



RASI SALAI, THAILAND NOVEMBER 28 - DECEMBER 3, 2003

RIVERSFORLIFE

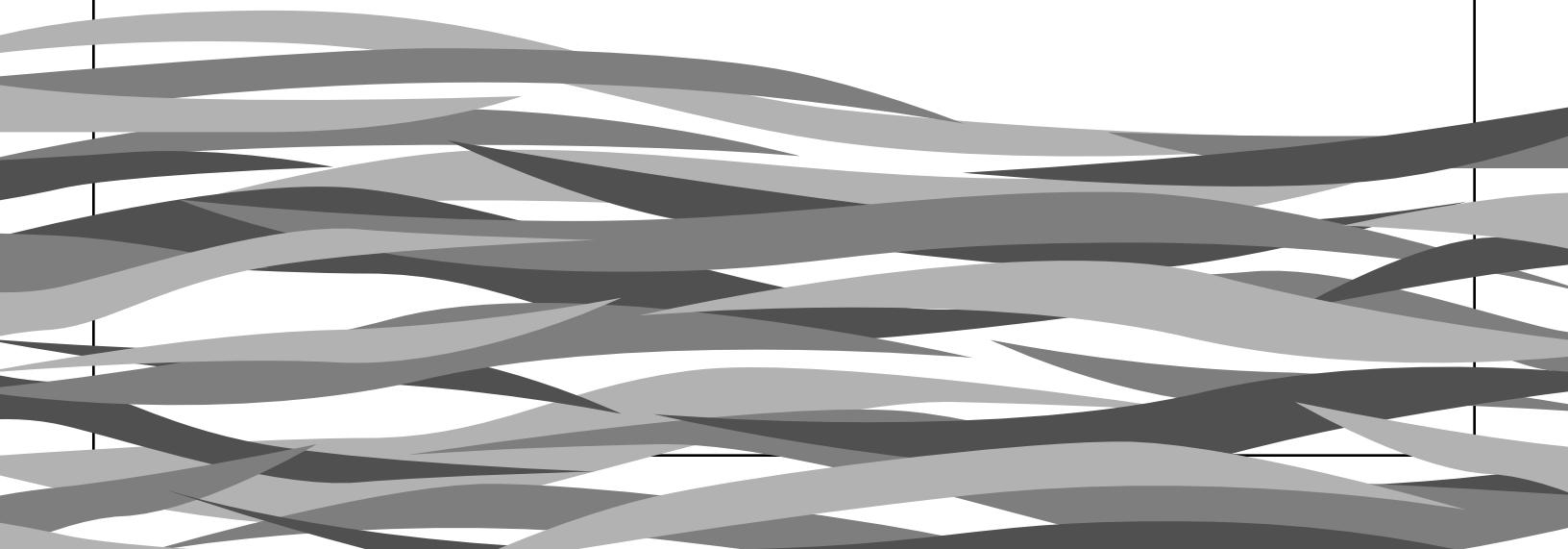
Inspirations and Insights from the 2nd International Meeting of Dam-Affected People and their Allies

RIVERS FOR LIFE

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**Rasi Salai, Thailand
November 28 - December 3, 2003**

**Published by International Rivers Network and
Environmental Leadership Program**



Acknowledgements

The Rivers for Life meeting and proceedings were made possible with the generous financial support of the following organizations: ActionAid, Environmental Leadership Program, Ford Foundation/ Institute for International Education, Novib, Open Society Institute, Oxfam America, Siemenpuu Foundation and Swedish Society for Nature Conservation. Thanks to Roberto Epple (Europe), Joji Carino (Indigenous Rights), Candy Gonzalez (Taking it to the Courts) and Liane Greeff (A New Process for Development) for their written contributions; Tara Wesely and IRN staff wrote the rest of the proceedings and provided editorial assistance.

We would like to thank Rivers for Life participants for their insights and inspiration, and give very special thanks to Aviva Imhof, SEARIN, Assembly of the Poor, the villagers of Rasi Salai and Pak Mun, and the many Thai communities and organizations who labored day and night to make the meeting an unforgettable experience.

Published by International Rivers Network and Environmental Leadership Program, Berkeley, CA USA 2004
1847 Berkeley Way, Berkeley CA 94703, USA
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Designed by Kim Todd, Tara Wesely. Cover by Design Action Collective
Printed by Inkworks Press



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OVERVIEW

The night before Rivers for Life began, an Indian organizer was asked how he would know if the meeting had been a success. He responded, "My hope is simply to put fire in the bellies, steel in the backbones and hope in the hearts of people fighting large dams around the world." For many, this hope was amply fulfilled.

On November 28, 2003, roughly 300 grassroots activists, people affected by large dams and representatives from NGOs gathered in a small village in Rasi Salai district in Northeast Thailand. They met for a five-day conference on large dams under the rallying cry of "Rivers for Life." The conference provided a forum for activists to exchange experiences, evaluate progress and devise new strategies to protect rivers, cultures and livelihoods from large dams.

As many dam builders have become painfully aware, dam fighters and critics have formed one of the most effective international civil society networks. The network's power has come from its base of strong grassroots movements of people directly affected by dams.

Participants from 62 countries listened to reports on the state of the dam industry and on regional efforts to challenge destructive river development (see Regional Summaries). They engaged in 30 workshops on topics such as alternatives, indigenous peoples and reparations (see Thematic Overviews).

Participants spontaneously organized two forums for affected people to share experiences and develop strategies. Field trips took visitors to areas affected by the Pak Mun and Rasi Salai Dams, which have been the focus of intense struggles for more than a decade. Cultural events, exhibits from around the world, informal chats and a wild party allowed people to relax and strengthen personal bonds.

High spirits...

The local hosts of "Rivers for Life" built a small village for the conference with meeting halls and dormitories made from bamboo, mud bricks, eucalyptus and other locally available materials. The entire village was constructed by local activists and villagers affected by the Rasi Salai Dam on a floodplain of the Mun River previously submerged by the reservoir. After a long fight by local communities, the gates of Rasi Salai Dam were opened in 2000 and remain open to this day.

"With unity and insistence, successes like in Rasi Salai can be achieved all over the world," said Phraiijit Silarak of Thailand's Assembly of the Poor as he welcomed participants to the



conference. The location of the meeting on formerly flooded land gave tremendous energy and inspiration to Rivers for Life participants. Many of the meeting structures will live on as part of a "School of the River" to educate people about local river-based livelihoods, thereby promoting northeastern Thai culture and the importance of healthy rivers.

The growth in numbers, expertise and skills of participants since the first meeting of dam-affected peoples in Curitiba, Brazil in 1997 was evidence of the increasing strength of the international movement. "People learn by organizing themselves. Step by step, we have taken this process of self-organization from the local to the national and international level," said José Josivaldo de Oliveira, a dam-affected farmer and leader of Brazil's Movement of Dam-Affected People, which organized the first meeting.

...and new challenges

Despite growing successes in the international movement, new challenges have arisen. The World Bank plans a return to dam-building through its new high-risk water sector strategy. Governments and financial institutions are shifting from developing individual projects to devising grand regional dam schemes such as the Mekong power grid, India's river-linking project, and the hydropower plan of the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). While the answer to climate change lies in reducing wasteful consumption in the North, the dam industry hopes global warming will provide a new justification for building dams.

Meanwhile, the vast majority of the rural poor remain excluded from water and power development strategies that increasingly focus on the needs of urban middle classes. "The global large dam era has been marked by a sharply growing and unacceptable inequality between South and North, and between rich and poor," states the meeting declaration (see Rasi Salai Declaration).

To counter these challenges, regional networks of dam-affected peoples and NGO activists have been formed in Africa, South Asia, East and Southeast Asia, Europe and Latin America. Many regional caucuses took place throughout Rivers for Life to strengthen these networks and develop collective strategies (see Regional Overviews).

Participants also had heightened awareness of the need to actively promote positive, community-based options for bringing water and power to the poor. In the Rasi Salai declaration, they committed to both "intensifying [their] struggles and campaigns against destructive dams and for reparations and river and watershed restoration," and to "working to implement worldwide sustainable and appropriate methods of water and energy management such as rainwater harvesting and community-managed renewable energy schemes."

While reading can never replace the experience of being there, we hope the following pages will help you feel the heat of the fire generated in our collective belly in Rasi Salai, Thailand.



THE RASI SALAI DECLARATION

*Second International Meeting of Dam-Affected People and their Allies
Rasi Salai, Thailand
November 28 - December 3, 2003*

THE INSPIRATION OF RASI SALAI

We, more than 300 people from 62 countries throughout the world, peoples affected by dams, fighters against destructive dams, and activists for sustainable and equitable water and energy management, have met in Rasi Salai. We have met on land that is being restored to life after being flooded by a dam. The gates of the dam are now open, the river flows, the crops have ripened, the fish are starting to return, community life is becoming vibrant once more. The dam-affected people of Thailand offer to us and to all peoples an example of determination and struggle to preserve lives, rivers, territories, culture, and identities.

Water for life, not for death! The call made at the First International Meeting of People Affected by Dams, held in Curitiba, Brazil, 1997, has been realised in Rasi Salai, Thailand.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Since Curitiba, we have made significant progress in our struggles. In the valleys, mobilisation and direct action of affected peoples has challenged the dam industry, governments, and financial institutions. The international movement against destructive dams has shown its ability to challenge the industry in the technical, political and moral spheres. We have stopped and decommissioned some dams. In some areas we have achieved recognition of the right to just reparation.

Affected and threatened peoples and allies have exercised decisive participation in decision-making processes, and in determining our own futures.

We are successfully implementing socially and environmentally just and effective community-based water management. We support the rapid advances in new renewable energy technologies and methods of demand-side management.

This extraordinary growth in our struggle is also made possible by ever stronger ties between indigenous peoples, grassroots movements and NGOs, and between Southern and Northern civil society. We have also joined in solidarity with the global struggle against neo-liberalism and for a just and equitable world.



The World Commission on Dams process is a key achievement of the last six years. The WCD report is strongly critical of large dams. While their report does not question the fundamental flaws of the neo-liberal development model, the WCD's recommendations constitute a framework for democratic, transparent and accountable decision-making processes.

OUR CHALLENGES

In the past, we were told that large dams bring development. Now the dam lobby claims that large dams are essential to "alleviate" poverty and close the gap between South and North. The last 50 years has shown this to be a fraud. The global large dam era has been marked by a sharply growing and unacceptable inequality between South and North, and between rich and poor.

We denounce the fallacy that hydropower and large dams are essential to slow global warming and adapt to its impacts.

Indigenous peoples have been disproportionately harmed by the targeting of their territories, lands, and resources. The use of violence, including by the military, to implement these projects violates their human rights and threatens their survival.

