

INTERIM REPORT

**INDEPENDENT PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL
ON DAMS
IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

FEBRUARY 3, 2008, ITANAGAR, ARUNACHAL PRADESH, INDIA



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INDEPENDENT PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL ON DAMS IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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February 2008

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Independent People's Tribunal on Dams in Arunachal Pradesh

February 3, 2008
Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India

Interim Report

An Independent Peoples Tribunal (IPT) on Dams in Arunachal Pradesh conducted a hearing on the issue at Itanagar on February 3, 2008. The Panel consisted of:

1. Justice H. Suresh (Retd) (could not attend due to last minute health problems)
2. Prof. Subhram Rajkhowa, faculty of law, University of Guwahati.

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3. Nandini Oza, social activist and dam expert (writer)
4. Shripad Dharmadhikary, researcher on dams and water issues.

The Tribunal was organised by the Human Rights Law Network in collaboration with the Arunachal Citizens Rights and Nefa Indigenous Human Rights Organisation. The Panel conducted the hearing at the invitation of these organisations and the local people affected by many of the dam projects in the state. Brief bio-data of the Panel Members is given at the end. (yes, do we want this to be given?)

Brief Background

India's total economically exploitable hydropower potential has been estimated at 148,000 MW. The Northeast has the maximum potential at 59,000 MW, and bulk of it, at 93% is undeveloped. This potential is highly concentrated with 50,000 MW being located in Arunachal Pradesh.



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With the current drive for economic growth putting tremendous pressure on power generation, a large number of big dams are under construction or in the pipeline in the state of Arunachal Pradesh to exploit this potential. According to a press note issued by the state government, as of September 2007, the state had signed 39 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) to generate 24,471 MW, with both public and private sector developers. To put this in perspective, this capacity that Arunachal wants to add in the next ten years or so, is only a little less than the total hydropower capacity added in the whole country in 60 years of Independence.

The central electricity authority (CEA) has identified 162 sites, spread across 16 states of India, for hydroelectric projects with an aggregate installed capacity of 50,560 MW. According to preliminary feasibility reports prepared till July 5, 2004, 154 of the 162 sites have a potential to generate 47,190 MW of electricity. The CEA has offered the sites to central public sector units for preparation of detailed feasibility reports.

The preliminary reports revealed that of the 16 states, 42 projects in Arunachal Pradesh have a combined capacity of 21,660 MW. Of the 162 sites identified by CEA all over India, the largest capacity of 4,000 MW is proposed at Etalin in Arunachal Pradesh with 16 units of 250 MW each. The second largest project will also be located in Arunachal Pradesh at Demwe (Dibang multipurpose hydro project) with a capacity to generate 3,000 MW of electricity.

The state has been dubbed as the new powerhouse of the nation.

However, these dams are likely to have many serious adverse social and environmental impacts and also raise important financial, economic and other issues. Many of the people affected or likely to be affected by the dam projects have been raising these issues through meetings, demonstrations, letters and memoranda. Protest actions have been taking place in the areas where dam construction has begun or has been proposed in the state. But they have complained of little or no response from the authorities.

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It is in this context that the organisers requested the panel to conduct a hearing on the issue of dams in Arunachal Pradesh so as to bring out and highlight the issues related to this. According to the concept note on IPT on dams in Arunachal Pradesh says:

The purpose of the IPT on dams in Arunachal Pradesh is to assess the problems of affected people and find out the ways through the experts and also to make known the issues of the affected people to rest of the world...

What the Panel Saw and Heard

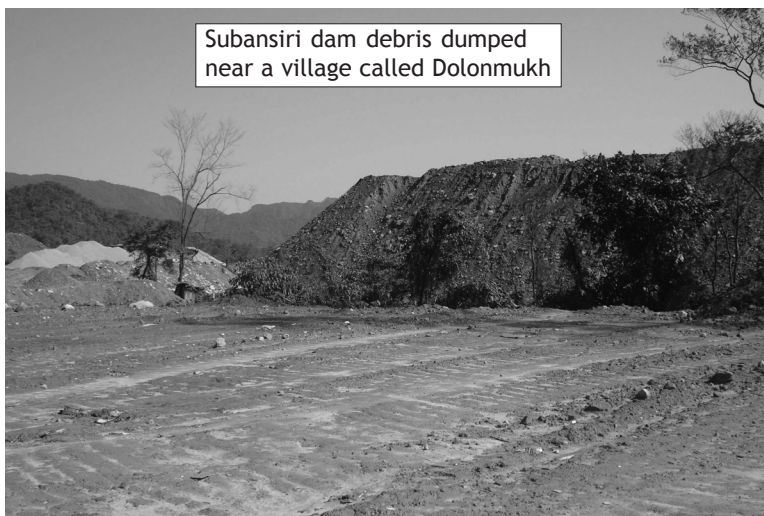
The panel members made a day long field visit on February 2, 2008. This field visit covered the Subansiri (Lower) project dam site, and the affected village of Gerukamukh / Durpai and one of the villages affected by the Ranganadi project. This village, Upper Cher, is downstream of the (Ranganadi) dam. The panel members met with several of the affected villagers at these places and heard oral testimonies of several affected people. Some written submissions are to be made by the affected people.

On February 3, 2008, the panel conducted a hearing where several people, most of them from various dam affected areas, made oral as well as written submissions on the issues concerning dam construction in the state.

The organisers of the IPT had invited representatives from the state government and the companies involved in building these projects. However, none of them appeared at the hearing, nor did they send any written or oral submissions to the panel.

Given below are some of the main findings and main recommendations made by the panel, based on the submissions and testimonies made to the panel members. Some of the main issues raised before the panel members are also being presented here.

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Main Findings

1. The dams under construction and in pipeline are likely to have huge social and environmental impacts. Several of these impacts are already being felt.
2. The social and environmental impacts of these projects have not been fully and properly assessed. In particular, there is no assessment of the cumulative impacts of many dams in a river basin or a cascade of dams on a river (no people's participation in these crucial impact assessment studies).
3. These dams will displace many people directly by submergence, and are likely to displace many times more this number by affecting resources of forests, rivers, fish, land, etc., on which these communities depend (no assessment of the total number of people to be impacted and how).
4. Apart from being directly affected by submergence, some of the more serious impacts of the dams are likely to be held on in the downstream areas due to decrease in the water flows and/or changing patterns of the flow of water (these impacts does not seem to have been studies or considered).

