

The Snowchange Cooperative Urges Re-evaluation of the Proposed Hydroelectric Dam that Threatens the Kayapo and Other Indigenous Peoples' Traditional Territories

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The Snowchange Cooperative based in Finland voices its concern regarding the Belo Monte Dam developments in Brazil.

Snowchange works with representatives of several Indigenous communities and organizations around the world connected through the Indigenous Peoples Climate Change Assessment.

Snowchange voices our concern over the recent decisions by the Brazilian government to agree to construct hydroelectric dam "Belo Monte". The impacts of the proposed hydroelectric development of "Belo Monte" on the Xingu River in Brazil in the Amazonian will have devastating impacts on the lives of the Kayapo Indigenous peoples currently living in the proposed dam areas to be flooded. Additionally the Juruna and Arana as well as other Indigenous peoples will be impacted because of this development. "Belo Monte" dam would flood over 400,000 hectares of forest. The impacts to local ecosystems and a vast range of species and natural habitats will be immense. Additionally the reservoirs to be created will increase methane levels in the region – thus contributing to climate change instead of improving the situation as the proponents of the dam argue. Snowchange urges an immediate stop to this hydroelectric development.

Recent scholarship (Mustonen et al. 2010) on hydroelectricity development and Indigenous Sámi communities from Northern Finland and Sweden indicates that the impacts of hydroelectricity development have resulted in a range of impacts including forced re-location of Indigenous peoples, language destruction, subsistence economy crash and loss of social and cultural networks in addition to the lost natural habitats.

The research quoted here re-visited Indigenous communities in Finland and Sweden almost 40 years after the original hydroelectricity dams had been constructed. Both the natural ecosystems as well as the Indigenous communities still continued to suffer from the impacts of lost lands – we can say that hydroelectricity development has caused inter-generational damages amongst the Indigenous peoples around the world. We urge the Brazilian government to respect the Indigenous rights of the Kayapo and other local Peoples and stop the construction of the hydroelectric dam "Belo Monte" and associated industrial activities. A full land-use and occupancy community-based study should be conducted to document the reality of the Kayapo and other local Indigenous Peoples at an earliest convenience. The rights of the local Indigenous peoples should be respected and the affected communities consulted at all stages of the process.

Snowchange and our international partners in the Indigenous Peoples Climate Change Assessment process and the associated UN and other international organizations will continue to monitor and assess the situation of the Kayapo and hydroelectric dam "Belo Monte". We request the government of Brazil to stop the repression and persecution of indigenous leaders who are resisting the destruction of their territories which would be caused by the dam. We demand that the government of Brazil guarantee the human rights of Indigenous peoples and recognize the right of indigenous peoples to their territories, as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recommends.

References

Mustonen, Tero and Mustonen, Kaisu with Aikio, Pekka and Aikio, Antti. Drowning Reindeer, Drowning Homes – Indigenous Sámi and Hydroelectricity in Sompio, Finland. Snowchange Cooperative, 2010.

<http://amazonwatch.org/work/belo-monte-dam>