Privatization continues to spread, despite more than a decade of spectacular failures worldwide. We strongly oppose privatization which subordinates life-giving water and rivers to corporate interests and the logic of the market.

The proposed interlinking of rivers, inter-basin transfers and transnational infrastructure initiatives based on water megaprojects show the incapacity of dam promoters to learn from the impacts and failures of these grandiose schemes.

The transfer of energy-intensive industries such as aluminum from North to South, from the central to peripheral countries, imposes on the latter high economic costs, the growth of external debt, and the huge impacts of megadams.

(Continued)



OUR DEMANDS

Our shared experiences and our five days of rich exchanges have led us to agree:

We affirm the principles and demands of the Curitiba Declaration of 1997;

- We oppose the construction of all socially and environmentally destructive dams. We oppose the construction of any dam which has not been approved by the affected peoples after an informed and participatory decision-making process, and that does not meet community-prioritized needs;
- We demand full respect for indigenous peoples' knowledge, customary resource management and territories and their collective rights to self-determination and free, prior and informed consent in water and energy planning and decision-making;
- Gender equity must be upheld in all water and energy policies, programs and projects;
- There must be a halt to the use of all forms of violence, intimidation and military intervention against peoples affected and threatened by dams and organizations opposing dams;
- Reparations must be made through negotiations to the millions who have suffered because of dams, including through the provision of funds, adequate land, housing and social infrastructure. Dam funders and developers and those who profit from dams should bear the cost of reparations;
- Actions, including decommissioning, must be taken to restore ecosystems and livelihoods damaged by dams and to safeguard riverine ecological diversity;
- We reject privatization of the power and water sectors. We demand democratic, accountable and effective public control and appropriate regulation of electricity and water utilities;
- Governments, funding institutions, export credit agencies and corporations must comply with the recommendations of the WCD, in particular those on public acceptance and informed consent, reparations and existing dams, ecosystems and needs and options assessments. These recommendations should be incorporated into national policies and laws and regional initiatives;
- Governments must ensure investments in research and application of just and sustainable energy technologies and water management. Governments must implement policies which discourage waste and over consumption and guarantee equitable distribution of wealth;



- The construction of interbasin transfer schemes, river inter-linking and other water megaprojects must halt;
- The international carbon market must be eliminated;
- Waterways for navigation should follow the principle "adapt the boat to the river, not the river to the boat."

We commit ourselves to:

- Intensifying our struggles and campaigns against destructive dams and for reparations and river and watershed restoration;
- Working to implement worldwide sustainable and appropriate methods of water and energy management such as rainwater harvesting and community-managed renewable energy schemes;
- Continuous renewal and vitalization of diverse water knowledge and traditions through practical learning especially for our children and youth;
- Intensifying exchanges between activists and movements working on dams, water and energy, including through reciprocal visits of affected peoples from different countries;
- Strengthening our movements by joining with others struggling against the neo-liberal development model and for global social and ecological justice;
- Celebrate each year the International Day of Action Against Dams and for Rivers, Water and Life (March 14).

We call upon the dam-affected peoples' movements and their allies and other social movements and NGOs to coordinate common actions on March 14, 2004, which protest the World Bank, in solidarity with the protests against the World Bank and IMF on their 60th anniversary.

Our struggle against destructive dams and the current model of water and energy management is also a struggle against a social order dominated by the imperative to maximize profits, and is a struggle based on equity and solidarity.

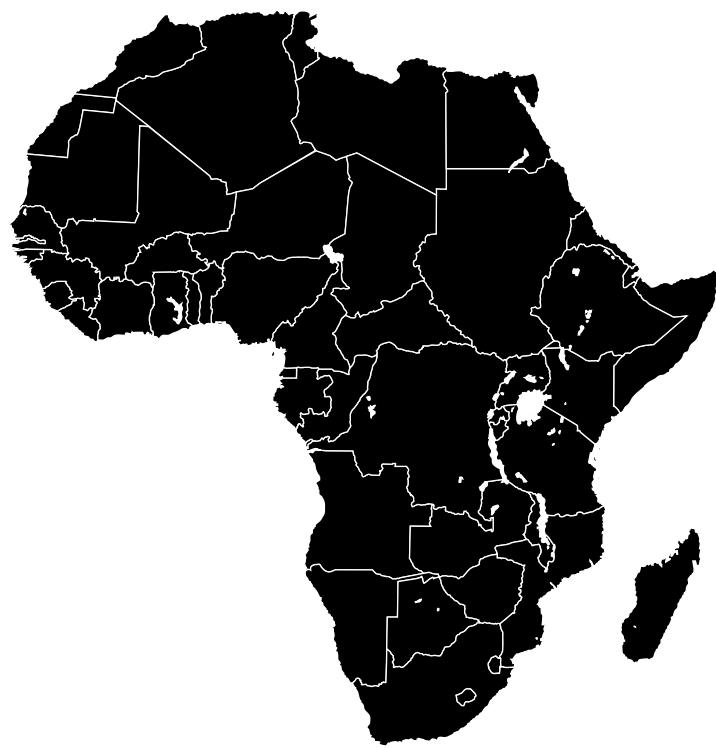
Another model of energy and water management is possible!

WATER FOR LIFE, NOT FOR DEATH!



africa

Villagers affected by Katse Dam, the first dam completed in the Lesotho Highlands Water Project.



facts and figures:

- 300 million Africans lack access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation; tens of millions lack access to electricity.
- Grid-based electricity is too expensive for the vast majority of Africans.
- 30 dams have been built on the Zambezi River, resulting in declines in shrimp catches, fisheries and mangrove forests.
- Dams on the Lower Senegal River unleashed the worst epidemic of schistosomiasis infection in Africa, and led to epidemics of Rift Valley Fever, diarrhea and malaria.
- The Akosombo Dam in Ghana flooded 4% of the nation's landmass and caused irreparable damage to the coastlines of Togo and Benin, where the river's estuary was starved of sediment.

FOCUS: AFRICA

Links between African dam activists grow stronger with each passing year. Most of these connections are informal, springing from campaigns around specific dams or river basins. However, formalized networking is beginning to take hold. Over the past three years, the Network for Advocacy on Water Issues in Southern Africa (NAWISA) has involved affected people and NGOs in World Commission on Dams follow-up processes in the region. At Rasi Salai, in a significant achievement, African delegates resolved to form the continent-wide African Rivers Network.

The movement has grown quickly in Southern Africa because the vast majority of the continent's large dams are located there. Dam-affected people's groups at Kariba Dam in Zimbabwe and Gariep and Vanderkloof Dams in South Africa are staging sophisticated campaigns demanding reparations – or retroactive compensation – for impacts experienced due to these dams. Transformation Resource Centre staff in Lesotho have become experts on compensation, resettlement, and development policy through their support for communities affected by the World Bank-funded Lesotho Highlands Water Project. And in Mozambique, Livaningo is pressing for a fair assessment of alternatives to the proposed Mphanda Nkuwa Dam.

Uganda also plays host to a vocal and broad-based movement, where the National Association of Professional Environmentalists and other local NGOs have waged a high-profile campaign against the Bujagali Dam, which is currently on hold. NGOs have also been instrumental in postponing the Epupa Dam in Namibia, Mashai Dam in Lesotho, and Sondu-Miriut Dam in Kenya.

Even so, dam-building in Africa is on the rise. While large dams have largely failed to extend electricity and water

services to the rural poor, this has not prevented institutions like the World Bank from encouraging the idea that the continent is "under-dammed" and needs more hydropower and storage reservoirs to provide energy and water to the millions of Africans that currently lack it.

The New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), an initiative to attract more infrastructure investment to the continent, poses one of the greatest threats to Africa's rivers and communities. NEPAD's support for large regional projects has fast-tracked a number of potentially destructive dams. At least 13 dams have been slated for promotion through NEPAD, including Mphanda Nkuwa.

Another major promoter of dams in the region is the South African electric utility, Eskom. Eskom has expressed interest in building several more dams, including Bujagali, Mphanda Nkuwa, and the enormous 44,000-MW Grand Inga project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which would consist of dozens of hydro plants.

The Chinese government has emerged as a funder of last resort and given new life to projects considered too destructive to build by international financial institutions. Currently, the Chinese government is involved in the Merowe Dam in Sudan, the Imboulou Dam in Congo and the Tekeze Dam in Ethiopia.

Solidarity amongst members of the fledgling African Rivers Network is growing, and they are committed to responding to these challenges. It is hoped the network will allow members to put forward a concerted message in important continent-wide meetings and to promote WCD recommendations throughout Africa. Network members will discuss next steps at a meeting planned for late 2004.



vukile manzana
south africa

The Gariep Dam was constructed in the Orange River Valley in the 1960s during South Africa's apartheid period. While displaced white farmers received compensation for their land, black farm workers were stripped of their lands and rights and did not receive any compensation. All were evicted from their homes and some ended up living along roadsides.

Vukile Manzana was one of the people who did not receive compensation. He is a member of Gavadwen, a group fighting for reparations for people affected by the Gariep and Vanderkloof Dams.

According to Vukile, "as people affected by large dams, we need to reclaim the platform from governments and international institutions and make sure that development meets our needs – not just theirs."



east and southeast asia

The campaign against Japan's Nagaraigawa Dam elevated public awareness about the impacts of dams.



facts and figures:

- ↳ China has approximately 22,000 dams, including four of the five largest dams in the region.
- ↳ Construction of dams in China on the Salween and Mekong Rivers poses serious threats to downstream communities in Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.
- ↳ In the 1980s, Philippine indigenous people succeeded in stopping the World Bank from funding a series of dams on the Chico River.
- ↳ Vietnam plans to build as many as 22 large hydro dams over the next 20 years.
- ↳ In Japan, more than 85 projects were cancelled over the past few years due to public opposition and the mounting debt of the water resources ministry.

FOCUS: EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

A growing network of dam-affected people, river activists and NGOs is challenging destructive river development projects in East and Southeast Asia. RWESA – Rivers Watch East and Southeast Asia – was formed in 2000 to stop destructive river development, promote alternatives and fight for reparations for people affected by existing dams.

RWESA has more than 80 members from 14 countries and is organizing coordinated campaigns to pressure governments and institutions to adopt the guidelines of the World Commission on Dams, stop Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) support for destructive dams and open more public debate in China on dams proposed on the Upper Salween River.

Dam-building is on the rise in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Mekong Basin where scores of dams have been proposed in the past decade. One of the greatest threats is the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Mekong power grid, which would be fuelled by 12 hydropower projects in China, Burma and Laos – countries where opposition is stifled by political repression. Critics are concerned that the hydro projects will forcibly displace tens of thousands, decimate fisheries and destroy the cultures and rights of ethnic minorities.

