

# Country Reports

Participants were asked to answer the following questions:

- What are the key threats to rivers in your region?
- Who are the major agencies involved in this?
- What are the strengths of your movement to stop these threats?
- What are your weaknesses/major obstacles?

## Thailand

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*Threats:* industrial waste water pollution, environmental destruction; deforestation; dams and water diversion projects.

*Actors:* government, politicians, companies, bureaucrats, multilateral development banks, bilateral agencies (WB, ADB, JICA, OECF).

*Strengths:* affected peoples organized well, struggle for 10 years, strong coalitions, good planning/cooperation, sharing of information among villagers across the country, non-violence as a strategy, Assembly of the Poor.

*Weaknesses:* no power over natural resource management, weak bargaining power of people, lack of transparency of projects, no prior notice/information, intimidation by local authorities, use of media by state, Thai media lack independence, few activists working on these issues, intimidation and divide and rule tactics by government.

## Cambodia

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*Threats:* Yali Fall dam in Vietnam which is threatening downstream communities in Cambodia; downstream impacts from other dams upstream in Mekong basin; privatization policy of the government whereby companies are given concessions to fisheries or forests that rural people depend upon for survival.

*Strengths:* democracy, NGO movement and community development organizations, strong network, good advocacy; donor support, participation of local people.

*Weaknesses:* weak democracy; law enforcement weak; unclear policies on development; corruption; high rate of illiteracy; low awareness among population; lack of rule of law.

## Laos

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*Threats:* Transboundary conflict/Laos as a downstream and upstream actor; completed dams have already had an impact on local communities; anticipatory logging and resettlement that occurs before a decision to build a dam has actually been made.

*Agencies:* ADB, WB, Mekong River Commission, bilateral agencies from Scandinavia, private sector

*Strengths:* international NGO movement, information is available.

*Weaknesses:* few studies of downstream impacts, civil society weak.

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**Vietnam**

*Threats:* droughts and floods, deforestation, industrial waste, dams.

*Agencies:* professional poachers, paper mills, factories(MSG), Vietnamese government, Taiwanese companies, multinational companies, Norway, Sweden, ADB, WB, MRC.

*Strengths:* forest policy, international NGOs, universities and research institutions.

*Weaknesses:* People have little power to fight; research is done on impacts of dams, but the information doesn't get to the government and change policy, lack of proposed alternatives.

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**Burma**

*Threats:* Political situation – repressive government, military wants to get rid of minorities; ASEAN policy of constructive engagement; China and Japan are investing in the country and are interested in investing in dams in the Salween, particularly Ta Sang dam; Burma and Thailand agreement to build dams on the Salween; deforestation

*Agencies:* military government, GMS Power – Thai company, Japanese surveyors.

*Strengths:* Salween Watch, composed of NGOs and villagers, is fostering an unprecedented indigenous environmental movement; international Burmese activists and Burmese advocacy groups want to get involved in the Salween struggle; international environmental movement/solidarity.

*Weaknesses:* lack of transparency (don't know where the funding will come from for Ta Sang); lack of freedom-villagers have no chance to speak up against the dam; forced labor will be used for building the dam; forced relocations have already begun.

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**China**

*Threats:* Three Gorges Dam and dams on other rivers, soil erosion, industrial pollution, drought, deforestation, landslides, overfishing (decreasing aquatic diversity) and fish farming, plan to build 8 dams on upper Mekong, "Go West" (Great development in West China) policy, "Moving water from south to north" policy, "Transmitting electricity from West to East" policy; corruption.

*Agencies:* Ministry of Water Resources, state energy company; State and Provincial Environmental Protection Bureau, Forestry and Agriculture Bureau, Resettlement Bureau; factories; dam builders and consultants; mainland and overseas investors, local government; World Bank; ADB; US private investment banks.

*Strengths:* laws to protect environment, including tree planting, restoration of the forests and lakes (questionable enforcement); education, poverty reduction strategies.

*Weaknesses:* market economy; population pressure; unsustainable use of natural resources; lack of transparency, reliable agencies for complaints and lack of independent research; confusing water resources policies among local governments; repressive politics in all levels of administration - lack of organization in affected communities; state-dominated propaganda.

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**Taiwan (Meinung Dam)**

*Threats:* Forest degradation, industrial pollution, agricultural development, dams.

*Agencies:* government, anti-dam movement, capitalists, international supporters.