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5. There is concern that the resettlement and rehabilitation policy will not be applicable to the projects in the state as in many cases the number of affected people have been shown to be less than 250, the cut-off number.
6. There is also apprehension about the resettlement of the affected people as the resources of land, forests, fish, rivers etc., are strongly attached to various tribes, which in turn are very specifically distributed geographically, and so resources like land are likely to be unavailable.
7. Attempts to resettle people of one tribe / clan in areas that belonged to other tribes are likely to lead to severe ethnic tensions.
8. The massive influx of workers from outside, quite high compared to the population of the local tribal people, is likely to have severe demographic and cultural implications.
9. The customs, traditions and the very character of local tribal communities is closely tied to the lands, rivers, forests and other elements of the natural ecosystems (the fragile environment, socio-cultural aspect of the region ignored). The dam projects are going to have severe adverse impact on these natural resources.
10. These two factors – influx of outsiders in large numbers, and destruction of the natural ecosystems which are integral to the tribal community – are therefore likely to threaten the very identity and culture of several communities who are already endangered due to the small numbers.
11. The state of Arunachal Pradesh is said to be in highly seismic zone. This raises concerns about the safety of the dams and the neighbouring areas.
12. Many of the areas where dam construction work is going on are highly prone to landslides. This raises issues of high siltation in the dams as well as the fear of massive flash floods.
13. These two concerns are leading to much anxiety and an atmosphere of fear among the population in these areas prevails.

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14. The people of the state, especially the people in the areas where these projects are coming up, have not being consulted or involved in the process of planning and designing of the projects and indeed the local people have often not even been informed about these. In particular, it appears that there is no involvement of the local people in preparation of the detailed project report (DPR) or the environmental impact assessment (EIA).
15. In many cases, the first information about a project reached the local people only when the project work.
16. Majority of the people in areas affected by these projects are strongly opposing them.
17. The people are also raising the larger questions like what kind of development these large dam projects would bring in.
18. The affected people are of the view that they are not against development, but they want sustainable development that does not destroy the natural resources, livelihoods, culture and identity.
19. People affected or likely to be affected by all these issues have been making presentations and submissions, through oral and written petitions, and sometimes even demonstrations. However, they have not been heard properly by the state government or the companies that are constructing the projects.
20. There is apprehension that the impacts of the projects as well as the apathy of the state government to the concerns raised by the people together could lead to social and political unrest, besides environmental and economic impacts.

Main Recommendations

1. The government of Arunachal Pradesh and the Government of India must take immediate and urgent cognisance of the issues that are being raised by the people in the context of the dams under construction or proposed. These include the issues that have been raised before the panel and which briefly highlighted in this report.

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2. In particular, the recommendation is that intense and widespread debates and discussions be taken up on the proposed dam construction programme in the state which cover issues like the real costs and impacts of these projects, the realistic benefits from the projects, who would actually benefit and in what manner from these projects, who would pay the price, and alternative options for sustainable development.
3. It is recommended that the current programme of dam construction on a massive scale and at a breakneck speed should be stopped till a consensus emerges from the widespread discussions (consultations, in-depth assessment of the impacts with people's participation) as suggested here.
4. In areas and projects where people have been affected due to loss of land, habitation or livelihoods, they should be compensated and resettled immediately and properly. The compensation and resettlement should be carried out based on the consultation with the affected people (till this is achieved, further displacement should be halted).
5. The downstream impacts of the dams seem to be as serious with far-reaching consequences—those people's problems need to be seriously addressed, who have already been impacted in the downstream areas.
6. The Indigenous people of Arunachal Pradesh owned the community land usually covered with forests and livelihood is based on community owned forests, rivers, streams. The compensation has to be paid to the community against acquisition of community forests, deforestation. There should be compensation for the loss of rivers and streams to the tribal way of life. Viable alternative livelihood mechanisms also need to be in place. Nowhere the compensation should be paid to the forest department as the impact is being felt by the local communities and they are being deprived of their forests.
7. The United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Rights, December 2007, particularly, "free, prior and informed consent" must be taken from the indigenous people before implementing any hydro project in their area.

Main Issues Raised

Large number of dams being proposed

The panel was informed that a large number of big dams were being built or were in the pipeline in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. According to a presentation made by Anthony Bamang, of Arunachal Citizens Rights, the state has signed 59 MoUs out of proposed hundred dams. Out of these, seven are with CPUs for 10,230 MW and 52 for 45,326 MW have been assigned to the private companies.

Ranganadi river reduced to a trickle



He also pointed out that these dams would impact socially and environmentally and that these impacts have not been adequately studied, that the quality of the environmental impact assessments (EIA) was very poor and there were no policies and provisions for proper rehabilitation of the affected people. In particular he said that the national rehabilitation and resettlement policy would not be applicable in many of the projects as the number of people shown as affected was less than 250, the cut-off number.

Lack of transparency

Most of the projects seem to have been planned without any information given to the local people or their involvement. Paha Mimi Dibang chairman of the Dam Affected Citizens Committee, New Aenaya, Lower Dibang valley told the panel:

The survey for the Dibang project has been going on since 1992 and the Brahmaputra board was doing it. In 1999, it was handed over to the NHPC. But we the people of the valley were never informed by anyone about this. Evasive replies were given to us like the names were being collected for the record of voter lists. We received the notice for the hearing on May 11, 2007 and that is when we started asking as to what was happening.

Similarly, Rago Duchok, from the Upper Subansiri project affected area told us:

The DPR of the project has been made but we have not even been informed about it, even our MLAs have not been informed.

Major social and environmental impacts

Many of the presentations were also made on the detailed social and environmental impacts of the dam projects under construction.

Destruction of resources: One of the big impacts of dam projects is the destruction of natural resources like forests, rivers, land, fish, etc., on which the local population depends for its livelihood and other needs.

The panel was informed by the people of village Durpai (in the affected area of Subansiri (Lower) project that while two villages were shown to be losing land to submergence, many other villages and people were affected as their rice growing fields were affected by the project. The panel was also told that the project was to require 4000 hectares of forests, much of it for submergence. This

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forest area supports part of the *jhum* (shifting) cultivation cycle of the local people apart from being a source of many other goods and services. Thus they have been badly affected.

They also informed the panel that the construction activities on the dam site had adversely affected their fishing activities and once the dam was complete the fishing would be completely out of question. The panel was also told that the villagers bring construction material for their houses on the river-rafts. This has already been disrupted due to dam construction and once the project is complete this would be completely blocked. These presentations were made to the panel by Dure Bui, the headman, Yumjum Taipodia and Menluk Ruwa among others, during the visit of the panel to this village.

Similar fears were expressed by the people of other areas where dams are likely to come up in their depositions made to the panel.

Ecological impacts: Many of the speakers eloquently spoke about the beauty of the river and the river valleys in which they were residing. They also talked about the flora and fauna in the area with which they enjoy a sabbatical relationship. They expressed great apprehension that these dam projects would have severe and adverse impacts on the ecological and the animal population.