Transboundary impacts are of particular concern in the Mekong Basin. Dam-building on the Upper Mekong and Upper Salween in China threatens local communities and millions of people downstream who depend on the rivers for their livelihoods. Communities in Cambodia are affected by dams being built upstream in Vietnam (see profile).

In other parts of Southeast Asia, indigenous peoples are battling dams that threaten their culture, heritage and

ways of life. In the Philippines, the indigenous Ibaloi peoples are concerned the JBIC-funded San Roque Dam will bury their rice fields, vegetable gardens and houses under a mountain of sediment. In Malaysia, 10,000 indigenous people displaced by the Bakun Dam have suffered under appalling conditions at the Sungai Asap resettlement site since 1999. Several hundred villagers have refused to move from their ancestral lands and face government repression.

But there is reason for hope. In China, civil society is experiencing a marked increase in political freedom due to the emergence of Chinese leadership that claims to be committed to more openness. This new freedom is permitting increasing public criticism of China's dam-building plans, particularly on the Upper Salween and Upper Mekong.

In Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, public opposition to large dams has led to a decrease in dam-building and increasing public reverence for free-flowing rivers. The cancellation of over 85 proposed dams in the past few years gives reason to believe that the era of dam-building in Japan is passing.

In Thailand, the local movement to decommission dams has provided inspiration for dam-affected communities all over the world. Villagers demanded permanent decommissioning of the Pak Mun and Rasi Salai Dams and restoration of the Mun River. The gates of Rasi Salai have remained open since July 2000, and in 2002 the Thai government agreed to open the Pak Mun Dam gates for four months per year to allow fish migration. While the battle at Pak Mun is far from over, the villagers have achieved significant success thus far.



tong lean
cambodia

In Cambodia, 55,000 people living along the Se San River have suffered severe impacts to their livelihoods because of the Yali Falls Dam in Vietnam. Dam operation has caused deaths to villagers and livestock and the flooding of rice fields and vegetable gardens. Communities have received no compensation for their losses. Despite this, the government of Vietnam plans to build up to five more dams on the Se San River.

Affected villagers have formed the Se San Protection Network to press for compensation and changes to the dam's operating regime to minimize downstream damages. Says Tong Lean, an affected villager:

"The Se San Protection Network is important for helping the situation of people, animals and fish that have depended on the Se San River since the time of our ancestors."



europe

Protest to stop the controversial Spanish National Hydrological Plan.



facts and figures:

- ↳ Some 150 dams are either in the pipeline or under construction in Europe.
- ↳ The Kárahnjúkar Hydropower Project, proposed to fuel aluminum smelters in Iceland, would irreparably damage Europe's second largest remaining wilderness area.
- ↳ The damming of the Volga River caused a 98% decline in sturgeon catches in the Caspian Sea.
- ↳ Europe's largest dam was completed in 2002 on the Guadiana River in Portugal. The reservoir flooded much of Portugal's last habitat for endangered lynx cats.
- ↳ The former Soviet Union embarked on a massive dam-building spree during its 73 years of existence. By the 1970s, the country's reservoirs covered 120,000 square kilometers, 2.5 times the area submerged in the US.

FOCUS: EUROPE

Opposition to dams in Europe has a long tradition. Stories of boaters breaking up mill ponds date back to medieval times, and in the 17th century a group of Scottish fishermen attempted to destroy a newly completed weir. The modern movement has its roots in high profile anti-dam campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s in Scandinavia, Switzerland, Austria and France. While many countries in Europe are no longer building big dams, over the past decade Turkey, Spain, Greece, Croatia and Portugal have all revived plans for big dam projects, resulting in equally big resistance by communities and environmentalists.

Spanish activists have been leading the movement with their opposition to the Spanish National Hydrological Plan (NHP). In a major victory for these activists, Spain's new Prime Minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, withdrew government support for the largest part of the plan – a massive water transfer scheme – in April 2004. The \$25 billion NHP would have involved the construction of more than 120 new dams on the Ebro River and a massive water diversion scheme that would have transferred water to the so-called "dry" south for tourism and intensive agriculture purposes. The new government stated that it was considering cheaper alternatives to the plan, including desalination, reuse and increased water efficiency. The movement against the NHP had organized massive mobilizations in opposition to the plan, including a 300,000-person march through the streets of Barcelona.

NGOs waged a successful campaign to stop British government support for the Ilisu Dam in Turkey, which would have affected up to 78,000 Kurdish people and flooded unique archaeological sites. However, the Turkish government is still moving forward with its controversial Southeast Anatolia

Project (known by its Turkish acronym GAP), which consists of at least 22 large hydropower dams concentrated exclusively in the Kurdish regions of the southeast.

The European anti-dam movement consists of strong local networks concentrating on specific river basins as well as continent-wide organizations which campaign on a broader level. Organizations such as European Rivers Network, Friends of the Earth, and World Wide Fund for Nature have all led important campaigns against dam projects in Europe. In addition, NGOs are increasingly targeting European companies and funding agencies involved in dam projects outside of Europe.

Dam decommissioning and river restoration have become a major focus for river activists in Europe. Many dams in Europe are now reaching the end of their useful life and thousands of dams are due for license renewals in the coming years. This will present opportunities for removing dams and restoring rivers. Since 1990, four medium-sized dams have been decommissioned in France and the European Rivers Network is now campaigning for the removal of the 25-meter-high Poutès Dam on the largest tributary of the Loire River. In Eastern Europe, environmental groups in Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and the Czech Republic have been working to restore damaged rivers and ecosystems and to educate the public about the importance of healthy rivers.

Roberto Epple



jacek bozek
poland

Known as the "Queen of Polish rivers," the lower Vistula River is one of Europe's most exceptional areas of natural value. However, the Vistula has been severely polluted by discharges of sewage and industrial effluent and is threatened by plans to build eight dams.

Jacek Bozek of Klub Gaja has campaigned to protect the Vistula and stop the proposed dams since 1994. Klub Gaja's networking with NGOs, scientists, youth and local governments has helped 20 communities challenge the dams and initiate eco-friendly river developments such as nature reserves and alternative energy projects. Their work has helped postpone the construction of a new dam at Nieszawa.

"You don't have to be a specialist to promote these issues," said Bozek. "What you need is energy and commitment."



mesoamerica

More than 15,000 people in Guatemala and Mexico would be displaced by the Usumacinta Dam, including this grandmother and child.



facts and figures:

- The Plan Puebla Panama poses one of the greatest threats to natural resources and communities in Mesoamerica.
- The Inter-American Development Bank and transnational corporations are driving dam construction in the region. Hundreds of projects have been proposed.
- People in Mesoamerica are consolidating and strengthening their national anti-dam movements.
- In the worst human rights atrocity associated with dam evictions, nearly 400 Maya Achi Indians were murdered for their resistance to Guatemala's Chixoy Dam. People affected by Chixoy are still fighting for reparations.

FOCUS: MESOAMERICA

Mega-development projects, corrupt governments and military repression are nothing new for many of the peoples of Mesoamerica. However, a new push to industrialize the region threatens to further undermine the rights, cultures and natural resources of people in the region.

Governments have plans to build hundreds of hydropower dams in Mesoamerica, including nearly 100 projects in Costa Rica. The Plan Puebla Panama involves the creation of a regional economic corridor connected by high-speed train and shipping links, super-highways, a power grid and development zones at a cost of \$10-20 billion. The plan also calls for privatizing water, petroleum and forest resources. These mega-projects, promoted by the Inter-American Development Bank and transnational corporations, would have great impacts on indigenous communities.

In response to this threat, people are mobilizing at local, national and regional levels. NGOs and affected people in Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica have rallied together to form the Mesoamerican Forum Against Dam Construction. The movement was established in 2002 during the first meeting of the Forum in Guatemala. A second meeting in Honduras allowed people to solidify relationships and develop a collective workplan. The Mesoamerican Forum states that the proposed hydroelectric projects will not meet the energy needs of the communities; rather they will allow big business to take advantage of the region's labor and natural resources at the cost of local economies, ecosystems and indigenous peoples.

The Forum has given strength to local movements, helped groups working to fight binational projects and provided opportunities for regional exchange of information and materials. For ex-

ample, communities threatened by planned dams on the Usumacinta River in Mexico and Guatemala have formed a regional working group to develop common strategies to stop these projects. Organizations and communities in Honduras and El Salvador have discussed strategies to fight dams on the Lempa River, including El Tigre. In Costa Rica, the first national anti-dam forum was organized in 2003. The struggle against the Chalillo Dam continues in Belize, where local organizations with support from international organizations have tried to use the legal system to reject the government's approval of the dam.

Communities in Guatemala and Panama are also continuing in their fight for reparations. People affected by the Chixoy Dam are demanding just compensation and mitigation measures from the Guatemalan government, World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank and are in the midst of conducting needs assessments to determine the extent of suffering on communities. In Panama, people affected by the Bayano Dam have had their case accepted by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. Negotiations are still underway.

The Mesoamerican Forum reiterates their call for continued resistance against the construction of dams, and against all of the complementary neoliberal policies. They are planning coordinated campaigns against IDB-funded projects and the Plan Puebla Panama, and they are working to strengthen and consolidate national anti-dam movements, build capacity, increase public awareness and build connections to the international movement. The Forum will organize its third meeting in El Salvador in July 2004.



berta caceres flores
honduras

Berta Cáceres Flores, a Lenca indigenous woman and co-founder of the people's organization COPINH, is resisting proposed dams in the Lempa River basin. People in the basin have survived decades of war and displacement and have fought to regain control of their lands and resources. Their lives are now threatened by the proposed El Tigre and El Chaparral dams. Communities once again fear displacement and upheaval.

"I think that to permit construction of dams would mean losing part of the heart of the Lenca people, because it is with our blood that we have achieved the communal titling of our lands," said Flores. "It would also mean losing the ancestral community structure of the Lenca people – our history, and our collective memory. The biodiversity and liberty of the rivers would be lost."



north america

Removal of the Silk Mill Dam on the Yukon Brook in 2003
restored habitat for Atlantic Salmon and Brown Trout.



facts and figures:

- The era of dam-building in the USA is largely over.
- There are over 7,000 large dams and millions of small dams in the USA and Canada.
- Less than two percent of rivers in North America are in pristine condition. Only about 40 rivers over 200 km long remain free-flowing.
- More than 500 dams have been removed in the USA since 1900.
- At 82 meters in height, Glines Canyon is the tallest dam slated to be decommissioned in the world. However, this has been stalled due to political opposition.