*Strengths:* awareness among people to be affected; education; moratorium on building dams for the next 4 years, alternatives have been raised to the government including underground water and elimination of development of industries.

*Weaknesses:* Weak alternatives/lack of research

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**Korea**

*Threats:* dam construction, industrialization, urbanization of 1970s causing river pollution

*Agencies:* The Government - Ministry of Construction and Transportation and other ministries; dam building construction companies.

*Strengths:* ability to mobilize various resources including media, local affected people, environmental groups; active democratic/environmental movements, successful campaign in stopping Tong River dam.

*Weaknesses:* government policy; insufficient cooperation with the international anti-dam movement

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**Japan**

*Threats:* Government overestimates future water usage; planning without input from local people; EIAs – the same company that builds the dam does the EIA so it is not critical; Japanese dam companies are starting to look overseas for business.

*Actors:* Ministry of Construction, Dam Council, watershed committee, Committee for Agenda 21, anti-dam movement.

*Strengths:* National Dam Opposition Network, Japan; Referendum for Yoshino River – a referendum was held amongst the local community and 90% voted against the dam; non violent direct action gets media attention; international pressure influences the Japanese government.

*Weaknesses:* The majority of Japanese citizens do not know why dams are not necessary. The media does not report on dam issues enough.

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**Malaysia**

*Threats:* Dams, plantations, logging, sewage, aqua-culture, and industrial pollution.

*Agencies:* Department of the Environment, private companies, foreign importers of palm oil and lumber.

*Strengths:* continuous support from communities, NGOs, academics, professionals.

*Weaknesses:* communities can be bribed or stirred up by government; internal security - government officials can jail anyone who speaks up; no transparency; funding is difficult; media blackout; middle class apathy/lack of public awareness; lack of legal expertise and support.

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**Indonesia**

*Threats:* dams, mining, logging companies, road construction, irrigation, industry, plantations.

*Agencies:* WB, ADB, multinational companies, government, military.

*Strengths:* community struggle; information provided by NGOs; organized communities; good preparation for future projects; multidisciplinary activists; strong network – local, regional, national, international.

*Weaknesses:* NGOs' difficulty getting information to the people; no continuing activities; financial support.

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**Philippines**

*Threats:* energy projects, mining, logging; government attitude towards natural resources as a source of profit; privatization; lack of social responsibility from private investors; focus on development of power generation; submarine mining.

*Agencies:* state agencies; multinational corporations; Japanese ODA, ADB, WB.

*Strengths:* there are some laws on environment, indigenous peoples etc that protect the rights of communities; community organizers and NGOs are strong; media, direct action,

lobbying strong; possible to dialogue with different agencies; strong international solidarity.

*Weaknesses:* politicking; lack of information, laws and policies; lack of transparency; lack of organization in affected communities; government corruption.

## **Summary of Country Reports**

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*Threats:* dams; water diversion projects; industrial pollution; logging/poaching; privatization of resources; effects of one country's needs/consumption/policies on neighboring countries.

*Actors:* multilateral development banks (ADB, WB); bilateral aid agencies, especially Japanese; national governments (Departments of Energy, Construction and Natural Resources); private sector – multinationals and local companies; military and repressive regimes; private banks.

*Strengths:* NGOs/peoples' movements; international support; donor support; laws and policies; mobilization of media; dialogue between government and members of movements; legal services; information exchange.

*Weaknesses:* weak bargaining power; lack of transparency and access to accurate information; false information distributed by the media; repression under oppressive regimes; corruption; lack of funding; lack of capacity for international cooperation; research on alternatives.

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**Funding Institutions And The World Commission On Dams**

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**JAPANESE OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA)****Ikuko Matsumoto, FOE Japan, and Kenji Fukuda, Mekong Watch Japan.**

There are two Japanese government institutions that distribute Japan's ODA – the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). The primary mission of JICA is to manage technical cooperation and grants. This includes conducting feasibility studies and surveys, which may then be followed by a JBIC project loan.

JBIC was established in September 1999 by the merger of the Export-Import Bank of Japan and Japan's bilateral aid agency, the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF). With an annual budget of over 3 trillion yen (approx. US\$27 billion), it is the world's largest source of development finance. JBIC is most interested in subsidizing Japanese companies. Japanese NGOs are working for policy changes at JBIC. NGOs are pressing for greater transparency and timely release of information to the public.

More information is contained in the handout, "JBIC and Its Environmental Guidelines".