According to Kotige Mena, from village Abali, Lower Dibang Valley, Dibang Multipurpose Dam affected area:

We Idu people are very friendly but have many taboos. Even if we kill one animal we have to go to the temple for five days. Now, with the dam and the roads being built, we will have many poachers coming in. So far, our community has protected the animals in the area and even when government officials come for hunting we do not allow them. But after the dam construction, we may not be able to protect animals any longer as there will be a major influx. The scientists have warned the Government of India and the state government not to construct Mega dams in the North-east.

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Martin Lego, from Dibang Multipurpose downstream affected area adds:

The Hoolock Gibbon, endangered, Schedule-I animal, is found in this area and the dam construction is going to wipe out this Gibbon.

The panel also heard about how the fish would be affected by the dam construction. People living downstream of the Ranganadi dam told us that their fishing activities were completely wiped out as the dam had diverted most of the water from the river. People from the Dibang valley expressed fears that the project would destroy the fish. Fish is a part of the ecology, a source of sustenance as well as a part and parcel of the local customs and rituals.

From the written submissions the panel received, it got to know that the entire area of the North-east, especially Arunachal Pradesh, was one of the hotspots for biodiversity. The construction of a large number of big dams in the state is going to have very serious affect on biodiversity - leading to the destruction of flora and fauna.

Downstream impacts: From the submissions made to the panel, it is clear that more serious impacts of the dams would be felt in the downstream areas. This is because the dams are likely to affect both, the quantity and the pattern of the water flows. The experience of the Ranganadi project, Arunachal's first and so far the only completed large dam project, shows the seriousness of the issue.

The 405 MW Ranganadi hydro electric project (RHEP) Stage-I, commissioned in 2002, involves a dam to divert the flow of the river into the Dikrong river, creating a 300 m head and generating power. Tana Pinje of village Upper Cher (district Papum Pare), downstream of the RHEP describes its impacts:

After the completion of the dam, waterflow in the river has gone down drastically. Our fish are totally gone. Earlier even outsiders—like tourists—used to come here to fish, now there is no fish even for us. In fact, our village was considered so beautiful because of the flowing river that

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it was a very popular tourist spot and many tourists used to come here for picnic. But now all that has stopped because with the river gone, so have the tourists.

Our fields are also affected badly as the channels we had made to take water to the fields have become dry. Horticulture, which is a very important source of livelihood for our village and includes banana, oranges, pineapple and spices like black pepper, cardamom - has almost finished along the river banks.

Like the problem of diminished water flows, there is a problem of sudden high flows in the river. On several occasions the project releases large quantities of water in the river without any warning, leading to flash flood like situations. There have been many cases of cattle being washed away and some years back, one person was swept away due to the sudden water release. People are now afraid of going near the river, of allowing their children to play on its banks. Tarh Anil of village Lichi (downstream Ranganadi) submitted to the panel:

On the night when there is heavy rainfall we are unable to sleep. We keep the lights on and keep awake the whole night. We are living in perpetual fear.

According to the people of these villages, when the issue was highlighted, the response of North-eastern electric power corporation (NEEPCO), the company that has built the dam was not even to consider the problem but to issue a circular that told the people to keep away from the river. Among other things the circular says:

...the gates of Ranganadi diversion dam may require opening from time to time... all villages, individuals, temporary settlers, etc., residing on the banks of river and other nearby areas... on the downstream of the dam to refrain from going to the river and also to restrict their pet animals too from moving around the river... the corporation will

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not take any responsibility for any loss of life of human, pet animals, etc., and damage of property and others ...

This circular, of June 2, 2006 was submitted to the panel. The panel found this circular to be shocking and this response of NEEPCO to be completely callous and irresponsible.

The people affected downstream of the Ranganadi project also presented several memoranda to the government about their plight. These include compensation and rehabilitation of those who were dependent on fishing and those whose cultivation has suffered, construction of a check dam to protect the village Upper Cher, complete resettlement of the village Lichi, letting down at least 30 percent of the river flow so that some of the fishing and cultivation can be restored, installation of an early warning system for releases into the river, etc.

It was pointed out to the panel that there were going to be serious downstream impacts of almost all the dams coming up in Arunachal Pradesh, and many of the serious impacts would also be felt in the downstream riparian states.

Destruction of culture and identity: One of the biggest impacts of dam construction is likely to be on the culture and identity of the local people. The local population of Arunachal Pradesh consist of about 26 major tribes and more than 100 sub-tribes in the state. These tribes have their distinct identity, language, customs and locations. As the total population of these tribes is small in number, they are excessively vulnerable to the influx of outsiders that is likely to take place with the construction of such huge infrastructure projects.

Raju Mimi, local activist, and journalist Hunli, lower Dibang Valley village told the panel:

Huge influx of outsiders will create a demographic problem. the Idu Mishmi population is just 11,021. According to EIA of the Dibang project, about 5800 workforce will come

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from outside. You can imagine how we will become outsiders in our own lands. As our tribe has been declared as an endangered tribe by the United Nations, we need protection.

Tony Mickrow, general secretary of the All Idu Mishmi Student Union was even stronger in his predictions:

A huge number of labour will be coming in from outside. Most of them will be coming from Bangladesh as there the cheapest labour is available. Our community will be compelled to move closer to China. The government of India is encouraging militancy.

Similar fear was expressed by Rago Duchok, affected from upstream Lower Subansiri dam:

The total population of our tribe—Tagin is only 20,000. The chief engineer of the project has told me that 15,000 people will be required for the construction of the project. For most of the people will be coming from outside. What will happen to our people?

It is clear that there is a serious threat to the culture and identity of the local population both, due to the influx of people from outside in large numbers as well as due to the destruction of natural resources which are not only resources but are part and parcel of the culture and identity of the local people.

According to a memorandum submitted by Kotige Mena and Ingore Linggi to the chairman of the state pollution control board of Arunachal Pradesh on January 29, 2008, a copy of which was given to the panel:

The construction of the Talon / Dibang multipurpose project will completely displace our Idu people who are very much dependent on the river, forest, ancestorily inherited land as a source of their livelihood. The Idu community's

tradition, custom, faith and beliefs are greatly attached to the river Talon/Dibang ... The construction of the dam will herald the end of our culture and tradition as the river Talon/Dibang is as sacred to us, as is the river Ganga to the Hindus... we believe that after death the Igu-myi (First Order Priest) Sineru carries forward our souls through this river... The hills, the rivers and the mountains are deeply embedded in our ethos. It is the life force of our community. Destruction or endangerment of these will be a threat to the community itself. Development at the cost of culture and tradition is not acceptable to us.

The panel finds this to be one of the most serious possible impact of large dams, which can lead to large-scale social and political unrest in the state.