FOCUS: NORTH AMERICA

Dam-building in North America reached its peak from the 1950s to 1970s. And, while the era of rapid dam construction appears to be behind us, dams are still being planned, fought and built. One of the regions with the most new dam proposals is eastern Canada, home of Hydro-Québec and Manitoba Hydro. In the USA, recent droughts and increasing development in arid regions in the south and west mean that dam proposals continue to surface as a way of meeting future water supply demands.

Proponents of new dams include government agencies, politicians looking to garner favor with constituents and other decision-makers and members of the public who have never been told they have other options. Policies on dam-building tend to be driven from the top down at both the federal and state level. However, the stage is ever-changing, and an agency or group who advocates for one project may push for removal of another.

Canada's Pimicikamak Cree nation is mired in a devastating cycle of joblessness and welfare. Portions of their land are flooded, with islands and shorelines constantly eroding, dirtying the water. The blame, according to Chief John Miswagon, rests largely with a series of dams built on the Nelson and Churchill Rivers in the 1970s to produce hydroelectric power largely destined for households in the US state of Minnesota.

In 2002, after a quarter-century war over compensation for ecological devastation from dam construction, the Pimicikamak negotiated a controversial \$36-million truce with Manitoba Hydro and Canadian national and provincial governments. The agreement presents an opportunity for the tribe to rehabilitate their lands and their lives, but also includes provisions for new

dam construction, viewed by many as an unacceptable compromise.

Though dams continue to be built in North America, the pace at which they are constructed has slowed dramatically, and is now surpassed by the rate of dams being decommissioned. A regional river restoration movement is seeking the removal of useless, dilapidated and environmentally devastating dams. This network, which was formed in the 1990s, provides technical assistance to local campaigns; educates dam owners, state and federal agencies, NGOs, and others; works to ensure dam removal is considered in the drafting of river management plans; and encourages the scientific study of dam removal.

More than 120 dams have been removed across the USA since 1999. Dozens of small dams have been removed in Canada, and river advocates have larger targets in their sights, including the 8-meter high, 125-meter long Theodosia Dam in British Columbia (BC), which the provincial government has agreed to remove. The Theodosia River once supported magnificent salmon runs, but in 1956 the dam began diverting up to 80% of the river's flow. As a result, salmon and steelhead populations were devastated. "The planned restoration of the Theodosia is one of the most exciting initiatives of its kind," said Mark Angelo of the Outdoor Recreation Council, "and we hope this initiative will be a cornerstone of the BC government's Living Rivers Strategy."



Dams have decimated wild salmon populations in the US.

"Our area represents the "last frontier" - great open wilderness spaces that we want to keep intact. We want to fight against this project that will destroy the river forever and totally ruin a unique biodiversity. This fight concerns every one of us...."

– Éric Gagnon, Rupert Reverence, Canada

"Let me leave you with a message of hope. Dams are not permanent structures. If a dam fight ends with a dam in place, let a new light shine on the possibility of decommissioning and removal."

– Serena McClain,
American Rivers, USA



south america

Indigenous Embera Katío children impacted by the Urrá Dam in Colombia. Credit: Jorge Cappato.



facts and figures:

- 75% of electricity in South America is generated by hydroelectric dams.
- Two-thirds of Brazil's future hydroelectric potential is in the Amazon region.
- More than one million Brazilians have been adversely affected by dam construction.
- 60% of the rural population in Latin America lack access to electricity.
- The region's largest dam plans are to power aluminum smelting expansions rather than meet the needs of local people.
- Corruption helped send the cost of the Itaipú Dam in Brazil/Paraguay skyrocketing to around \$20 billion, nearly six times more than original estimates.

FOCUS: SOUTH AMERICA

Groups in South America have waged inspiring struggles against dams for years and have started to increase their cooperation to confront upcoming dam threats. They formed the Latin America Network against Dams and for Rivers, Communities and Water in 1999. A second meeting was organized in Argentina in 2002, with representatives from seven South American and two Mesoamerican countries. The network is helping groups throughout the continent share experiences.

One of the strongest national anti-dam movements is in Brazil. The Brazilian Movement of Dam-Affected People (MAB) was formed in the 1980s following the eviction of thousands of families for the Itaipú Dam. Since then, MAB has grown to become a national movement, using tactics ranging from occupying dam sites to collaborating with experts on proposals for energy alternatives.

The movement has achieved several recent victories. Brazil's new government agreed to allocate money to address the impacts of existing dams on communities. The country's environmental protection agency rejected plans by a consortium of multinational aluminum companies to construct the Santa Isabel Dam on the Araguaia River. Activists in Chile's Patagonia region succeeded in pressuring the Canadian company Noranda to suspend plans to build the Alumysa aluminum foundry and hydroelectric dam complex. In Argentina, dam opponents worked to pass a law in Entre Ríos province that prohibits dam construction.

Indigenous people have played a major role in opposing dams in South America, including the campaign of Pehuenche people against the Pangue and Ralco Dams on the Biobío River in Chile and the mobilization of Kayapó

against dams on Brazil's Xingu River. In Colombia, the Embera Katío and fishing communities affected by the Urrá I Dam on the Sinú River are working to ensure that its impacts are resolved, and to stop the construction of Urrá II.

People affected by the Yacyretá Dam on the Paraná River in Argentina and Paraguay are continuing with their two-decade campaign for fair compensation and resettlement. In 2003, they filed a new complaint with the inspection panels of the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank. Argentine environmentalists are campaigning to freeze the reservoir at its current level to protect wetlands. A regional campaign to stop the governments' plans to build the Corpus Christi dam just upstream of Yacyretá is also gaining strength.

A major influence behind new dam proposals in South America is the aluminum industry. Dams have been proposed in Venezuela, Surinam, Guyana and Brazil to fuel the gluttonous electrical energy requirements of aluminum manufacturing facilities. The Brazilian government plans to construct dozens of new dams in the coming decade, including some of the world's largest in the Amazon. The South American Regional Infrastructure Initiative is also driving dam construction, including a two-dam and industrial waterway complex in the Amazon, and a dam on the Uruguay River. The Inter-American Development Bank and Andean Development Corporation would finance these projects.

Activists are responding to these plans on a regional basis, through coalitions such as Ríos Vivos, and strengthening of the Latin American Network against Dams and for Rivers, Communities and Water. A continent-wide meeting of anti-dam activists is planned for 2005.



**josé josivaldo de oliveira
brazil**

Promises made by the Brazilian government to Josivaldo and others affected by the Castanhão Dam are currently under water. Torrential summer rains are causing the reservoir to flood far more than project engineers predicted, including the resettlement community Josivaldo and the Brazilian Movement of Dam-Affected People fought to achieve. Hundreds of domestic livestock are dying, and their crops are being ruined.

"I would like to tell farmers, indigenous peoples, and traditional communities throughout the world that dams are a disaster that exceeds all proportions," said Josivaldo. "People should not allow themselves to be deceived when dams are presented as development projects. People should organize and do everything they possibly can to stop even a single dam, if they can."



south asia

Tribal musicians who are fighting against India's Sardar Sarovar Project.
Credit: Harikrishna and Deepa Jani



facts and figures:

- In 2003, the Indian government announced plans to increase the country's hydropower capacity by 50,000 megawatts over ten years at an estimated cost of \$50 billion.
- Large dams have displaced at least 42 million people in India.
- Huge areas of southwestern Bangladesh suffer water shortages and saline intrusion due to diversion of water at India's Farakka Barrage on the lower Ganga.
- Nepal hopes to attract foreign investment in two of the world's largest hydro projects, Pancheswar and Mahakali, to export power to India.
- Rainwater harvesting has recharged groundwater and supplied water for 700,000 people in India's Rajasthan state.

FOCUS: SOUTH ASIA

The movement against large dams in South Asia has inspired people around the world. Using marches, occupations, hunger strikes, lobbying and the courts, the Narmada Bachao Andolan has led a passionate non-violent struggle to stop dams in India's Narmada valley. Their efforts forced the Japanese government and World Bank to withdraw from the Sardar Sarovar Project and resulted in the formation of an inspection mechanism at the World Bank. In Nepal, the fight against the Arun III hydroelectric project exposed the Bank's faulty planning and appraisal process and resulted in the Bank refusing funding for the dam.

After a 10-year hiatus in World Bank funding for dam projects in India, the Bank has recently announced plans to reengage in dam-building in India. Plans will be unveiled in the coming year. In addition, more than a hundred dams are proposed in northeastern India, some of which may be funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The most ambitious, misguided and non-transparent project in the region is India's proposed river-linking project (RLP). The Indian government proposes linking over 37 rivers from the north to the south. The mega-plan involves the construction of 150-200 large dams at an estimated cost of \$122 billion, and would disrupt rivers flowing from China, Nepal and Bhutan through India to Bangladesh. The plan lacks a comprehensive policy addressing human rights, environmental consequences and other trans-boundary concerns. The proposed RLP will devastate the lives, cultures, ecology and socio-economic well-being of millions of people. Scores of dams are also planned in India's northeast region.

These proposals come as communities continue to suffer the devastating consequences of World Bank and

Asian Development Bank-funded dam projects. Villagers are fighting for just compensation for projects such as Sardar Sarovar in India, Kali Gandaki in Nepal, and Tarbela, Ghazi Barotha and Chashma in Pakistan. Chashma is currently undergoing an inspection panel investigation at the ADB.

Activists across the region are joining together to fight the RLP and other dam plans. Over 200 activists, academics and affected people met in Kathmandu, Nepal in December 2002 for a regional consultation on water resource development. The participants agreed to form the South Asian Solidarity for Rivers and Peoples (SARP), which will provide a platform for a democratic and consensus-based approach to water resource management in the region.

SARP plans to facilitate dialogue, organize exchange programs, conduct impact assessments, organize workshops and help resolve conflicts. It will also support a collective initiative to adopt a South Asian or international treaty on water and dams based on the WCD and international human rights law. A second meeting was organized in October 2003, where participants endorsed the Sagarmatha Declaration and Program of Action.

Looking to the future, the regional movement is planning to build strong linkages with international struggles to fight globalization, privatization and dam-building. Groups will consider increasing their use of national and international laws against governments and institutions such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, and will campaign for the recognition of rights to land and other natural resources for indigenous and tribal peoples, *Dalits*, and ethnic and national minorities.



ejaz ahmed khan
pakistan

When the Tarbela Dam was built 30 years ago, villagers living along the Indus River were promised compensation, education and employment, among other things. But according to Ejaz Ahmed Khan, these promises have not been fulfilled and outstanding problems with compensation and resettlement remain.

