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October 12, 2004

As part of the CHIXOY DAM REPARATIONS CAMPAIGN, we are pleased to announce the publication of: "Continuing the Struggle for Justice and Accountability in Guatemala: Making Reparations a Reality in the Chixoy Dam Case", a report by COHRE in collaboration with Rights Action. To order copies, see below. PDF version of report available at [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org).

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#### WORLD BANK & INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK FOUND LIABLE FOR ATROCITIES AND MASS EVICTIONS IN GUATEMALA

The World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) are liable for a series of massacres and human rights violations that occurred in the early 1980s in Guatemala, says a newly released report. The report reveals the two Banks, who were the principal funders of the Chixoy Hydro-Electric Dam Project, continued to finance and supervise the project despite being aware of the murder of over 400 people from the Rio Negro community in 1982 by the Guatemalan government, to make way for construction of the dam.

A total of 17 isolated Mayan-Achi communities were forced and obliged to move from their home communities, where their ancestral roots date back to before the arrival of European imperialism.

The report ("Continuing the Struggle for Justice and Accountability in Guatemala: Making Reparations a Reality in the Chixoy Dam Case") was written by COHRE (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, [www.cohre.org](http://www.cohre.org)) in collaboration with Rights Action. It examines the legal issues surrounding the question of reparations for the survivors of the Chixoy Dam massacres and concludes that the two Banks failed to show due diligence in the implementation of a project they were directly supervising and financing.

The murders in Rio Negro took place between 1980 and 1982, when the government of Guatemala used massacres and threats as the principal means of forcibly evicting the community, plus 16 other communities, from their land and homes for the construction of the Chixoy Dam.

Grahame Russell, of Rights Action, said, "By channeling \$350 million to the brutal US-backed military regime, notorious for its appalling human rights record throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and by promoting and continuing with the project during the worst years of state terrorism and genocide, the World Bank and the IDB supported and legitimized the repression of the Guatemalan government."

According to the report, the Banks' disregard for the brutal massacres and forced evictions that resulted from a project they were directly supervising, and their failure to protect the people of Rio Negro, clearly shows that they are "legally liable for gross negligence and for reckless disregard of the rights of the residents of Rio Negro."

Leticia Osorio, Coordinator of COHRE's Americas programme, said, "The fact

the World Bank granted its second loan installment to the Government of Guatemala in 1985 - three years after the massacres took place - clearly raises the threshold of legal liability from gross negligence to reckless conduct."

The survivors of the Rio Negro massacres - plus villagers from the other displaced communities -- have only received meager compensation from the Guatemalan government and live in extreme poverty, a situation exacerbated by the trauma that many underwent due to the repression.

The World Bank and the IDB, despite acknowledging the tragedy of the Chixoy massacres, have refused to assume responsibility for reparations to the survivors.

"International human rights laws and standards clearly indicate that in addition to the Guatemalan government, the World Bank and the IDB are also liable for the human rights violations that occurred in Rio Negro, and therefore, have responsibility in redressing the matter," said Osorio. "We strongly recommend that the World Bank, IDB and the Guatemalan government abide by their legal obligations to provide full reparations, including just and fair compensation, to both the survivors of the Rio Negro massacres and other communities negatively affected by the implementation of the Chixoy Dam project," added Osorio.

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