Difficulties in rehabilitation: From the submissions made to the panel, it was found that there were serious problems in the implementation of rehabilitation of people affected by the projects.

Impossibility of compensation: It would be impossible to compensate for some of the most important losses that the people are likely to suffer. These include the rivers, mountains and forests, which form a part and parcel of the people's customs and culture. Many of these are sacred for the people. For example, according to Kotige Mena from the Dibang project affected area:

Our community, the Idu Mishmi depends upon the fish like angha, Ayu, arohpra, asoo, ayaa. etc., found in the river stream for festival Reh. This fish will be completely wiped out due to the construction of the dam.

Lack of political will: First and foremost, the panel found that there was a complete lack of political will among the authorities to carry out a proper rehabilitation resettlement. This is seen from the fact that there is not even an adequate impact assessment

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that recognises the total impacts both direct and indirect of the projects.

For example, the impacts downstream of the Ranganadi project have been totally ignored. Similarly, in case of the Subansiri (Lower) project, the number of people affected has been grossly underestimated.

This is the case that can be seen in the projects that have already been constructed or are in progress. In projects that are in the pipeline, the same problems exist.

Therefore, it is clear that any rehabilitation effort is bound to fail as it is not even fully seized of the problem.

Difficulties of jobs for local people: While some of the government officials and dam companies are saying that the local people will get employment in the projects, this is subject to their being found eligible and qualified for the same. Since most of the local people are illiterate and not trained for the kind of jobs available, this would not really be of benefit to them.

Demarcated tribal areas: An important fact that was brought to the notice of the panel was that there is very strong geographical distinction among the various tribes in the state. Moreover, the resources of land, forests, rivers etc., are sharply demarcated as belonging to various different tribes and/or clans within the tribes.

This means that people displaced from one area cannot be easily settled in another area or are allowed access to resources of forests, fish, etc., from other areas as these other areas are likely to belong to other tribes.

Many of the people making depositions to the panel expressed deep apprehension that the way in which people were being resettled would only lead to serious tensions between the various tribes. Anthony Bamang told the Panel:

Yazali town will be affected in the Ranganadi Phase-II project. This is the pioneering valley of Nyishi art, culture and literature. Now they say that this town will have to shift to the upper side. But that land belongs to another community and so they will not allow the shifting. You can imagine what will happen if there is an attempt to settle one tribe in the land of another. People's livelihood based on shifting cultivation, shifting to other places cannot find any land for shifting cultivation.

Seismic risks

An issue that was raised by almost every speaker was that of the seismic risks of the projects. Speaker after speaker pointed out that the state of Arunachal Pradesh fell in the seismic zone-5 and this meant that the dams were likely to be subjected to earthquakes of high intensity. This has immense implications for the safety of the populations in the neighbouring and downstream areas. In particular, the fear of the colossal loss of life and property and the destruction that would cost, in case of a dam break haunts the people.

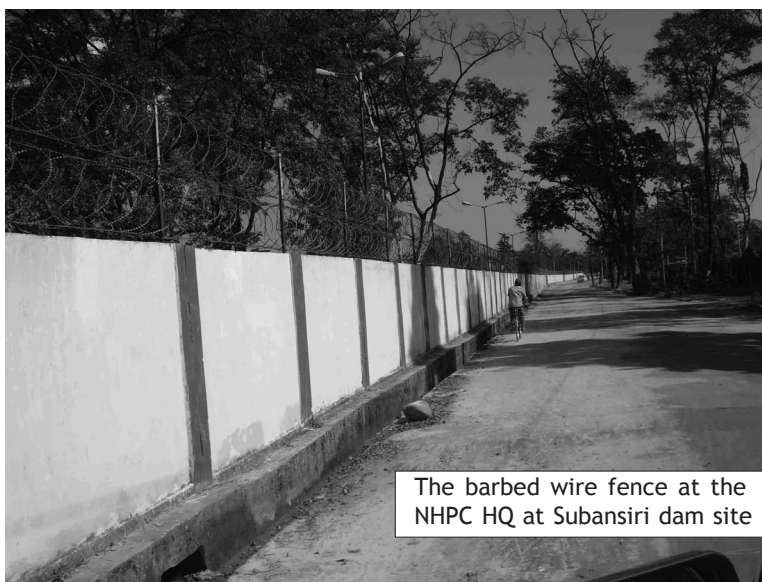
Some of the speakers told that even if the project authorities assured the people on the safety aspect of the dams saying that these were designed to withstand the largest possible earthquakes, the issue of reservoir induced seismicity wherein the dam and the reservoir triggers off earthquakes remained an important concern.

A related issue that was raised before the panel was that the area was heavily prone to landslides. This would create serious problems in the event of increased siltation in the reservoirs, and could also trigger off large waves and/or flash floods.

The panel strongly feels that this is a very important issue. Given the current and past records of the dam building authorities, it is clear that the common people do not have faith in the statements of the authorities. Therefore, it is imperative that the issues of seismic risks be evaluated and studied by an independent panel of

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experts who should convey to the people the real risks. As of now, as per the submissions made to the panel, there is an air of fear in the areas where these projects are coming up.



Insensitivity of project authorities

The submissions made to the panel brought out in many ways the lack of sensitivity of the dam building authorities, the government and the construction companies towards the people.

Inadequate response to people's petitions: Most of those making submissions to the panel told us that they have been making repeated petitions, sending letters and memoranda to the government and project authorities. The panel was given copies of several such memoranda. However, the people have not received any meaningful response from the authorities to their requests. This shows complete callousness and lack of sensitivity of the authorities towards the people. One of the speakers, Tone Mickrow

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from Dibang multipurpose dam affected area told the panel in agitated manner:

What is the use of memoranda and letters? I find them ridiculous now. Our memos are lying in the dustbin.

Other instances: Several other instances show the approach of the project authorities who are not even bothered to treat the people in a proper manner. One of the incidents that troubled most of those was that the prime minister laid the foundation stone for the Dibang project just a couple of days before the hearing and the project is yet to secure the mandatory environmental clearance.

People also pointed out how the public hearing for the Dibang project was scheduled just a couple of days before one of the most important festivals of the Idu Mishmi community—Reh. They expressed the sentiment that this was done deliberately so as to sabotage the participation of the people in the public hearing.

The manner in which the public hearings for environmental clearance are being conducted also shows the approach of the authorities. The panel was told how in the case of the Dibang project, the EIA report was available only in English. The people also told us that they, the people affected by this project, got entry to the public hearing with much difficulty and they had to push against the police to enter the hall.