"We have lost our culture, our environment, our beautiful valley and even our identity," said Khan. People affected by Tarbela are frustrated that they made major sacrifices but have not been fairly compensated. They demand that a part of the earnings from the dam be earmarked for the development of affected communities.

"If the people of an area do not want a dam, there should not be a dam. We will shape a movement based on these ideas," said Khan.

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

WORKSHOPS ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND ON FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT

"Indigenous peoples' lands, forests, waters and rivers should not be treated as raw materials or commodities to be sold, bartered, bought or replaced."

– Aram Pamei, Citizens Concern for Dams and Development & Committee Against Tipaimukh Dam, India

Area to be impacted by the proposed Tipaimukh Dam. Credit: CORE



Large dams have disproportionately impacted indigenous peoples and future dam-building targets their lands disproportionately. They have suffered from loss of land and livelihoods, cultural losses, fragmentation of political institutions, breakdown of identity and human rights abuses. These problems, which were identified by the World Commission on Dams and confirmed by Rivers for Life participants, continue to be experienced by indigenous communities around the world. New dams are being built on indigenous lands in Botswana, Northeast India, Honduras, the Southern Philippines and the Mekong Basin. In many countries, increased militarization has accompanied dam-building.

Dam planning and projects are characterized by serious procedural failures that relate directly to indigenous communities. The distinctive characteristics of indigenous peoples are often ignored in project planning, as are customary rights. Environmental and social impact assessments are either absent or inadequate. Resettlement is frequently ill-planned. Compensation and reparations are tardy and inadequate. Participatory mechanisms are typically weak, with no negotiation or prior and informed consent. Within national societies, indigenous peoples are often subject to social exclusion and prevalent discrimination, exacerbating these failures.

The widespread adoption of neo-liberal economic policies continues to weaken national protection of indigenous people's rights and create legislative conflicts. Regional trade agreements and economic plans, like the Plan Puebla Panama, promote regional energy grids and further dam-building. Under these conditions, there is weakening accountability of dam-builders, operators, contractors, consultants and financiers to affected peoples. This tendency is likely to be intensified by moves to privatize the dam-building industry. These policies are fueling conflicts in many countries, and indigenous peoples have mobilized in popular uprisings against state policies, including land and water privatization.

Participants valued the exchange of information and experiences and underlined that linkages at national, regional, continental and global levels among indigenous peoples and communities must be strengthened and promoted. They resolved to intensify struggles against the neo-liberal policies of international financial institutions and to change their policies aimed at indigenous peoples. Together, we must demand that governments respect and comply with the self-determination and cultural rights of the indigenous peoples.

In development discourse, indigenous peoples are mainly portrayed as victims. However, their knowledge, technologies and worldviews are centrally important to solving the social and ecological crises we face. Indigenous peoples and social movements, far from being marginal, are central actors in solving contemporary problems.



Indigenous Ibaloi women protest against the San Roque Dam in the Philippines.

next steps:

Push for the adoption of the United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Advocate for free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples as the standard for development processes.

Strengthen knowledge of cultures and indigenous peoples as a form of resistance and major contribution to truly sustainable development.

Demand that governments respect and comply with the self-determination and cultural rights of indigenous peoples.

more information:

Cordillera People's Alliance, Philippines
cpa@skyinet.net

Centre for Organisation Research and Education, Northeast India
www.coremanipur.org

Tebtebba Foundation, Philippines
www.tebtebba.org

Dams, Indigenous People and vulnerable ethnic minorities
Paper prepared for the World Commission on Dams
www.dams.org/kbase/thematic/tr12.htm

Joji Carino

CASE STUDY: PHILIPPINE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS ACT

Joan Carling, from the Cordillera People's Alliance, presented the provisions of the Philippine law on Free, Prior Informed Consent (FPIC). These provisions stipulate that all members of the affected community consent to the decision. Consent is determined in accordance with customary laws and practices, free from external manipulation, interference or coercion. Full disclosure of the intent and scope of the activity is mandatory. Decisions must be made using processes and languages understandable to the community.

FPIC is required for the following activities: exploration, development and use of natural resources; research and bioprospecting; displacement and relocation; archaeological explorations; policies affecting indigenous peoples such as community-based forest management; and the entry of the military.

Communities are beginning to assert these rights, for example by petitioning project financiers not to continue projects without FPIC. In one case, a traditional chief successfully prevented the recruitment of local militia in his community. However, developers continue to misuse and abuse this legal requirement by employing tactics such as bribery of local chiefs and officials to obtain consent, and deceptive collection of signatures as evidence of consent. The military is also used to push through unwanted development projects.

Other participants stated that in situations where indigenous people's rights are not recognized, no requirements for FPIC are in place, and where no recourse mechanisms exist in the country, intensification of conflict occurs. In those countries, other mechanisms are needed.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE, LOCAL POWER

WORKSHOPS ON RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

"The villager is the researcher because they hold local knowledge no academic will have."

– Chainarong Srettachau,
SEARIN, Thailand

The situation is all too familiar: high-priced consultants are paid by dam builders to travel to rural villages to investigate possible dam sites, potential impacts or mitigation measures. After a few weeks "on the ground," their reports are filed, and are often turned into prescriptions for development that run counter to local people's perceptions of what is needed and what will work. The knowledge of these consultants, typically honed in university classes and offices far away, is drastically removed from the day-to-day lives of the villagers whose lives their work will impact. Villagers are reclaiming this monopoly on "local knowledge" by organizing community-based research projects to document local wisdom on natural resource management, empower communities and promote their rights over natural resources. At the Rivers for Life meeting, people participated in workshops to learn how communities have used local knowledge in their struggles against dams.

Participants agreed that community-based research is an important tool for lobbying, negotiating and strengthening the unity of affected people. Somparn Kuendee from Southeast Asia Rivers Network (SEARIN) discussed how communities carried out research to document the positive impacts of opening the gates of the Pak Mun Dam on river ecosystems and people's livelihoods (see case study). Arnold Gapuz from the Shalupirip Santahnay Indigenous People's Movement talked about how communities organized, conducted fact-finding missions and lobbied the government during their campaign to stop the San Roque Dam in the Philippines. In Colombia, Juan Jose Lopez Negrete from Asprocig (a group representing fisherfolk) shared how they used research to strengthen and empower communities. This included documenting personal stories and organizing frequent meetings to discuss dams and related issues. Aboubacry Mbodj from Co-ordination for Senegal River Basin told how local knowledge of aquatic vegetation was used to address the debilitating disease schistosomiasis, which increased after dams were built in the basin starting in the 1980s.

Some of the most important elements of community-based research are making the research process participatory, utilizing local knowledge and communicating the results of the research back to communities. It is also critical to use this information to lobby government officials and project proponents to recognize communities' dependence and rights over their natural resources.

Chainarong Srettachau from SEARIN told how the Thai villager research was used as a tool to empower communities and raise awareness about the role of local villagers in managing their natural resources. Activists used the villagers' research in their campaign to convince the government about the importance of the Mun River to villagers' livelihoods and cultures.

Woman harvests kai (seaweed) from rapids on the Mekong River. Credit: SEARIN





Fishing gear made obsolete by Pak Mun Dam was restored to use when the dam's gates were opened.

Credit: SEARIN

next steps:

Participants agreed that people should maintain ownership or rights over the research they conduct. Community members should be involved in every step of the research process, including data analysis. While others can help with proposing action plans and possible solutions, affected people must ultimately decide which approach is most applicable for them.

more information:

Southeast Asia Rivers Network, Thailand
www.searin.org

CODESEN, Senegal
(Co-ordination for Senegal River Basin)
ambodj1@yahoo.fr

Asprocig, Colombia
anaines@col3.telecom.com.co

CASE STUDY: THAI VILLAGER RESEARCH ON PAK MUN

In 2001, villagers succeeded in forcing the Thai government to temporarily decommission the Pak Mun Dam after a decade-long struggle. When this occurred, affected villagers seized the opportunity to conduct research on the impacts of opening the dam's gates on their lives and the Mun River ecosystem.

For 14 months, 200 villagers from 65 communities gathered and recorded data on fisheries, fishing gear, social aspects, herbs, vegetable gardens and ecosystems. SEARIN staff and volunteers assisted with recording data, writing the report and facilitating discussions and field surveys, however villagers were the primary researchers and were involved in every step of the research process.

For example, the identification of local fish species was done using local knowledge. Twenty local fishermen with extensive fishing experience were selected amongst the villagers to identify each fish species, assign its local name and discuss its relationship to the ecosystem. Each fisherman would then select 5-7 digital photos of the fish and explain characteristics about the fish to the larger group. The group would then discuss the information, and use the agreed identification as a basis for determining and counting each species they caught.

The opening of the dam's gates had tremendous positive impacts. Using this methodology, the villagers found that over 156 fish species returned to the Mun River. Fishing gear made obsolete by the dam was put back into use. Villagers living on the riverbanks of the Mun River and its tributaries resumed catching fish, cultivating vegetables in riverbank gardens and collecting plants and herbs on islands and rapids.

FINANCING RIVER DESTRUCTION

"Because of Yacyretá, our people are on the ground, in misery, desperate and dying of stress. We demand the reservoir be maintained at its current level so we will not be drowned in its waters."

– Jorge Urusoff,
affected by World Bank
and Inter-American
Development Bank-
financed Yacyretá Dam,
Paraguay

Upstream communities suffer from flooding by the Yacyretá reservoir even during mild rains.



WORKSHOPS ON INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND DAMS

International financial institutions (IFIs) have played a major role in the promotion of destructive dams around the globe. The World Bank, the world's leading financier of dams, has spent more than \$60 billion on large dams since its creation 60 years ago. Regional banks such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the African Development Bank and others are increasingly supporting regional infrastructure schemes that include numerous large dams.

The role of IFIs in financing destructive dams was a prominent topic at Rivers for Life, with workshops on the World Bank, ADB, Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and export credit agencies.

Securing financing is often the weakest link in a dam project. Social movements and NGOs have waged successful campaigns to stop projects and change the policies of financial institutions. The World Bank's resettlement policy, indigenous peoples policy and Inspection Panel were all created after high profile anti-dam campaigns. Campaigns highlighting the poor economics of large dams have also proved successful. For example, after NGOs presented critiques of the economics of Arun III (a World Bank dam in Nepal) and proposed alternatives to it, the World Bank abandoned the project. Due to strong opposition and public concerns, the World Bank largely withdrew from financing dams in the mid-1990s. Export credit agencies such as JBIC created and strengthened environmental policies and, in a few cases, created appeals mechanisms for affected people.

