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## Thailand: Big hydroelectric power plants are not clean energy! Communities in struggle against dams exchange experiences and issue joint declaration

Over the last 30 years, some 15 mega-dams have been built on the Mekong River, both upstream in Chinese territory, and downstream in Laos, causing death and destruction in one of the world's largest rivers, on which millions of people depend to survive. Eight new dams are currently being planned. One of the projects among those considered most destructive is the Phou Ngoy hydroelectric power plant, in Laos. Along the Mekong and Mun rivers, communities that are fighting against this plant warn that its conclusion, in tandem with other dam projects, will mean the death of the Mekong River once and for all.

For its part, the government of Indonesia intends to strongly stimulate the construction of mega-dams in the coming years under the guise of the 'green transition'. In northern Kalimantan island, on the Mentarang River, construction of a mega-dam — the largest in Indonesia — has already begun, directly affecting the survival of some 10 Punan indigenous communities, as well as 20 others that will be indirectly impacted. The electricity generated would supply two other 'green' megaprojects: an industrial park called [KIPI](#) located on the coast and the country's new 'green' capital, also with [devastating impacts](#) (1). Furthermore, in other islands of the archipelago, more destructive hydroelectric mega-projects are planned, for instance in Papua, with projects for major dams on the Mamberano, Warsamson and Muyu rivers.

The experience of struggle and resistance built up by the communities of the Mekong region motivated Punan communities from Indonesia to visit them in order to exchange experiences during four days in February, 2025. The exchanges with other activists were profound and filled with the certainty that despite many differences, there is no path other than advancing together as a collective in order to confront the new wave of hydroelectric power plants that has already begun in the region.

On the occasion of the International Day of Action Against Dams (March 14), the communities that came together issued the below declaration re-affirming the importance of the commitment to a joint struggle, thus showing that “we are united and firm in the collective struggle to defend our rivers, forests and futures from false green solutions and corporate greed”.

Read the declaration below and click [here](#) to sign it:

(1) For more information about KIPI and the devastating impacts of Indonesia's new capital, please consult WRM Bulletins 264 and 268, available [here](#).

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### **Joint Statement**

**By Communities and People Resisting Large Hydropower Dams  
Across Southeast Asia, Latin America and Worldwide**

*This statement is issued by community representatives from the Mekong River in Thailand, the*

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*Mentarang River in Indonesia, and from Latin America, who convened in Thailand in February 2025 to exchange experiences and strengthen their ongoing struggles against destructive dam projects. These struggles do not exist in isolation — they represent and stand alongside dozens of other struggles resisting large-scale dam projects and plans along the rivers of the Mekong region, from China to Vietnam; across Indonesia, from Papua to Sumatra; throughout Latin America; and in many other parts of the world.*

On this International Day of Action Against Dams, we, Indigenous Peoples and grassroots communities whose survival depends on our rivers — stand united to reject the false claim that large hydropower dams are clean energy.

For decades, our lands, waters, and ways of life have been sacrificed under the banner of so-called development. The empty promises of jobs, prosperity, and clean energy have instead delivered flooded homes, destroyed livelihoods, collapsing fisheries, and irreversible environmental devastation.

As the climate crisis is weaponized to accelerate the global push for renewable energy, we reaffirm — with absolute clarity and conviction:

Large hydropower dams are not clean energy. They are engines of violence, displacement, and destruction.

Governments, corporations, and financial institutions continue to impose destructive dam projects across mainland Southeast Asia — from the Mekong to the Mentarang — as well as on other vital rivers in Latin America and around the world. These projects are fraudulently marketed as green energy, even as they ravage rivers, forests, and Indigenous communities. Behind these dams stand powerful, centralized power trade schemes such as the ASEAN Power Grid, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and Indonesia's National Strategic Projects — all advancing corporate profits at the direct expense of communities and ecosystems.

The threats extend far beyond hydropower dams. Across regions, other types of dams — including mine tailing dams driven by relentless mineral extraction for the so-called low-carbon economy — endanger nearby communities with grave risks, as tragically demonstrated by Brazil's Mariana and Brumadinho dam collapses. At the same time, irrigation dams built to serve large agribusiness projects are causing severe environmental and social harm, while further deepening the worsening water crisis.

We, communities united across Southeast Asia, Latin America, and around the world, demand:

1. An immediate end to the financing and purchase of power from destructive dams.
2. The rejection of all large-scale dam projects that devastate rivers, force community displacement, and accelerate the climate crisis.
3. A genuine, community-led energy transition — one rooted in the rights of communities and grounded in ecological restoration, not corporate mega-projects.

We stand together, resolute in our collective struggle to defend our rivers, forests, and futures from false green solutions and corporate greed.

14 March 2025

**SIGN IN SOLIDARITY [HERE](#)**

(deadline May 31)

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Initial signatories:

1. Gerakan Selamatkan hutan, tanah dan Manusia Malamoi (Tolak Bendungan Warsamson) — Save Forest, land and Malamoi people movement (Against Warsamson River Dam), Indonesia
2. Hug Chaingkhan Community group, Thailand
3. Hug Mekong Association, Thailand
4. Komunitas Masyarakat Hukum Adat suku Muyu ( Tolak Bendungan kali Muyu) — Indigenous People Muyu Tribe Community (Against Muyu River Dam), Indonesia
5. Living River Association, Thailand
6. MAB (Movement of People Affected by Dams in Brazil)
7. MAR (Movement of People Affected by Dams), Latin America
8. Northeastern Mekong River Protection Network, Thailand
9. Northeastern Network for Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand
10. People's Network to Protect the Mekong River, Thailand
11. Punan Sekalak Community, Mentarang-Tubu River, North Kalimantan, Indonesia
12. Thai Mekong People in 8 Provinces
13. Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT)
14. Tamui Community-Based School, Thailand
15. Lao Highlander Network
16. Mekong Community Institute Association (MCI), Thailand
17. Ubon Monitoring Group on Flood and Mekong Dams (UMFD)
18. Earthrights international. Mekong
19. ETOs Watch Coalition
20. Focus on the Global South (FOCUS)
21. Human Rights and Environment Association, Thailand
22. Just Energy Transition in Thailand (JET in Thailand)
23. Land Watch Thai
24. Laos Dam Investment Monitor (LDIM)
25. Mekong Energy and Ecology Network (MEENet)
26. Nature care, Thailand
27. NUGAL Institute for Social and Ecological Studies, Indonesia
28. Project SEVANA South-East Asia
29. School of Democratic Economics, Indonesia
30. The Association of Northeast Thailand Community Network in 7 Provinces along the Mekong Basin (ComNetMekong)
31. The Mekong Butterfly, Thailand
32. Towards Organic Asia (TOA)
33. World Rainforest Movement (WRM)