The panel was also told that the authorities were using the promise of development to both lure and threaten the people. According to **Aegami Meme**, who belongs to the village near as to the Dibang project dam site:

The national hydroelectric power corporation (NHPC—the company building the Dibang project) says that if you allow us to develop the dam, the government will bring new roads. So I ask, is this a condition? That we won't get roads without dams? That means what they're saying is that you give us your water and only then we will give you the roads.

One of the issues that the people making submissions to the panel were disturbed with was the absence of the representatives of the government and/or the project companies at the hearing. To them this further emphasised the complete unaccountability of the government and the project authorities.

Indeed, the panel also wishes to express its disappointment at this absence of the government and project authorities.

Sentiments of the people

At the end, we would like to note certain very strong sentiments expressed by the people at the hearing conducted by us. We think these are particularly important feelings of the people conveyed to us and it is our responsibility to bring this to the attention of the public at large and in particular the authorities.

Appeal to the national actors: Several people who made presentations to the panel said that it was very important for the national and international actors to step into this issue at this stage. They were at pains to emphasise that the impacts of large-scale buildings of mega dams in Arunachal Pradesh was not an issue of concern only for the people of the state, but has much larger ramifications. Therefore, they strongly urged the people of the country to take notice of these issues. In particular, they urged the panel to help make this a national issue.

Strong opposition to dam projects: One thing which was expressed to us very strongly was that the common people, especially those who are being affected by the dam projects, strongly opposed them. For example, Martin Lego told us that almost 99 percent of the speakers at the public hearing on the Dibang project said that they were opposed to the project.

Several other speakers also expressed their opposition to such projects and said that they would fight these projects.

Call for sustainable development: This does not mean, however, that the people are opposed to development. Many of the speakers

were at pains to emphasise to the panel that their opposition to large dams should not be construed as a position to development. They do want development, but development that is sustainable, development that does not destroy their resources, culture and identity. They called for mini and micro hydel projects for generating electricity. As Babu Gamah, a young person from the Subansiri (Upper) project affected area said:

Our tribal and ancestral property will be destroyed by the dam. These mountains and waters, we regard as our property, we have no other property. I know about my forefathers of seventeen generations. We have a very close relationship with our ancestors. But with the coming of the dam all this relationship will be destroyed. We're not against electricity. We need it but we are against the mega dams. We can construct mini-dams for power. And we can encourage other things like tourism. Arunachal Pradesh is so beautiful with zero pollution. We can earn revenue that we want from such activities.

Conclusion

As members of this panel, we have been privileged to listen to the testimonies and stories of many a people in the two-day TPT. These stories are distressing not only because they talk of some of the most serious problems that are likely to arise due to the construction of large dams in Arunachal Pradesh, but because they also emphasise the continuing neglect and and callous attitude of the government and project authorities. These testimonies—both oral and written—also show that dam builders in Arunachal Pradesh have not learnt their lessons from the painful experience of dam building in other parts of the country.

We sincerely hope that the exercise carried out by us will help highlight some of the key concerns related to building of large dam projects in Arunachal Pradesh, and bring this to the notice of public at large, and the government and project authorities in particular, both in the state and at the national level.

IPT on dams in Arunachal Pradesh

We hope that this would contribute in stimulating a healthy debate and discussion on the real costs of the massive dam building programme, and sustainable and equitable and options for development.

Prof. S. Rajkhowa Nandini Oza Shripad Dharmadhikary

**Main points made by the
various speakers during
the depositions
to the Independent Peoples Tribunal
on Dams in Arunachal held on
February 3, 2008 at Itanagar**

Italics - *key issues*
Underlined - demands

Dibang project

Raju Mimi

- Presented a detailed report at the public hearing on January 29, 2008 on how the environment impact assessment was full of errors.
 - ❖ *downstream impact has been missed by the EIA*
 - ❖ 60,000 people would be affected downstream
- The EIA should be done again and public hearing conducted again based on the revised EIA.
- *laying of the foundation stone by prime minister even before the public hearing has been done is a mockery of the EIA notification.*
- *Huge influx of outsiders will create a demographic problem. Idu Mishmi population is just 11,021. According to EIA of the Dibang project, about 5800 workforce will come from outside.*
- *Possibility of high ethnic tension as population is distinctly and geographically distributed. Resettling one tribe in another area would be a problem.*

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- *Dibang is as sacred for the Idu Mishmi community as the Ganga is for the Hindus.*

Martin Lego

- Chief minister had assured us that the dams would be finalised only after the public hearing
- *In the public hearing almost 99% of the speakers were against dam.*
- The public hearing on 31st January was aborted due to heavy snow, but the prime minister laid the foundation stone on the same day at Itanagar.
- *I have lived in the Dibang valley all my life but the river has never flooded or eroded our lands. So why is this project being built for so-called flood control?*
- *This is the area with very high seismic risk. If there is a dam break all the Idu people downstream will be finished.*
- NHPC has never responded to us.
- *The Hoolock Gibbon is found only in this area, it is an endangered species under Schedule-I.*
- One of the key area for quarrying is Durbani. But collecting products from the river bed has been banned since last 15 years. Somehow will it be allowed for the dam?
- The country wants the lands of the Northeast but are the people of the Northeast. Why should so many dams be constructed in Arunachal?
- *NHPC has not looked on the issue of methane gas emissions from reservoirs.*
- Our basic demand is no to this dam.

Tone Mickrow

- *A huge number of labour will be coming in from outside. Most of them will be coming from Bangladesh as the cheapest labour is available there. Our community will be compelled to move*

closer to China. The government of India is encouraging militancy.

- *Our people are not yet ready for the contracts and the jobs that the project would be offering. So what benefit would we get?*
- *According to the UN, we are among the endangered tribal communities of the world. With the influx of the labour from outside local people will be reduced to a minority. This is the situation in Tripura.*
- *What is the use of memoranda and letters? I find them ridiculous now. Our memos are lying in the dustbin.*
- *Lot of our community land will be lost to catchment area treatment, compensated afforestation, etc.*
- *In the Teesta river valley, the people were very healthy but after the construction of the dam, there started a tremendous spread of AIDS.*
- We are opposing the construction of the dam.

Paha Mimi

- *The survey for the Dibang project has been going on since 1992 and the Brahmaputra board was doing it. In 1999 it was handed over to the NHPC. But we the people of the valley were never informed by anyone about this. evasive replies were given to us like the names are being collected for voter lists. The notice for the hearing was issued on May 11, 2007 and that is when we started asking each other what is happening.*
- *There's been no response to the memorandum submitted by us.*
- *Where they will give land to us? There's no land anywhere to give. If the dam is constructed we shall have to go to some other country to settle down.*
- We're given a memo for resurvey but they are not doing it at the place we have indicated.