Despite such progress, problems remain and new challenges are arising. Financial institutions often do not comply with their environmental and social policies. The World Bank announced in early 2003 that it would re-engage in large dams in what it calls a "high risk/high reward" strategy. The ADB and other financial institutions have taken to promoting large regional power schemes: the ADB is promoting a Mekong power grid in mainland Southeast Asia that would rely on no less than 12 new dams.

Rivers for Life participants discussed strategies to counter the new dam-building initiatives of financial institutions. Suggested campaign strategies include community-based research on the impacts of proposed dam projects; shaming financial institutions for violating their internal policies; proposing innovative alternatives; challenging destructive projects through the World Bank Inspection Panel and other appeals mechanisms; and educating the media, parliamentarians, governments and the public about the impacts of dams. Participants committed to better supporting local communities with early, critical information, and to preparing coordinated regional campaigns to target proposed regional dam-building schemes.



Protest to stop World Bank financing of destructive projects.

next steps:

2004 marks the 60th anniversary of the World Bank. Many groups that were present in Rasi Salai agreed to make March 14, 2004, the international day of action on the World Bank and large dams.

CASE STUDY: NGOS DISCOURAGE INVESTMENT IN UGANDA'S BUJAGALI DAM

Ugandan organizations, such as the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE), have waged a strong campaign to stop the Bujagali Dam and to promote more appropriate energy options. US company AES proposed building the dam on the Nile and solicited funding from the World Bank Group and numerous export credit agencies. The project would destroy Bujagali Falls, one of Uganda's national treasures, and produce power that the majority of Ugandans cannot afford.

NGOs used a variety of tactics and strategies in their campaign. They petitioned the World Bank's independent investigative arms to examine the project's many problems. Subsequent inspections validated NGO concerns, and have been used to pressure the Bank and to warn other funders about outstanding problems. Activists also used the Ugandan legal system to obtain copies of the project contract between the Ugandan energy authority and AES. This was later scrutinized in an independent review, which revealed Uganda was being massively overcharged for this risky project. NGOs also organized a public workshop to examine the potential of geothermal energy to meet Uganda's energy needs.

In response to this campaign, AES, the project's Norwegian contractor and its Swedish partner all pulled out of the project in 2003. The Ugandan government is now working with the World Bank to find a new developer. This is likely to prove difficult, and the government is increasingly showing interest in moving on to other energy projects.

more information:

Gambling with Peoples Lives: What the World Bank's New "High-Risk/ High Reward" Strategy Means for the Poor and the Environment
www.irn.org/programs/finance

Bank Information Center,
USA
www.bicusa.org

NGO Forum on the ADB,
Philippines
www.forum-adb.org

ECA Watch
www.eca-watch.org

Friends of the Earth Japan
www.foejapan.org

REPAIRING THE DAMAGE

WORKSHOPS ON REPARATIONS

"We want our dignity to be restored. Chixoy was built with the blood of our people."

– Cristobal Osorio Sanchez, affected by the Chixoy Dam, Guatemala

Cristobal Osorio Sanchez



According to the World Commission on Dams, an estimated 40-80 million people around the world have been forced from their homes and lands because of large dams, and millions more have lost access to fisheries, forests and other essential resources. The majority of people affected by dams have been left worse off, their rights violated and their resources seized, without any basic source of livelihood.

Increasingly, non-governmental and affected people's organizations are calling for reparations for human rights violations committed against dam-affected communities. Reparation campaigns attempt to hold governments, corporations and project financers responsible for compensating communities for their losses and for restoring damaged ecosystems. Many groups believe that addressing the legacy of large dams will help ensure that the mistakes of the past will not be repeated.

The violations committed against dam-affected communities have been emphatically noted in declarations emerging from congresses of NGOs and affected people's organizations since 1994. Many groups have called for the establishment of a fund by the World Bank – the world's largest funder of dam projects – to pay reparations for damages suffered by people displaced by large dams who have never received adequate compensation or rehabilitation.

Rivers for Life included two workshops on reparations. The first one consisted of a general presentation on reparations by anthropologist Dr. Barbara Johnston, and case presentations on projects in Zimbabwe, Indonesia and Guatemala. The second was a strategy session led by attorney Dana Clark from the International Accountability Project.

Basic Concepts in Reparations

Calls for dam reparations include monetary as well as non-monetary measures, such as dam decommissioning, official recognition of injustices committed and restoration of ecosystems. The following describes the three legal categories used to structure reparations agreements:

Restitution includes actions to restore family life, return people to their homeland or to self-sustaining livelihoods, or return property that was taken. The ultimate example is the decommissioning of dams and subsequent social and environmental restoration.

Compensation is payment for any assessable damage from violations of human rights and humanitarian law. This includes physical and mental harm, lost opportunity (to education, income), harm to reputation or dignity, costs for legal and expert assistance and rehabilitation (medical, psychological, legal, social services).

Satisfaction includes actions that make amends or transform behavior to ensure that the violation never happens again. It can include such things as an apology and prosecution to stop continuing violations.



next steps:

Expose the truth by presenting evidence of injury, damage and loss.

Work to establish reparation funds, especially outside the government.

Urge IFIs and governments not to fund new dam projects until outstanding issues from past projects are addressed.

Hold governments and financial institutions accountable.

Create a working group that will brainstorm on this issue and produce working documents.

more information:

World Commission on Dams
Paper on Reparations and the Right to Remedy
www.dams.org/docs/kbase/contrib/soc221.pdf

Japanese Committee Supporting the Victims of Koto Panjang Dam
www2.ttcn.ne.jp/~kotopanjang/ENG00.htm

International Rivers Network
Chixoy Dam Campaign
www.irn.org/programs/chixoy

World Commission on Dams
Case Study on Kariba Dam
www.dams.org/kbase/studies/zz

CASE STUDIES: DEMANDS FOR REDRESS

More than 57,000 Tonga people in Zambia and Zimbabwe were displaced by the Kariba Dam, which was funded by the World Bank in the 1950s. The Tonga lost fertile alluvial lands, livestock and houses. People were never adequately compensated for their losses. In 2002, NGOs and community groups united to seek reparations. They are currently preparing a socioeconomic study detailing the project's impacts and the government and World Bank's remaining obligations. They intend to work through both political and legal channels.

The Koto Panjang Dam in Indonesia was built with loans from what is now the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). Some 20,000 people were displaced by the dam. Their traditional culture has been destroyed and their living standards have declined. In 2002, 8,396 residents filed a lawsuit in the Tokyo District Court demanding that the Japanese government restore the affected rivers and pay compensation of 5 million yen (about \$42,000) per person. If the lawsuit is successful, it will create a precedent for communities affected by Japanese-funded projects worldwide.

While Guatemala was in the midst of a civil war, the government, with funding from the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), built a large dam in Maya Achí territory. After some villagers refused to move for the dam, some 400 Maya Achí were massacred in 1982. The affected villagers are now demanding reparations for their social, physical and financial losses. Currently, the affected communities are documenting their development history and the project's impact on the environment, natural resources, poverty, and malnutrition. They aim to produce a community needs assessment that will encourage the World Bank and IDB to fund a negotiated plan for reparations. The case will also be presented to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission.

TAKING IT TO THE COURTS

"Law is an important tool. We must speak to the state as a whole and judiciary is part of the state. Law is not just to be used as a grievance redressal mechanism, but we have the right to knock at the judiciary's door to put things right."

– Medha Patkar,
Narmada Bachao
Andolan (Save the
Narmada Movement),
India

Protest against dams on India's Narmada River.



WORKSHOP ON LEGAL STRATEGIES

Going to court over a dam project can be complex, expensive and difficult, but there are sometimes good reasons to use a legal strategy against a bad dam project. Radha D'Souza, Professor of Law from New Zealand, explained that communities fighting dams can challenge projects utilizing international human rights and environmental laws; local and national laws covering human, land and water rights; business, trade and contractual agreements; and much more. Any legal strategy must involve broader questions such as: Do we want to be part of the present system or change the system and the laws? When the existing laws are being used to legitimize the current pattern of development, what do we do?

There have been some victories using legal strategies. In the UK, NGOs commissioned a legal opinion which stated that British funding for the proposed Ilisu Dam in Turkey could violate the UK's Human Rights Act. While a legal challenge was never made, this opinion was circulated publicly and the British government subsequently withdrew from the project. The legal opinion helped to mobilize government opposition to the project.

International treaty obligations can provide leverage in some cases. Opponents of the Bakun Dam argued in court that Malaysia had signed onto the Convention on Biological Diversity, binding the government to preserve the nation's flora and fauna. The High Court accepted this argument but it was overturned in the Court of Appeals, which argued that the environment was a state issue. Though this fight was lost, it is an example of how international agreements can be used.

Private contracts giving rights to corporations can often be difficult to challenge. In some instances, these agreements rise above the law, superceding national human rights standards and environmental protections. In Belize, the nation's privatized electric company was given all rights to the water in the river where they are trying to construct a dam. In India, a private firm bought a 22-km stretch of river and the government would have to pay compensation to the company if they broke the agreement.

Legal systems rarely recognize traditional rights of people, and we cannot always depend on the courts to give a fair decision. The participants agreed that the use of legal strategies can work at times but should be viewed as just one strategy which is most effective when linked with empowering communities. We must demand accountability using the law; it is an evolving process and it is important to lay the foundation so that others can build on it.



Villagers affected by Koto Panjang Dam in Indonesia are suing the Japanese government for just compensation.

CASE STUDIES: BELIZEAN AND INDONESIAN ACTIVISTS MOUNT INNOVATIVE LEGAL CHALLENGES

In Belize, activists have used legal strategies in their campaign to stop the construction of the Chalillo Dam on the Macal River. Although relatively small, the dam would have huge impacts on the river, communities and biodiversity. According to Candy Gonzalez of the Belize Environmental Law Protection Organisation, dam opponents filed a "judicial review" arguing that the government's approval of the project was invalid since it did not comply with regulations on environmental impact assessments. The case was lost in the lower courts and appealed to the Privy Council of the United Kingdom, Belize's highest court of appeal. However, the court ruled in January to let the dam go forward.

Activists are now considering challenging the constitutionality of a law passed by the government which gives Canadian company Fortis immunity from prosecution and waives enforcement of all environmental laws, rules or regulations. The community most affected by the dam's construction is also preparing to challenge the project based on international agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Declaration on Human Rights.

Communities affected by the Koto Panjang Dam in Indonesia filed an unprecedented lawsuit in Tokyo against the Japanese government for failing to uphold its loan conditions for the project. These loan conditions required the Indonesian government to relocate wildlife and ensure that displaced people's livelihoods were restored. At the time of printing, the court is deciding whether Indonesians have the right to bring an action against parties in Japan. The community is asking that the dam be decommissioned and that compensation of 5 million yen (\$42,000) per person be paid to the community for their suffering.

