



## WISER Baram 2015 Declaration on Dams and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

*On October 23rd 2015 indigenous communities from many parts of the world gathered on the banks of the Baram River in Sarawak, a Malaysian state on the island of Borneo, in the context of the second year anniversary of the indigenous-led blockades against the proposed Baram Dam.*

We the participants of the World Indigenous Summit on Environment and Rivers Baram 2015 (WISER), have come together in the spirit of solidarity with communities fighting dams worldwide. We gather in the state of Sarawak where dam development has already caused widespread suffering and destruction. Government proposals to construct twelve additional dams would lead to the involuntary displacement of tens of thousands of indigenous people and flood thousands of square kilometers of rainforest in one of the most biodiverse ecosystems in the world. **We declare the following truths about dam development impacts and forced displacement:**

- Dams have caused immense pain and suffering through the irreversible loss of socio-biodiversity, loss of human and other forms of life, loss of ancestral land, loss of culture and tradition, loss of knowledge, loss of unique habitats and ecosystems, loss of livelihoods, and loss of heritage. The compounded impacts of dams result in multi-generational psychological and emotional trauma for upstream and downstream communities.
- Involuntary relocation compromises traditional institutions and identity. It compromises spiritual practices through flooding sacred sites and often results in inter-community conflict when communities are divided.
- Dams contaminate and pollute river systems, resulting in damaged riverine ecosystems, critically damaged or destroyed food and livelihood sources, and increased disease in upstream and downstream communities.
- The processes of planning, decision-making and constructing dams rarely include the participation of affected populations. Free, Prior, and Informed Consent of affected populations are seldom obtained, and the processes are often in direct violation of International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169 on the rights of indigenous people and UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP).
- Dam projects often result in criminalization, militarization, harassment, and repression of those who oppose the project. Ethnocide often accompanies these processes.
- Large developments like dams are often riddled with corruption, misuse of public funds and incur high cost overruns. Dams are merely profitable for those in power and authority, including government officials and corporations, while having a devastating impact on the vast majority of impacted people. Less destructive, smaller and affordable alternatives are often overlooked as they are less profitable for the elite.

**We demand that governments, companies, development agencies, donor institutions, and investors:**

- Respect the peoples' right to autonomy, to self-determination, and stop moving forward with dam projects that do not obtain the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of impacted populations. Recognize and respect indigenous land management practices as tools for ecosystem health.
- Stop presenting dams as climate neutral, and recognize that dams emit large amounts of greenhouse gases, including methane.
- Stop using economic models based on short-sided extraction of natural resources.
- Implement electrification projects in rural contexts through off-grid small-scale renewable energy alternatives.
- Ratify the ILO Convention 169, and where already ratified, enforce the Convention.
- Enforce the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- Fully deliver reparations, restitution, and justice to upstream and downstream communities that have suffered from dams, even though these actions will never account for the irreplaceable losses caused by dams.
- Conduct timely studies that fully incorporate FPIC and, for dams that have already been constructed, conduct follow-up studies on economic, social, and environmental impacts of the dams.
- Conduct studies to lead to the removal of dams, and proceed with dam removal before ecosystems are damaged beyond repair, in coordination with the community needs.
- End the invisibility of our struggles in public media and debate, and ensure that people who are working to protect human rights and the environment be protected and not persecuted. Stop all forms of harassment, intimidation, abuse, and violations against people who express opposition.
- Prosecute and penalize companies and individuals who have violated contracts, requirements, and laws. All stakeholders must act in full transparency and accountability.

**Proposal**

We have gathered together from many parts of the world to express solidarity amongst each other and with the communities of Baram who are fighting to save their land, livelihood, culture, and forests from the proposed Baram dam. Our individual struggles share many similarities that reflect the realities of an unsustainable world structure based on uncontrolled extraction. In light of the upcoming COP 21 where representatives from around the world will gather to discuss, and potentially commit, to a pathway that does not result in catastrophic climate change, we urge decision makers to recognize that dams are not a solution to climate change. Furthermore, indigenous communities can provide examples of living that differ from the conventional extractive model. The global community must learn from and listen to indigenous communities, and recognize that our ways of life can offer solutions to catastrophic problems.

## **Appendix: Specific Demands**

We the participants of the WISER Baram 2015 stand in solidarity with the following demands:

### *In Sarawak, Malaysia:*

We demand that the government of Sarawak cancel all logging concessions in the Baram, return the gazetted land to the indigenous communities, and cancel the Baram Dam for good. We also call for the government to listen to the people of Baram and collaborate with experts on rural alternative energy options.

### *In Sabah, Malaysia:*

We demand that the state government of Sabah stop building the Kaiduan Dam that would cause mass destruction of our life, natural resources, and culture. Save Ulu Papr to save Sabah.

### *In Honduras:*

We demand that the government of Honduras cancel the Agua Zarca Hydroelectric Project on the sacred Gualcarque River, as well as the other hydroelectric concessions that privatize and destroy the rivers, culture, and territory of the Lenca people. We demand the government adhere to and enforce ILO convention 169.

### *In Cambodia:*

We demand that the Cambodian government and international institutions stop building all dams that cause mass destruction to natural resources, tradition, culture, land, and livelihood of indigenous people, and stop persecution of all environmental activists. We call for the immediate release of the four activists currently held.

### *On the Tapajós River in Brazil:*

We call for all indigenous peoples to recognize Daje Kapap Eipi - Sawré Mūybu, an ancestral territory of Munduruku, and we demand the Brazilian government to respect our right to FPIC and stop planning the destruction of the Tapajós river with dams projects.

### *On the Xingu River in Brazil:*

We demand that the Brazilian government cancel the construction of the hydro electric complex Belo Monte in Xingu River and all the 150 hydroelectric plants planned in the Amazon. Our 1988 constitution must be respected. Stop ethnocide in Brazil.

### *In the Philippines:*

We demand that the Philippine government stop mega dams and resist imperialist globalization and plunder; stop political vilification, harassment, and red tagging of activists; implement genuine FPIC; withdraw large dams applications; decommission San Roque Dam; stop extrajudicial killings and deliver justice to all victims of political killings; respect the rights of indigenous peoples.

### *In the United States:*

As indigenous people who have fished for the once abundant salmon runs along the banks of the Klamath River since time immemorial, we declare that the removal of the Klamath dams must be initiated by the year 2020 before the river and it's resources are lost forever.

In Indonesia:

We demand the government of Indonesia to stop natural resources exploitation that harms Indigenous Peoples in the name of development and stop the constructions of mega dam in Seko Community. We also demand the Indonesian government to clearly acknowledge the term of Indigenous Peoples in government documents especially INDC for the upcoming COP21.

Signed, October 24th, 2015:

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