

From: Rights Action [info@rightsaction.org]
Sent: Sunday, September 12, 2004 3:08 PM
To: info@rightsaction.org
Subject: GUATEMALA: Massacre survivors take control of World Bank and IDB funded Dam

September 12, 2004

GUATEMALA: Mayan-Achi massacres survivors from Rabinal take control of Chixoy Hydro-electric Dam, as means of pressuring the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank (WB) and the Guatemalan government to provide full compensation and reparations, 22 years after the army carried out a series of massacres (killing some 450 Rio Negro villagers) as a means of forcibly displacing the community, to make way for the flooding of the dam basin.

Since 1995, Rights Action has funded and otherwise supported a wide range of community development and re-building projects designed and implemented by the communities affected by the Chixoy Dam.

BELOW:

Press Release and Background Urgent Action -- COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY THE CHIXOY DAM.

What to do list - Rights Action.

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If you want on-off this elist, info@rightsaction.org <mailto:info@rightsaction.org>. Please redistribute this information to friends, media, politicians, etcetera Ö .
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PRESS RELEASE

Pueblo Viejo, Guatemala, September 7, 2004

From: The COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY THE CHIXOY DAM

WE DEMAND RESPECT FOR OUR RIGHTS AS A PEOPLE -- Guatemalan Government, World Bank (WB), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Must Resolve Damages Caused

by the Chixoy Dam

We, the communities from Quiché, Alta and Baja Verapaz, Guatemala, have been and continue to be affected for more than 28 years by the Chixoy Hydroelectric Dam -- a so-called "DEVELOPMENT" project promoted by the Government of Guatemala. Construction of the project by the National Institute of Electricity (INDE) began in 1976 with financing from the WB and the IDB.

Project developers entered our communities and deceived us, offering many promises to reach their goals. We resisted their project proposals. Nevertheless, they used the armed conflict in the country as a strategy to accuse us of being guerrillas and to conduct several massacres to displace us violently from our lands and strip us of our rights, especially our lands, homes and crops and other possessions.

At present the Guatemalan Government, the WB and the IDB, do not recognize that our rights have been violated, and even more, they have not recognized that our possessions have been flooded.

For more than 28 years, our right to live a balanced life, in harmony and with the possibility of providing a better life for our future generations has been taken away. What is worse is the lack of compliance with the promises made during the promotion of that "DEADLY PROJECT."

In light of these violations, we demand the following. To the Guatemalan Government, WB and the IDB:

- * Immediate reparations for the damages and losses caused by the construction of the Chixoy Hydroelectric Dam, and for the Guatemalan State to accept responsibility for the committed violations of Human Rights.
- * Prompt compliance with the promises made by INDE since 1975, when the construction of the Chixoy dam began.
- * A halt to construction of new hydroelectric dams, because they do not benefit affected communities. As an example, none of the communities in the proximity to the Chixoy dam have electricity, even though the

generating
facility is close by.

WE CONDEMN THE GOVERNMENT OF GUATEMALA

- * For its lack of interest in promoting public policies to improve the lives of Indigenous Peoples.
- * For responding to the interests of transnational companies and the economic sectors.
- * For allowing the economic interests of a few to prevail while negotiating away the rights of communities over their natural resources.
- * For charging exorbitant electricity fees from consumers, especially indigenous communities and the poor.

THEREFORE, WE DEMAND THAT THE GUATEMALAN GOVERNMENT:

- * Halt all megaprojects for which we have not been consulted and which threaten our lives and that of future generations; the Chixoy dam is an example because of all the irreparable damage it caused.
- * Revise the strategy of billing consumers, now in the hands of DEORSA, in order to address improper billing.
- * Immediate compliance with promises made by INDE since 1976 when construction of the Chixoy dam began. This includes the following:

1. Urgently purchase fertile lands, build appropriate housing and construct public services where communities live. Provide sustainable economic projects, educational grants for our children and grandchildren who live in extreme poverty and free electricity; all in order to be able to provide for our families and guarantee them better and dignifying living conditions.
2. Resolve with EXTREME URGENCY the electricity crisis in the community of Pacux where villagers have not had ELECTRICITY OR WATER FOR 2 MONTHS. Use funds from the Rural Electrification Fund created when INDE was privatized.
3. Create a working group including representatives of the Government of the Guatemalan Republic, the WB and the IDB, the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, MINUGUA and representatives of the affected communities to discuss and come up with solutions to all these problems. The creation of such working group should be organized no later than 15 days from today's

date.

NO MORE CONSTRUCTION OF HYDROELECTRIC DAMS. NO MORE BLOOD AND FAMINE
FOR
OUR FAMILIES

URGENT ALERT

Pueblo Viejo – Chixoy Dam site, Guatemala, September 7, 2004

From: The COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY THE CHIXOY
DAM

In response to the lack of willingness to repair the damages caused by
the
construction of the Hydroelectric Chixoy Dam to the affected
communities,

BACKGROUND

According to the policies of the Government of Guatemala in 1976, The
National Institute of Electricity (INDE) began construction of the
Chixoy
hydroelectric dam. The Project was called "the biggest project build
by men
in Central America," and was build to provide cheap, abundant and
reliable
energy.

At the end of 1976 INDE forcibly displaced communities. They were
offered
compensation for damages and losses caused by the construction of the
project, such as: new replacement lands, compensation for lost crops
and
damaged harvests, construction of new homes in new colonies with all
the
services and infrastructures, sustainable economic projects,
cooperatives,
free electric energy, a bridge, a communal boat, among other things.

The WB and the IDB were indispensable in the planning and financing of
the
Chixoy Dam, and played a very important role in several stages in the
construction of the project. They approved Chixoy in 1978 without
considering the importance of the lives of affected communities that
were
massacred because of their opposition to the project, and the flooding
of
lands we used to cultivate. In 1982 the reservoir was finished and the

plant
began operation.

The survivors sought refuge in sub-human places for five years, and later after the first amnesty announced by the government in 1985, we began to live in the resettlement villages of Colonia el Naranjo, Colonia Rosario Italia and Colonia Pacux where we presently live. These were the "Model Villages" built by the army to control guerrilla actions. The houses are uninhabitable and lack services, for which the WB and the IDB admitted that the resettlement program had failed. It was immediately clear that the economic situation of the community worsen after the resettlement to those colonies began, all the services are in bad condition.

The WB, in its 1996 mission [to Guatemala to investigate the Chixoy Dam issue], acknowledged that compensation and resettlement had not been fulfilled completed and identified obligations that had not been met, such as providing free electricity and water for the resettled communities.

Because of these reasons we CALL on all Human Rights organizations, communities affected by the construction of dams and to the national and international press to join a peaceful demonstration at the dam site, today September 7, starting at 8:00 AM at the Chixoy Dam Site in Pueblo Viejo, Santa Cruz Verapaz.

Sincerely,

COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY THE CHIXOY DAM.

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TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS in the USA and Canada:

To support the community development and rebuilding work of the communities affected by the Chixoy Dam, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

USA: Rights Action, 1830 Connecticut Av, NW, Washington DC, 20009.
CANADA: Rights Action, 509 St. Clair Av, W. box73527, Toronto ON,
M6C-1C0.

To come on an educational delegation to Guatemala or to become a human rights accompanier in the region, please -1- get on our e-list and -2- contact RA: 416-654-2074, info@rightsaction.org.

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