Candy Gonzalez

more information:

Chalillo Dam Campaign,
Belize
www.stopfortis.org

Ilisu Dam Campaign, UK
www.ilisu.org.uk

Sahabat Alam Malaysia
surforever.com/sam/intro.html

Center for International
Environmental Law, USA
www.ciel.org

"As civil society we need to think about our role as equal partners in decision-making. Because of a lack of democracy, we tend to see ourselves as outsiders. It is good when we can see ourselves as central to the decision – an empowering experience."

– Joji Carino, former WCD Commissioner, Philippines/UK

Sardar Sarovar Dam, India



A NEW PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT

WORKSHOPS ON THE WORLD COMMISSION ON DAMS AND NATIONAL WCD PROCESSES

The World Commission on Dams (WCD) was one of the key advances made in the international dam movement since 1997 when the First International Meeting of Dam-Affected People was held in Curitiba, Brazil. At that time, participants issued a call for an independent review of large dams.

Released in 2000, the WCD report elevated global awareness about the problems with dams and the need to take these more seriously. The WCD confirmed that dams do not perform as promised, typically cost much more than anticipated and have huge social and environmental costs. The impacts of dams are mostly impossible to mitigate, and alternatives to dams do exist. The WCD proposed a new framework for decision-making on water and energy projects based on recognizing the rights of, and assessing the risks to, all stakeholders. It issued a series of recommendations, including requiring that affected people give their acceptance before dams are built and that people's needs are thoroughly assessed and all options considered before proceeding with a project.

Representatives from the Commission, Secretariat and International Committee on Dams, Rivers and People – the NGO coalition that monitored the WCD – shared perspectives during a workshop evaluating the WCD at Rivers for Life. Participants agreed that NGO involvement in the WCD process was a catalyst for strengthening the anti-dam movement. The process was interactive, beneficial for Southern people and provided a forum for the voices of affected people to be heard. On the negative side, the WCD process was too reliant on English, there was a lack of African involvement, an elitist Secretariat dominated by Northern men and an acceptance of the existing development paradigm, which supports ecologically and socially unjust forms of development.

During the workshop on national processes, activists from South Africa, Southern Africa and Nepal provided information on how the WCD is being used in their countries and regions. A key issue of debate was the need to think strategically about the effectiveness of these national processes in furthering our own aims. It was emphasized that successful examples cannot be replicated. Instead, each country must determine its own process. Some delegates emphasized the need to ensure political support from higher levels of government and shared frustrations when governments refused to support multi-stakeholder processes, as in the case of Ghana. The Southern African Development Community process provided an example of how the WCD could be taken up at a regional level.



March in Curitiba, Brazil of dam-affected people and NGOs.

CASE STUDY: SOUTH AFRICAN MULTI-STAKEHOLDER INITIATIVE

The South African Multi-stakeholder Initiative on the WCD Report was initiated in early 2001. All parties – government, affected people, NGOs, industry, financial and research institutions and public utilities – were broadly supportive of the strategic priorities outlined in the WCD report, but believed that the guidelines needed to be contextualized in the South African situation.

A coordinating committee is going through each of the strategic priorities and assessing its relevance for South Africa, identifying what policy and legislation exists and making recommendations regarding gaps. There is also a South African WCD Forum, which meets on an annual basis for updates and to provide the mandate for the work of the coordinating committee.

While there have been positive steps in discussions on comprehensive options assessment and progress on reparations, there are a number of areas of concern. George Dor of the South Africa Water Caucus said, "Our concern is that the context in which dams are being looked at in South Africa is neo-liberal, with homegrown structural adjustment programs such as NEPAD favoring large dams." In addition, it is not clear to what extent the Department of Water Affairs will take the findings of the initiative process seriously. It is simultaneously participating in the initiative and planning to build 16 new large dams. Civil society needs to constantly redefine why it is involved in the process and to be ready to leave if the outcomes become weak.

Liane Greeff

next steps:

Support ongoing dissemination and translation of the WCD's findings and recommendations.

Organize WCD workshops, especially at the grassroots level.

Use the report for education in schools and of local officials.

Support national and regional WCD processes, and linking northern and southern national processes.

Increase alliances across sectors and with mass social movements.

Use March 14 – the International Day of Action – to highlight the WCD.

more information:

WCD Website
Contains final report and whole knowledge base
www.dams.org

Dams and Development Project
Follow-up body to the WCD
info@unep-dams.org,
www.unep-dams.org

A BETTER WAY

WORKSHOPS ON ALTERNATIVES TO DAMS

"Our struggle is not only against dams, our struggle is to meet the needs of the people. Our war is against the 10% who control resources and keep them away from the people."

– Rajendra Singh,
Tarun Bharat Sangh,
India

Rajendra Singh is an unrepentant, serial dam-builder. His organization, Tarun Bharat Sangh, has constructed thousands of small dams across arid Rajasthan, India, which have recharged groundwater and restored rivers, rejuvenating communities that depend on them in the process. The fact that Rajendra the Dam-Builder mingled easily with hundreds of other Rivers for Life participants who work to prevent, stop or tear dams down demonstrates the growing recognition among dam activists that their movement's success will be defined not only by what it preserves, but also by what it creates.

Worldwide, a growing number of renewable energy and small-scale water supply projects prove that less destructive alternatives to large dams are viable. Germany has installed enough wind turbines to power 14 million homes. Hundreds of thousands of Kenyan families use solar photovoltaics to light their homes, allowing children to study at night. Drip irrigation has spread rapidly across India and Nepal. Much remains to be achieved, but hopeful signs of progress abound.

More exciting is the fact that citizens' groups and non-governmental organizations are uniquely placed to hasten the adoption of sustainable water and energy planning. Their relationships with people at the grassroots give them important insights into the needs and desires of those who too often bear the brunt of impacts from large dams. And their access to government, media and funding agencies allows them to promote investment in less destructive, more effective alternatives.

Better still, many groups are already catalysts for the adoption of renewable alternatives. The challenge is finding the most effective way to do it. Some organizations, like Tarun Bharat Sangh, approach the problem head-on, building water harvesting structures in arid areas with volunteer labor and expertise. Others work at the policy level and form ties with renewable energy trade associations to maximize their influence with decision-makers. Still others raise money for independent options assessments that give renewable and decentralized alternatives a fair shot by carefully measuring the costs and benefits of each option.

It is clear, however, that additional capacity needs to be built in this area. "Proponents of renewable energy need to become a stronger voice in policy discussions," noted Suphakij Nuntavorakarn of Sustainable Energy Network for Thailand. "It is not enough to install lots of solar panels or wind turbines. NGOs should advocate that local communities take a more integral role in energy planning and management."

Rajendra Singh's group has helped build rainwater harvesting structures to improve access to drinking and irrigation water.





Dam decommissioning would solve erosion problems on Poland's Vistula River.
Credit: Agnieszka and Wlodek Bilinscy

CASE STUDIES: MAKING IT HAPPEN

The Uganda-based National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) has struggled for years against the proposed Bujagali Dam on the Nile River, a project that would not only destroy Bujagali Falls but also produce expensive power that most Ugandans cannot afford. Even so, Uganda does need power. So, NAPE began research on possible alternatives.

They contacted a geothermal industry trade group, and learned that Uganda's geothermal potential is more than double the amount of power that Bujagali would produce. Moreover, it could be developed in stages and closer to the areas where electricity is needed most.

NAPE also organized meetings with members of parliament and other government officials to discuss the feasibility of geothermal energy. Eventually, they organized an international conference on geothermal energy which attracted participants from government, international donors, NGOs and trade groups. These efforts have significantly raised public awareness of alternatives to Bujagali and helped stimulate the Ugandan government to consider geothermal options more seriously.

In Poland, NGOs concerned about the proposed Nieszawa Dam on the Vistula River sponsored studies which revealed that the best and least expensive solution to downstream erosion problems was decommissioning an upstream dam, not building a new one. "A new dam will not solve existing problems but will only put off the solution, whilst creating problems of its own," said Jacek Bozek of Poland-based Klub Gaja. The NGOs' research helped persuade the Polish government to delay investment in the Nieszawa Dam pending further investigations.

more information:

World Energy Efficiency Association
Compilation of useful websites
www.weea.org

Intermediate Technology Development Group
Resources on sustainable water and energy
www.itdg.org

International Development Enterprises
Develops low-cost drip irrigation systems, treadle pumps and water storage systems
www.ide-international.org

Rainwater harvesting
www.gdrc.org/uem/water/rainwater/rain-web.html

Water conservation
www.waterconserve.info

Articles on renewable energy
www.nrglink.com/energy.sourceguides.com/news.shtml

Tarun Bharat Sangh, India
www.tarunbharatsangh.com

Klub Gaja, Poland
www.klubgaja.pl

National Association of Professional Environmentalists, Uganda
napesbc@afsat.com

Sustainable Energy Network for Thailand
www.serid.ait.ac.th/reric/reric11.htm

BRINGING RIVERS BACK TO LIFE

WORKSHOPS ON DAM DECOMMISSIONING AND RIVER RESTORATION

"A dam is but a brief episode in the life of a river."

– Roberto Epple,
European Rivers Network,
France

The Orienta Dam on the Iron River in the US was removed in 2001.

To a community that has fought the construction of a dam and lost, the notion of the eventual removal of that dam is hope. To a river choked by a concrete or earthen structure that traps sediment and blocks fish passage, dam removal is life. Participants at Rivers for Life recognized that dam removal is a logical step in the fight to protect and restore their rivers. They learned that the largest obstacles to achieving this goal are often ideological and conceptual rather than physical or economic.

To the general public, dam removal is a mystery. One of the great challenges to the movement is the commonly held misconception that dams are forever. To dispel this myth, it is crucial to show people a vision of rivers without dams. The resounding message is that dam decommissioning is not about destroying development, but restoring ecosystems and everything that healthy rivers bring to communities. It is also crucial to look at management of entire river basins when developing plans for restoration.

For community members who consider a dam and reservoir as an integral part of their local history and culture, dam removal is seen as an attack on their way of life. Roberto Epple of European Rivers Network explained his strategy while fighting to decommission a dozen dams in France's Loire Basin. He simply found members of the community who remembered fishing in the river before the dam was built, and invited them to meet and drink wine with the opponents of removal. Opponents soon saw that there was life before the dam, and there will be life again when it is gone.

Decommissioning is a tremendous threat to dam-builders and promoters. One way to reduce the perceived danger is to begin by removing smaller, older structures that provide minimal, if any, benefits. In the US, according to Serena McClain of American Rivers, this strategy has resulted in over 500 dam removals, 120 of them in the last four years. Of course, once restoration advocates have conquered the ideological barriers to dam removal, they face legal, ecological and economic hurdles as well.