Some hints for advocacy:-

- Timing: It's difficult for Japanese NGOs to get early information about proposed projects.  
However, the earlier you can raise your concerns with JBIC, the better. The best time to influence or stop the project loan is during the time of the social and environmental impact studies or feasibility studies. Only in one case has the loan been stopped after it's been approved: Narmada.
- JBIC and JICA don't have any skills in local level research, so the information they receive is from their foreign consultants. It's important to give them real information from the ground – often they're working with outdated information.
- JBIC has guidelines for their own operations that may be used against them, such as "there must be consultation with local people".
- Decision-makers: The best places to target are the JBIC Environmental and Social Office, officials in Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Diet members (Members of Parliament).
- The media in Japan isn't very interested in development issues in other countries, but they are beginning to become interested in the NGOs. NGOs are trying to work with the media by bringing journalists to various sites and by sending them information.

JBIC web site: [www.jbic.go.jp](http://www.jbic.go.jp)

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## **THE WORLD COMMISSION ON DAMS**

### **Aviva Imhof, International Rivers Network, and Joan Carling, Cordillera Peoples' Alliance**

Question: What are the funding sources and how will that affect outcome of the report?  
Funding comes from dam building agencies, WB, private foundations, and many other sources. Supposedly the funding has no strings attached, but we don't know what private promises the WCD Secretariat has made to the funders.

Dam building companies and governments are waiting to see the report before committing to the guidelines. The WCD has no power to enforce the guidelines.

The WCD final report will be launched on November 16 in London, with Nelson Mandela as special guest.

WCD web site: [www.dams.org](http://www.dams.org). For more information contact Aviva Imhof at IRN.

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## **ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

### **Takahiro Nanri, NGO Forum on the ADB and Somkiat Khuen Chiangsa, SEARIN**

Somkiat Khuen Chiangsa from SEARIN talked about the campaign at the ADB Annual Meeting in Chiang Mai and the network of 38 peoples' organizations that are campaigning against ADB-imposed water usage fees for farmers. The demonstrations around the ADB Annual Meeting in Chiang Mai were extremely successful – they managed to get international media coverage, the ADB was forced to seriously consider the concerns raised by the activists (which also included a wastewater treatment plant in Samut Prakharn, Thailand), and the ADB is feeling increasingly under international pressure to change.

In addition, a conference organized by Australian activists on the ADB's role in the Mekong in late June was also extremely successful. The ADB sent 8 people to the meeting to try to counter the claims being made against them.

The ADB Annual Meeting is being held in Hawaii next year and Hawaiian groups are already organizing activities to coincide with it. Hawaii is important to follow on from the momentum established by the Thai groups.

Some tips for ADB advocacy (Aviva Imhof, IRN)

- for local communities, connections with NGOs from donor countries is very important because donor countries control the money, and ADB is likely to feel more pressure if they feel their funding sources are under threat.
- The ADB usually gives a technical assistance grant to prepare a project before actually funding it. The TA grant will usually pay for a feasibility study or EIA to be produced. Therefore, if you monitor the ADB's portfolio in your country and see a TA grant for a destructive project, then a loan will probably follow that. Start raising

concerns as soon as you hear about the TA grant as the earlier on in the process that you express your concerns, the more likely you are to influence/stop the project.

- The ADB's Country Program Notes are a good way of monitoring what the ADB is doing in your country. Each year the ADB publishes its planned program of loans and technical assistance for each country for the next three years. These are available on the internet or from the ADB. They are worth getting, because then you can see what the ADB is planning for the next three years.
- In Japan, NGOs have quarterly meetings with the Ministry of Finance to discuss any concerns. The NGOs try to come up with a set of suggestions/recommendations for the ADB. It may be useful to get in touch with these NGOs.

ADB web site: [www.adb.org](http://www.adb.org).

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## **Alternatives And Reparations/Decommissioning**

### **REPARATIONS**

#### **Aviva Imhof, International Rivers Network**

An estimated 60 million people worldwide have seen their homes flooded beneath reservoirs and millions more have lost land, fisheries, forests and other essential resources due to the construction of dams and other river intervention projects. Those who have suffered most have been the already politically and economically marginalized, in particular indigenous and tribal peoples, ethnic minorities and women.

The human rights violations committed against dam-affected communities have been emphatically noted in declarations emerging from meetings of non-governmental organizations and affected peoples' organizations. The 1994 "Manibeli Declaration" called for the establishment of a fund by the World Bank to pay reparations for damages suffered by people displaced by large dams who had not received adequate compensation or rehabilitation. The "Curitiba Declaration," endorsed by The First International Meeting of People Affected by Dams in 1997, also highlighted the urgent need for reparations.