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- *We feel that the submergence will be much more than what the project authorities are saying.*

Kotige Mena

- *The whole Idu Mishmi and Adi community is opposing the project but only the MLAs are supporting.*
- *Unrest is sure to follow, even armed rebellion.*
- *At the public hearing, we had to enter forcibly enter the hall. NHPC was mobilising people to support the project. The public had to shout to be heard.*
- *The EIA/EMP made by national productivity council are totally hopeless and faulty.*
- *We would like the nation to help us.*
- *We are against the construction of large dams.*
- *Our community, the Idu Mishmi depends upon the fish Iyu found in the river for festival Reh. This fish will be completely wiped out due to the construction of the dam.*
- *The national productivity council has done the EIA secretly.*
- *Our major festival, Reh, is celebrated on first and second February. But they kept the public hearing on January 29 & 31 as they wanted to sabotage our participation.*
- *The dam and the road will bring many poachers in the area who will kill the animals. Our community, Idu, is very friendly to nature and very protective of animals.*

Kamin Pertin

- *The EIA report was not made a widely available.*
- *No copies were given to the affected people.*
- *The EIA report is available only in English.*
- *In Arunachal there is no Land Act. Land, even rivers, can be owned by the community or individual. So from where will the government bring land for resettlement?*

Ingore Mimi

- *we expected the government of Arunachal to be here at the hearing.*
- *our community, Idu, is very small so even if a small number is displaced the impact is very large.*
- *The downstream area remains and will remain in the grip of fear psychosis.*
- *How can the authorities undermine our, or the Adi community's attachment to nature, mountains?*

Aaga Mena

- *I belong to the upstream affected area, the village nearest to the dam site.*
- *We welcome development, but sustainable development.*
- *We are very clear that we do not want this kind of development with mega projects.*
- *Our tribe is among one of the most endangered tribes. When so many labourers come in from outside what will happen to us?*
- *We want this issue to become a national issue.*
- *NHPC says that if you allow us the development of the dam the government will bring new roads. So I ask, is this a condition? That we won't get roads without dams? That means what they're saying is that you give us your water and only then we will give you the roads.*

Ranganadi Project

Tana Pinje

- *We were told that after the dam has been built there would be glitter and lighting everywhere. But often we don't get electricity for one week sometimes even one month.*

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- *After the dam, the water level in the river has gone down sharply.*
- *Earlier there is to be lot of fish in the river, but now the fish has all gone.*
- We demand that those who were dependent on fishing should be given jobs.
- *Even our orange gardens have finished because the water level has gone down.*
- *Even the other crops had been affected.*
- *At the same time, often waters are released suddenly into the river and this can create sudden flood.*
- *Sometimes our cattle have been washed away. Sometime back one young boy was also swept away by the flash floods.*
- *One day NEEPCO suddenly issued the circular that says that they will not be responsible for any damages to live for property downstream and has warned all the people to keep away from the river.*
- *We are living in perpetual fear.*
- We demand that there should be early warning system when water is released, a check dam should be built to protect our village, (Upper Cher), the village Lichi which is very close to the river bank should be shifted and rehabilitated, the people whose livelihoods have been affected should be given compensation, and at least 30 percent of the water should be released into the river so that at least some fishing activities and some agriculture can be restored.
- We would like to warn other people that they should reject the project and protest before the MoUs have been signed.

Tarh Anil

- *On the night when there is heavy rainfall we are unable to sleep. We keep the lights on and keep awake the whole night.*

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- *Even the ground water levels have gone down. Earlier our oranges used to be juicy, now they're very dry.*

Subansiri (Lower) Project

Dr. Thado Karlo

- I'm representing a family affected by the project.
- Prof. Wadia says that the state falls under seismic zone-5. This is serious implications for building dams here.
- The affected people have come here and sat on *dharna*. Once again they came here, tried to take out a rally. But the administration disallowed that. The chief minister says that your local MLA has committed to the project and for solution talk to him.
- People in the area have now surrendered themselves to their fate.

Subansiri (Upper) Project

Rago Duchok

- *Before the dams came up in our area of people were completely unaware of what the impacts would be. I visited the Teesta dam in Sikkim, and I can't even imagine that if this was being done in our area where would our people go?*
- *The DPR of the project has been made but we have not even been informed about it, even our MLAs have not been informed.*
- *The MoUs say that jobs in grade C and D would be reserved for local people, but this is subject to fulfilling the criteria. The problem is that our people can't fulfil their criteria.*
- *The dam will make the road from our area to the district headquarters much longer. Even today people find it very difficult to go there, after the dam it will be even more difficult.*

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- *The total population of our tribe Tagin is only 20,000. The chief engineer of the project has told me that 15,000 people will be required for the construction of the project. For most of the people will be coming from outside. What will happen to our people?*
- We certainly want development. But sustainable development. It is possible to build many mini and Micro-projects. It is not required to construct large dams here. These are not for us, these are for outsiders.
- We demand that the dam is stopped totally. If not, at least they should be minimised.

Babu Gamah

- It is almost as if the NHPC is invading our area.
- *The NHPC told me when I went to their office that they are working for our people. But we're seeing that even people more advanced than us have been badly affected by dams. We tribal people are so unaware of things that we will be very badly affected.*
- *Our tribal and ancestral property will be destroyed. These mountains, water we regard this is our property, we are no other property.*
- My father keeps telling me stories about how he and his father hunted here, how we have fought here.
- *I know my forefathers upto seventeen generations. We have a very close relationship with our ancestors. But with the coming of the dam all this relationship will be destroyed.*
- We're not against power. We need power but are against mega dams. Instead, we can encourage other things like tourism. Arunachal Pradesh is so beautiful with zero pollution. We can earn revenue that we want from such activities. And it has to construct mini dams for power.
- We will fight the dam. Maybe the government is stronger than us but we will still fight against the dam.
- We see the fate of people affected by the Ranganadi project.

Taje Ramsingh

- The survey for the dam has already taken place.
- The people are somewhat happy at this stage because some economic benefits are trickling in—land compensation, medical facilities etc.
- Those who are questioning the dam are being told that they are questioning because they are illiterate.
- The people feel that they will get jobs and contracts but nobody is aware of the long-term impacts of the project.
- The Government of India and the Government of Arunachal Pradesh only want our land. They don't care if the people live or die.