The participants in the dam decommissioning workshops at Rivers for Life left Rasi Salai with a clear and overriding goal – to make others understand the power and value of healthy rivers and watersheds, and that diminishing those qualities with a dam is often a temporary, correctable mistake.

next steps:



Opening of the Rasi Salai dam gates in 2000 is restoring livelihoods and the Mun River ecosystem.

CASE STUDY: RESTORING THAILAND'S MUN RIVER

Chainarong Srettachau inspired Rivers for Life meeting participants with the incredible story of how the Rasi Salai Dam was decommissioned. This struggle was all the more significant since the meeting was held on land once flooded by the Rasi Salai reservoir.

The project was the first of 13 dams planned to irrigate land in northeast Thailand as part of a water diversion project. Completed in 1994, the project was supposed to irrigate about 5,500 hectares. However, the reservoir was located on top of a huge salt dome, making its water too salty for irrigation. The defunct project cost more than six times original estimates.

While project benefits never materialized, Rasi Salai had huge impacts on local villagers and the environment. More than 15,000 people lost farmland to the reservoir, and most did not receive compensation. The dam blocked fish migration and destroyed a freshwater swamp forest that provided food and traditional medicine for the villagers, fish habitat, natural flood management and water treatment.

In 1999, affected people began calling for the permanent decommissioning of Rasi Salai and set up a protest village in the reservoir area. They risked drowning in their quest for permanent opening of the dam gates. In a victory for villagers, in July 2000, the Thai government agreed to open all seven sluice gates of Rasi Salai for at least two years for environmental recovery and to conduct studies to determine who was affected by the project. The gates remain open to this day.

Create a common document on global decommissioning with statistics and stories, translated into many languages.

Share information, particularly about successes in restoration.

Promote less-damaging alternatives to dams.

Emphasize positive messages and visions of healthy river basins.

Ensure that decommissioning costs are included in proposals for new dams.

Organize a global decommissioning and restoration conference.

more information:

Southeast Asia Rivers Network, Thailand
www.searin.org

European Rivers Network, France
www.rivernet.org

American Rivers, USA
www.amrivers.org

International Rivers Network, River Revival, USA
www.irn.org/revival/decom

GLOBAL WATER AGENDA

WORKSHOPS ON THE WORLD WATER MAFIA AND WATER SECTOR REFORM

"The strongest actor in water management is the people. We have a right to water."

– Liane Greeff,
Environmental
Monitoring Group,
South Africa

One of the most critical challenges facing society today is ensuring that all people have access to clean water. The solution advocated by the World Bank and other powerful players in the water sector is to encourage private companies to build dams and manage water supplies.

The “world water mafia” has become one of the biggest global forces advocating water privatization and dam construction, according to Patrick McCully of IRN. The “mafia” consists of organizations like the World Water Council and Global Water Partnership, which include representatives from private companies, aid agencies and national bureaucracies. This “mafia” states that annual investments of \$180 billion in water infrastructure, including large dams, will be needed to meet the water demands of developing countries, and that public subsidies will be required to attract private investors into this arena.

These strategies, however, will not help meet the needs of the over 1.1 billion people who now lack access to adequate water supplies. Over 80% of the waterless poor live in rural areas, and multinational corporations will not invest in unprofitable rural water systems.

Shripath Dharmadhikary of Manthan Adhyayan Kendra described how smaller “water mafias” are avidly promoting water privatization and large dams at the national and regional levels. In India, they have tried to set up “fake” NGOs or so-called “people’s organizations” which support the construction of large dams.

During the water sector reform workshop, activists told how privatization has destroyed existing water management systems and caused prices to escalate. Water in South Africa is now more expensive than during apartheid. In Indonesia, water is now twice as expensive as fuel. Social safety nets have also been slashed. Many of the poor and elderly have had their water supply cut off when they could not pay their bills. In South Africa, some people were evicted after refusing to pay for water.

In response, communities are rejecting privatization. Groups like the Environmental Monitoring Group in South Africa and Taller Ecologista in Argentina are building alliances, educating the public and organizing protests. In Indonesia, NGOs are rejecting the government’s revision of the national water policy which will primarily benefit private companies.

Contrary to what the “world water mafia” says, the UN-affiliated Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council estimates that we can meet the world’s water and sanitation needs at a cost of \$9 billion per year. This includes low cost technologies such as rainwater harvesting, demand-side management, crop shifting and better groundwater management.





Citizens protest against water privatization in Argentina's Santa Fe province. Credit: Taller Ecologista

CASE STUDY: FIGHTING PRIVATIZATION IN ARGENTINA

Elba Stancich from Taller Ecologista shared experiences with water privatization in Argentina. In the 1990s, following plans laid out for it by the World Bank, the Argentinian government privatized many sectors, including the water sector. The government tried to amend the constitution to allow for privatization but this was strongly resisted in several provinces.

In Santa Fe, the water utility Aguas Provinciales de Santa Fe, a subsidiary of French company Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux, purchased water rights and signed a contract for water management in 15 communities. The contract was highly favorable to Suez, which was not required to pay taxes. After Suez took over, water quality declined and rates were raised. A 40% subsidy for the elderly was eliminated. Expansion costs were borne by new users. If people failed to pay their bills, they were cut off. This included elderly people, the unemployed and schools.

Eight years ago, strong local resistance arose. Groups including Taller Ecologista organized a referendum in September 2002 on privatization. 250,000 people voted in favor of rescinding Suez's contract, defending water as a basic right and demanding a participatory water service. These efforts led to the formation of a provincial assembly for the right to water in Santa Fe. Despite local resistance, the government has not rescinded its contract with Suez. Nevertheless, civil society is continuing to pressure the company and the government to cancel the water supply contract.

next steps:

Spread and translate information about the world water mafia.

Link up with groups working in other sectors which are being privatized (agriculture, power, etc.).

Continue to push for more transparency.

Develop people-centered models of water sector reform.

As the world water mafia often lobbies the United Nations to adopt their strategies through resolutions and other mechanisms, we should monitor UN processes more.

more information:

Taller Ecologista, Argentina
www.taller.org.ar

Environmental Monitoring Group, South Africa
www.emg.org.za

South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People, India
www.narmada.org/sandrp

International Rivers Network, USA
www.irn.org/riversforlife/presentations.html

WARMING THE EARTH

WORKSHOPS ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND CARBON TRADING

Climate change has significant implications for rivers and the communities and species who depend upon them, as well as the ways in which we manage them. Workshops at Rivers for Life focused on the impacts of climate change on rivers, and how carbon trading schemes which are supposed to help reduce global warming may promote dam-building and other threats to communities.

Patricia Schelle of WWF gave an outline of predictions of climate change and how it may impact riverine ecology. Global warming due to excessive greenhouse gas emissions has already warmed our planet by more than 0.6°C. Global temperatures are predicted to rise a further 1.4 to 5.8°C by 2100. Many ecosystems are unlikely to be able to adapt to any rise in global temperature more than 2°C above the pre-industrial level. Rising global temperatures will have many negative impacts on freshwater ecosystems, including the elimination of riverine habitats due to droughts.

Patrick McCully of IRN told how extreme droughts and floods will become more frequent and severe. This will have implications for dam safety and performance. Many poor countries are heavily dependent on hydropower, and their economies are seriously at risk from power shortages during droughts. Northern countries that are mainly responsible for global warming must help pay for measures to help Southern countries adapt to climate change.

In the workshop on carbon trading, Roy Laifungbam of the Centre for Organisation Research and Education (CORE) argued that “carbon fraud” is being perpetrated through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) set up under the Kyoto Protocol. The CDM allows Northern countries to buy the right to continue high emissions from fossil fuel plants by investing in plantations and supposedly clean energy projects in the South. Indigenous people were not consulted in the design of the CDM and are not being consulted in the development of CDM projects.

McCully explained that the CDM trades in a fictitious commodity – “avoided carbon.” Calculating “avoided carbon” depends upon non-verifiable assumptions about what emissions would occur if the CDM project did not take place. The process is prone to manipulation by project developers. Eight large hydropower projects (>10MW) are applying for CDM carbon credits. Most of these projects would clearly be built without the CDM (several are already complete) and so do not avoid any carbon emissions. Although the CDM is already established and has an Executive Board under the United Nations, it cannot officially assign carbon credits until the Kyoto Protocol enters into force.

“The CDM is a carbon fraud perpetuated on indigenous peoples and Southern countries.”

– Roy Laifungbam,
CORE, Northeast India

The Petit Saut reservoir floods a French Guyana forest, emitting greenhouse gases.
Credit: Jacky Brunetaud





Extreme droughts and floods are expected to become more frequent due to climate change.

CASE STUDY: MONITORING THE CARBON MARKET

CORE and UK-based NGO SinksWatch organized a workshop for activists in Northeast India to explain what the CDM is, how it works and how it may affect community struggles in the region. Activists concluded the workshop with a declaration rejecting the CDM.

IRN has worked with CDMWatch and other groups to review technical documents for specific projects proposed for CDM credits and has sent comments to the CDM Executive Board and the purchasers of carbon credits (including the World Bank's Prototype Carbon Fund and the Dutch government). These comments have helped ensure that several large hydropower projects have been rejected by the CDM.

These groups have also raised concerns to European and Japanese governments and other players in the carbon market about the CDM's rules and the first set of projects proposed for credits. This has helped to tighten the rules and to make relevant players cautious about backing CDM credits for large hydro schemes. The key targets for lobbying are European governments (who are sensitive to public pressure for meaningful action on global warming) and carbon consultants and purchasers (who want to reduce the risks that projects will be rejected for credits or otherwise fail).

next steps:

Pressure Northern countries to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The USA should ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

Work toward long-term, global agreements based on the principle that everyone has equal rights to the atmosphere's ability to absorb greenhouse gases.

Ensure that money for climate adaptation goes towards effective and just measures like flood management, increased end-use efficiency and improved groundwater recharge and management.

Push the CDM to exclude large hydro projects, and demand that all projects comply with WCD recommendations.

more information:

International Rivers Network
www.irn.org/programs/greenhouse

WWF International
www.panda.org/climate

Centre for Organisation Research and Education, India
www.coremanipur.org

CDMWatch, Indonesia
www.cdmwatch.org

SinksWatch, UK
www.sinkswatch.org

EcoEquity, USA
www.ecoequity.org

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A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sky is filled with orange, yellow, and pink clouds. The water reflects these colors. Two small boats are visible on the water, one on the left and one on the right. The 'RIVERS FOR LIFE' logo is overlaid on the image, positioned in the upper right quadrant.

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