According to the thematic review commissioned by the World Commission on Dams (WCD) "Reparations and the Right to Remedy", these internally displaced people have suffered human rights abuses; cultural alienation; dispossession from land, resources and the means to sustain a self-sufficient way of life; failure to meaningfully participate in the benefits of the development; lowering of living standards and lack of compensation or inadequate compensation.

According to the review, "reparations for dam-affected communities are warranted under existing international law, and moral and legal culpability includes those parties who planned and authorized projects, as well as those who benefited from dam development projects – including States, funding institutions, contracting and construction companies, and energy and water system management companies."

The need for reparations for those who have suffered past harm is a well-founded legal principle accepted by the international community. Precedents include reparations for damages from wars, for victims of torture, and for Japanese-American internments

during WWII. These reparations imply that those responsible for damages or suffering have an ongoing responsibility to right the wrongs they committed, and that the victims of these actions have a permanent right to achieve redress.

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. Communities affected by Chixoy Dam in Guatemala and Pak Mun Dam in Thailand are engaged in active campaigns to demand reparations from the World Bank and their governments.

IRN is interested in developing, together with dam-affected communities and NGOs, legal and policy arguments to secure restitution for dam-affected peoples and to restore damaged ecosystems. Applying the principles of reparations to communities damaged by large-scale river engineering projects will help restore the livelihoods of those affected and will serve as a major disincentive for future destructive and unjust projects.

Some of the issues that we need to consider collectively for the future is how to push for reparations in the international arena? What sort of mechanisms do we want to promote? Eg national, regional and/or international commissions, legal mechanisms, UN mechanisms. How do we hold all of the actors accountable, including governments, construction companies, consultant companies, funders such as the WB and ADB, private banks etc.?

In Thailand, people affected by dams have been fighting for compensation and reparations. At Pak Mun, the WB has agreed to provide money for income generating schemes, but villagers were not happy with that because they want to restore the river and the fisheries. At Sirinthorn dam in Thailand, near the Pak Mun dam, villagers were not informed of the effects of the project. The project was built in the 1960s and compensation paid was at 250 Baht/rai. Not all families have been compensated. Communities have collapsed and people have become migrant laborers and scavengers. Since Thailand became democratic in 1994, there have been protests and in 1997 the government accepted their past mistakes. But when the government changed, all the promises for compensation by the old government were ignored. So people have united together under the banner of "Assembly of the Poor" to demand that the promises be kept.

## **DECOMMISSIONING**

**Chainarong Srettachau, SEARIN and Aviva Imhof, International Rivers Network**

The movement to decommission dams is growing in North America, Europe, and around the world, but is most advanced in the US where scores of dams have simply outlived their functional purpose, or sit abandoned as public safety hazards. Other dams continue to operate, but inefficiently and with devastating environmental and social impacts.

In many cases, the dams simply cannot be ignored, due to safety concerns, and repair represents a far more expensive alternative than removal. The removal of dams offers considerable ecological benefits, as well as improving recreational opportunities for local communities.



Decommissioning can include a full range of actions, including deactivating a project's principle functions, dismantling a dam's power generating capacity (e.g. turbines, diversion tunnels, and spillway), partial breaching, or complete removal of a dam and associated structures. All types of dams have been successfully decommissioned. To date, earth-fill dams, concrete arch dams, gravity dams, masonry dams, and timber crib dams have all been successfully decommissioned. In their time, these dams might have performed a full variety of functions, from providing water supply, irrigation, and hydroelectric power, to flood management and recreation. The act of removing dams, however, entails much more than merely a physical demolition. There also needs to be restoration of what has been temporarily lost, including wild salmon, ancestral fishing grounds, and the wild river ecosystem.

### ***The US Experience***

Dam decommissioning, like the frenetic dam building era preceding it, has roots in the US where more than 75,000 dams obstruct over 600,000 miles of waterways. In the past 75 years, 500 dams were removed in the US. Most decommissioning projects have involved relatively small to mid-sized dams, although there are 40 documented US dam removal cases of dams 40 feet or taller. The trend is accelerating, with the removal of 177 dams since 1990 and intensifying campaigns to decommission several large, high profile dams in the western US.