Overall

Anthony Bamang

- The question is, what kind of development we want? For whom? This is what we're been asking.
- The government of Arunachal Pradesh has signed 59 MoUs for dams.
- Seven MoUs of 10,230 MW are with the CPUs and 52 are with private companies for the remaining capacity.
- *The national rehabilitation and resettlement policy will not be applicable as many times the number of people affected issue to be less than 250, the cut-off number.*
- *Yazali town will be affected in the Ranganadi Phase-II project. This is the pioneering valley of Nyishi art culture and literature.*
- *Now they say that this town will have to shift to the upper side. But that land belongs to another community and so they will not allow our shifting there. You can imagine what will happen if there is an attempt to settle one tribe in the land of another.*
- *This is the time for the national and other actors to come in. There's no need to wait for a movement to go beyond what it is, or wait for the displacement to happen on a large scale.*

People who made their depositions

Sr. No	Name	Address	Organisation	Project	Remarks
1	Dure Bui	Durpai Village		Subansiri (Lower)	Field Visit
2	Yumjum Taipodia	Durpai Village		Subansiri (Lower)	Field Visit
3	Mentluk Ruwa	Durpai Village		Subansiri (Lower)	Field Visit
4	Dr. Takio Taram	Upper Cher (Hawa Camp)		Ranganadi	Field Visit
5	Tana Pinje	Upper Cher (Hawa Camp)		Ranganadi	Field Visit
6	Raju Mimi	Hunti Village		Dibang 3000 MW	Hearing
7	Martin Lego	Ziya	Downstream Anti-Dam Committee	Dibang 3000 MW	Hearing
8	Tone Mickrow	Iditi Village	All Idu Mishmi Students Union	Dibang 3000 MW	Hearing
9	Paha Mimi	New Aenaya	Dam Affected Citizen Committee	Dibang 3000 MW	Hearing
10	Kotige Mena	Mayu, Roing, Dibang Valley	Idu Cultural Literary Society	Dibang 3000 MW	Hearing
11	Kamin Pertin	Bolung, Dibang Valley		Dibang 3000 MW	Hearing
12	Ingore Linggi	Mayu, Roing, Dibang Valley		Dibang 3000 MW	Hearing
13	Tana Pinje	Ranganadi		Ranganadi	Hearing
14	Tarh Anil	Lichi		Ranganadi	Hearing
15	Rago Duchok	Upper subansiri		Subansiri (Upper)	Hearing
16	Babu Gamah	Drupai		Subansiri (Upper)	Hearing
17	Taje Ramsingh	Daparijo		Subansiri (Upper)	Hearing
18	Aegami meme	, Roing		Dibang 3000 MW	Hearing
19	Anthony Bamang	Arunachal Citizens Rights		Overall	Hearing
20	Dr. Tado Karlo	Likhabali	NIHRO	Subansiri (Lower)	Hearing

**Highlights of the
presentation on the dams in
Arunachal Pradesh**

AN OPPORTUNITY

**Independent Peoples Tribunal
on DAMS**

Arunachal Pradesh

February 3, 2008

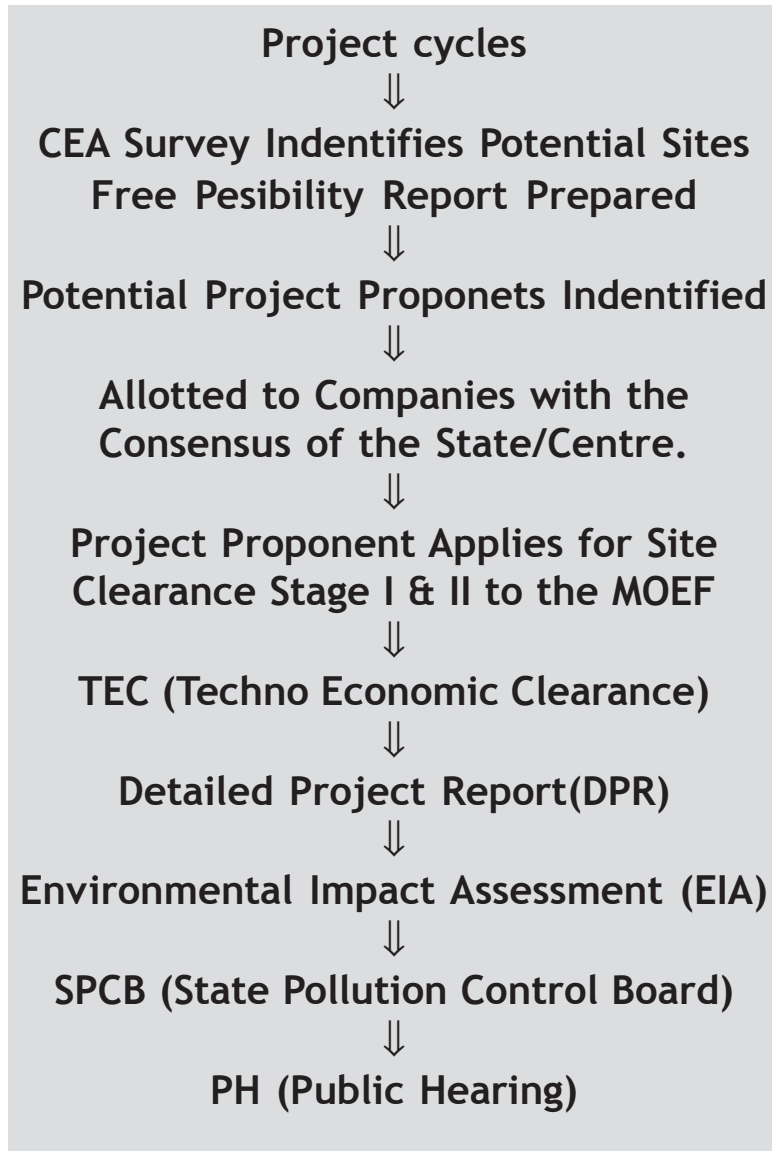
**Organised by:
HRLN, NIHRO and ACR**

MEGA DAMS IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

**Pros and cons
in the 21st century
A perspective by: ACR**

MAJOR RIVERS

- Kameng
- Subansiri
- Siang
- Dibang
- Lohit
- Tirap



Wars in the Name of Development

- Trans-boundary issues, inter-state conflicts, inter-ethnic conflict are bound to happen when dominant and top-down approach to mega dams development continues.
- The preliminary reports revealed that of the 16 states, 41 projects in Arunachal Pradesh have a combined capacity of 21,660 MW. Of the 162 sites identified by CEA all over India, the largest capacity of 4,000 MW is proposed at Etalin in Arunachal Pradesh with 16 units of 250 MW each. The second largest project will also be located in Arunachal Pradesh at Demwe with a capacity to generate 3,000 MW of electricity.
- The impacts of all these projects on the state's environment, ecology, and its people are going to be significant!

