

December 7, 2000
Communique #10

Contact: info@rightsaction.org
www.rightsaction.org

"Chixoy Dam / Rio Negro Massacres Reparations Campaign"

Dear friends,

Thanks to the many of you who sent letters [emails, fax, mail] to the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, asking that they seriously address the demands of the Chixoy Dam/Rio Negro Massacres survivors for compensation and reparation.

Your letters are having an impact. Please continue writing letters, and using this information in your educational and advocacy work.

(For previous information concerning this "Reparations Campaign," visit our website www.rightsaction.org, or contact us info@rightsaction.org.)

- *** Please copy and re-distribute or publish this information
- *** Tell us if you do not want to receive these emailings
- *** If you would like to financially or otherwise support the Chixoy Dam/Rio Negro Massacres Reparations Campaign, contact us [Information below]

"World Commission on Dams" [WCD] Final Report

With the November 2000 release of the report of the "World Commission on Dams" (WCD), human rights and development organizations are demanding that the funders of the "international dam industry", including the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and export credit agencies, halt all support for dams until the WCD's recommendations are implemented. We are also demanding reparations for damage and loss of life caused by dams in the past.

The WCD is an independent body, sponsored by the World Bank, to review the performance of large dams in the past, and make recommendations for future planning of water and energy projects. The Chixoy Dam in Guatemala was one of the dam projects they looked closely at.

FINDINGS

The WCD's report provides ample evidence that large dams have failed to produce as much electricity, provide as much water, or control as much flood damage as their backers claim. In addition, these massive projects regularly suffer huge cost overruns and time delays. Furthermore, the report shows that:

- . . . large dams have forced 40-80 million people from their homes and lands, with impacts including extreme economic hardship, community disintegration, and an increase in mental and physical health problems. Indigenous, tribal, and peasant communities have been

particularly hard hit. People living downstream of dams have also suffered from increased disease and the loss of natural resources upon which their livelihoods depended;

- . . . large dams have caused great environmental damage, including the extinction of many fish and other aquatic species, huge losses of forest, wetland and farmland; and
- . . . the benefits of large dams have largely gone to the already well-off while poorer sectors of society have borne the costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the WCD recommends that:

- . . . no dam should be built without the informed agreement of the affected people;
- . . . comprehensive and participatory assessments of the needs to be met, and alternatives for meeting these needs should be developed before proceeding with any new project;
- . . . priority should be given to maximizing the efficiency of existing water and energy systems before building any new projects;
- . . . periodic participatory reviews should be done for existing dams to assess such issues as dam safety, and possible decommissioning;
- . . . mechanisms should be developed to provide reparations for those who are suffering the impacts of dams, and to restore damaged ecosystems.

NGO Call for Action

NGOs monitoring the WCD have prepared this call to public financial institutions. Please make copies of this information, and distribute to and get as many persons and organizations as you can to sign on. Then, please email, fax or mail your endorsement to the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

If you would like more information about the WCD report and about NGO reactions, see www.irn.org (International Rivers Network), www.evb.ch (Berne Declaration), or www.dams.org (WCD).

CALL TO FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Given the role of financial institutions in funding large dams and in the WCD process, we call on all public financial institutions, including the World Bank, the regional development banks, the export credit agencies and bilateral aid agencies, to take the following actions:

(1) All public financial institutions should immediately and comprehensively adopt the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams, and should integrate them into their relevant policies, in particular those on water and energy development, environmental impact assessment, resettlement, and public participation.

(2) All public financial institutions should immediately establish independent, transparent and participatory reviews of all their planned and ongoing dam projects. While such reviews are taking place, project preparation and construction should be halted. Such reviews should establish whether the respective dams comply, as a minimum, with the recommendations of the WCD. If they do not, projects should be modified accordingly or stopped altogether.

(3) All institutions which share in the responsibility for the unresolved negative impacts of dams should immediately initiate a process to establish and fund mechanisms to provide reparations to affected communities that have suffered social, cultural and economic harm as a result of dam projects.

(4) All public financial institutions should place a moratorium on funding the planning or construction of new dams until they can demonstrate that they have complied with the above measures.

CHIXOY DAM REPARATIONS CAMPAIGN

Based on WCD findings in general, and on the 3rd point of the NGO call to all institutions involved with and profiting from the "international dam industry", please write letters to the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, demanding that they establish an independent commission that will investigate and determine the quantity and nature of the reparations that the WB and the IDB owe the survivors of the Chixoy Dam/Rio Negro Massacres.

EMAIL, MAIL or FAX YOUR LETTER TO:

WORLD BANK

James Wolfensohn
President
The World Bank
1818 H Street NW
Washington DC, 20433

Attention to:
Minneh M. Kane
[Asst. to the President]
F: 202-522-1677
E: mkane@worldbank.org

Donna Dowsett
Director, Central America Country Management Unit
The World Bank
1818 H Street NW
Washington DC, 20433
E: ddowsettcoirolo@worldbank.org
T: (202)473-0121
F: (202)676-1464

Mark Cackler
The World Bank
1818 H Street NW
Washington DC, 20433
E: mcackler@worldbank.org

T: (202) 473-8999
F: (202) 676-1464

Mario Marroquin
The World Bank
Guatemala City
E: mmarroquin@worldbank.org

Steve Maber
E: smaber@worldbank.org
T: (504) 2394551
F: [504] 239-4555

INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

Enrique V. Iglesias
President
Inter-American Development Bank
1300 New York Ave., NW
Washington DC, 20577

Jairo Sánchez
Deputy Manager, Regional Operations - Department II
Inter-American Development Bank
1300 New York Ave., NW
Washington DC, 20577
E: jairos@iadb.org

Peter Bate, Media Liaison
Inter-American Development Bank
1300 New York Ave., NW
Washington DC, 20577
E: peterb@iadb.org

Anne Deruyttere
Inter-American Development Bank
1300 New York Ave., NW
Washington DC, 20577
E: anned@iadb.org

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THANK-YOU

Rights Action [Guatemala Partners]
info@rightsaction.org
www.rightsaction.org