar installation company facilitates creation of sustainable jobs

Country: USA	Company: Solar Holler
<p>Solar Holler is a solar installation company that helps train solar installers in West Virginia in the United States, a region known for the dominance of coal mining in its economy. The company works with an NGO called Coalfield Development, which sends trainees to Solar Holler through a direct employment programme. Through this arrangement, Coalfield Development aims to mitigate the social and economic hardships the region's residents face with shrinking jobs in the coal sector. This community outreach and training also helps mitigate potential conflicts between the company and residents. Solar Holler benefits by cultivating a willing workforce that contributes to a just transition to a low-carbon economy.</p>	
Source: Fast & fair renewable energy: A practical guide for investors	

Categories: [Solar energy](#) [Renewable Energy](#) [Training managers & employees](#)