IPT on dams in Arunachal Pradesh

50,000 MW HYDRO ELECTRIC INITIATIVES

Sl. No	River	Sl. No	Name of Scheme	River
1	Lohit	22	Oju- II	Subansiri
2	Lohit	23	Niare	Subansiri
3	Lohit	24	Naba	Subansiri
4	Dibang	25	Kurung Dam-I & II	Kurung
5	Emra	26	Duimukh Stor.	Dikrang
6	Matun	27	Nalo	Si Ngit
7	Matun	28	Bharali Lift Dam- I	Kameng
8	Dibang	29	Bharali Lift Dam- II	Kameng
9	Dibang	30	Tenga	Tenga
10	Angon	31	Kameng Dam	Kameng
11	Ahi	32	Chanda	Kameng
12	Ashupani	33	Badao	Kameng
13	Si Ngit	34	Talong	Kameng
14	Etabu	35	Kapak Leyak	Pachuk
15	Siyom	36	Panchung	Pacha
16	Siyom	37	Utung	Bichom
17	Rigong	38	Dibbin	Bichom
18	Sigong	39	Tarang Warang	Pacha
19	Siyom	40	Pakke	Pakke
20	Simang	41	Seba	Pakke
21	Subansiri	42	Papu	Papu

Present Scenarios

- 104 potential dams identified in the tiny state of Arunachal Pradesh with a installed capacity of 55556 MW.
- Total projects signed MOU/MOA = 59 nos.
- Projects allotted to CPUs = 7 nos.
- Installed capacity = 10230 MW
- Projects allotted private players = 52 nos.
- Installed capacity = 14289.50 MW
- Total installed capacity = 24519.50 MW

Article 5: Free Power to the State, Evacuation & Trading of Power

5.2 From the Commercial Operation Date (COD), the Company shall deposit @ 3 (three) paise per Unit of power generated from the Project with the Welfare Funds of the State Govt. for the welfare of the people of the State of Arunachal Pradesh.

Article 7: Recruitment of Project Personnel/Award of Work

7.1 The Company shall reserve 15% of the following categories of post against the Project to be filled up by the local tribal people, subject to the incumbents fulfilling the job requirements and considered suitable by the Company.

- (a) Managerial/Professional post.
- (b) Ministerial/Clerical post.
- (c) Skilled jobs
- (d) Unskilled jobs.

7.2 The Company shall give preference to the local contractors subject to they fulfilling the eligibility criteria in the award of the works except for the specialized jobs.

National Policy on Resettlement and Rehabilitation ”for Project Affected Families-2003 ”No. 46, dated February 17, 2004

- NPRR will be applicable to project displacing 500 families or more enmasse in plain areas and 250 families enmasse in hilly areas.
- Any Project Affected Family (PAF) owing house and whose house has been acquired may be allotted free of cost house site to the extent of actual loss of area of the acquired house but not more than 150 sq.m. of land in rural areas and 75 sq.m of land in urban areas.
- Each PAF of BPL category shall get a one-time financial assistance of Rs.25000/- for house construction. Non-BPL families shall not be entitled to received this assistance.
- Each PAF shall get financial assistance of Rs 5000/- as transportation cost for shifting of building materials, belongings and cattle etc. from the affected zone to the resettlement zone.

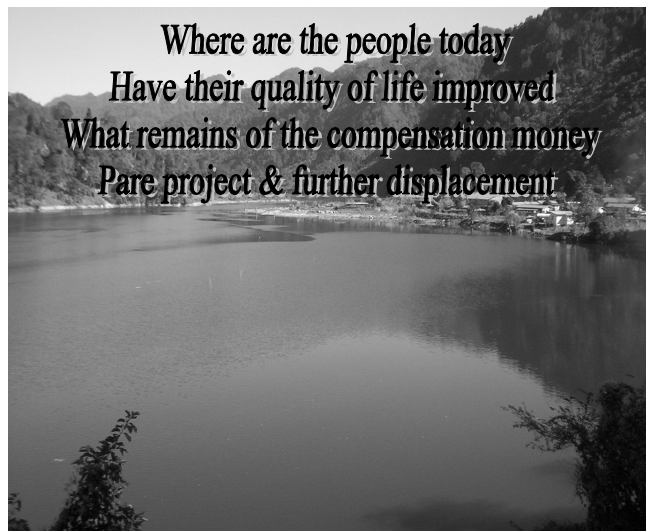
Impacts of mega dams

- The impacts of these projects are going to be significant. The Subansiri and Dehang hydel power projects alone will require nearly 28,000 hectares of wildlife-stocked forestland and preliminary estimates put the cost at a whopping US \$ 200 billion. The Dehang-Debang Biosphere Reserve and the soon-to-be notified Namdapha Biosphere Reserve lies within the proposed impact zone. The Kameng hydel power project at Tipi threatens the Namheri National Park and the Pakui Wildlife Sanctuary, which have just been brought under the Project Tiger mantle.
- The projects have been riddled by problems of shoddy Comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessments, no projections been made on the cumulative effect of so many projects concentrated in a relatively small area, displacement of millions, the geology of the area, situation due to geological instability, seism city and catchments denudation.

IPT on dams in Arunachal Pradesh



LESSONS FROM PANIOR PHASE-I



IMPACT OF DAM INDUCED DISPLACEMENT

These refugees were temporarily settled in 10,799 acres of land in these districts. The district-wise population of these refugees during the period 1964-69 is as follows:

- a) **Lohit District:** 214 Chakma families consisting of 1192 persons
- b) **Subansiri District:** 238 Chakma families consisting of 1133 persons (now in Papum Pare district)
- c) **Tirap District (now in Changlang district)**
 - i) **Chakmas:** 2146 families consisting of 11813 persons
 - ii) **Hajong:** 150 families consisting of 750 persons

Total: 2748 families consisting of 14888 persons

State Govt.carried an exclusive census in September' 1979.

1. **Lohit District:** 319 families consisting of nearly 1900 persons.
2. **Subansiri District:** 290 families consisting of 1600 persons
3. **Tirap District:** 1480 families consisting of 8474 persons.
 - a) **Bordumsa Circle:** 412 families consisting of 2248 persons
 - b) **Miao Circle:** 1160 families consisting of 6131 persons
4. **Tirap District (Hajongs):** 258 families consisting of 1141 persons

Total : 3919 families consisting of 21,494 persons

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EXPERIENCES AND ANALYSIS,

	1964	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	2021
Arunachal Tribal	2,98,439	3,69,408	4,41,169	5,50,351	7,05,158	9,13,980	12,064454
Chakma Hajong	14,888	21,494	30,951	65,000	1,62,500	4,55,000	13,65,000

Yazali-the Pioneering Valley of Nyishi Art, Culture and Literature



CONSEQUENCES OF MEGA DAMS

- Intra-Nyishi conflict
- Influx
- Displacement
- Environment and Wildlife
- Cultural conflict over land, forest & river
- Political conflict
- Economic