One basis for the trend is the overall poor condition of the country's massive dam infrastructure. In addition, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is addressing the expiration of hundreds of licenses granted before standard environmental review or consideration of indigenous rights. In fact, 500 of the 50-year licenses FERC issued for private dams expire between 1989 and 2004. Permits for another 200 dams will expire in the next 20 years. This once in a lifetime relicensing process, the first since the height of America's dam boom, now ensures endangered species protection and equal consideration of fisheries and environmental quality.

River revival campaigns from Maine to California are currently targeting more than a hundred projects for decommissioning, including the removal of obsolete dams of all types, sizes, and purposes on America's rivers. Dams have been decommissioned in Europe also. Pak Mun in Thailand is another case where people are asking for decommissioning.

What about the context of this region where the dams have not reached their life expectancy? Generally, decommissioning will have to be argued for because of the effects it has had on the environment and livelihoods, not because of its age or maintenance cost as in America.

### **IRRIGATION AND FLOOD CONTROL ALTERNATIVES** **Mr. Hannarong Yaowalers, Wildlife Fund Thailand**

Flood control – first thing to recognize is that floods are a natural part of the cycle, therefore they can never really be stopped, although the impacts can be minimized as much as possible. To reduce the severity and incidences of floods, forests and wetlands should be protected where they still exist, and regenerated where they have been degraded.

Flood damage can best be reduced by managing floods rather than trying to halt them. The principle of floodplain management is to allow some land to flood so that other land can stay dry – letting floodplain wetlands play their natural role of providing flood storage while strengthening the protection for buildings at risk from exceptional floods. Flood management requires regulations which discourage new floodplain development, financial incentives for people living in the riskiest areas to move to higher ground, improved flood warning systems, strengthened embankments around urban areas, floodproofing of farm building and other isolated structures by elevating them or building ring-dikes around them, and allowing the most threatened floodplain farmland to revert to wetland.<sup>1</sup>

Irrigation - many reservoirs are used for large agribusiness/industrial conglomerates, not for small-scale farmers. Traditional irrigation systems work well for small-scale farmers – they have been used for generations. Small-scale and traditional systems not only water more land than large dam and canal schemes but also tend to be far more productive and sustainable. In India, the productivity of land watered from private wells is on average nearly twice as high as that on canal projects.<sup>2</sup>

## **ENERGY ALTERNATIVES**

**Mr. Suphakij Nuntavorakam, Coordinator, Sustainable Energy Network for Thailand and Anung Karyadi, WALHI Indonesia**

Power vs. Energy—countries need energy, not power; people think they need power, so they follow the western modernization scheme which leads to consumption increasing at an exponential rate.

Energy services

1. Can we reduce energy use? Is electricity really needed? Depends on behavior in household sector and industrial sector.
2. How many options do we have to get energy services?

Biomass: Rice Mills, Sugar mills, and small power producers together can create energy to replace almost 50% of oil consumption; Thailand has a large agriculture industry creating a large potential for biomass and also creates energy from burning. Other sources of renewable energy: Biogas (fermenting manure or organic waste), Solar, Geothermal, Wind.

3. Can we improve the efficiency? Energy saving potential in Thailand is 2,200 MW or 13,000 GWh/year (approximately 15% of peak demand and electricity consumption in 1999).
4. Why are alternatives not used in the real world?
  - Concept – centralization and huge power plants from idea of modernization/development

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<sup>1</sup> From *Silenced Rivers: The Ecology and Politics of Large Dams*, by Patrick McCully, Zed Books, London, 1996, p.193.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.166.

- Planning—don't look to alternatives, demand forecast in old paradigm (overestimating); does not consider import cost, employment, environment, etc; alternatives are seen as too small to consider
- Regulations are unfavorable towards alternative electricity production
- No financial, technical or other supports

#### What is Integrated Resource Planning?

- Comprehensive – supply and demand side options
- Finds the LEAST “COST” mix
- Is a continuing PROCESS – not a single plan or computer model – planning, implementation, evaluation.
- Is OPEN to: Utilities, Regulators, Intervenors.
- Seeks to develop a CONSENSUS through negotiation
- Utilizes a set of CRITERIA for evaluation and selection
- Looks at both SHORT-TERM and LONG-TERM

#### Basic principles

1. Evaluation of feasible supply and demand resource in formulating the most efficient expansion plan—looking at how much we actually need for our purposes - Find what kind of resources are available—if there is a small stream, use micro-generator
2. An evaluation process that selects a portfolio of resources to minimize the total cost to society of providing electric power, including environmental and social impact.