
[Thailand: local people's resistance to dams](#)

Dam megaprojects are being strongly resisted by local communities worldwide since they mean the loss of their lands and forests, and their forced displacement. In Thailand massive protests have been organized to halt this kind of projects undertaken in the name of "progress" (see WRM Bulletin 22).

A group of 500 villagers belonging to the Forum of the Poor has settled in the middle reservoir of Rasi Salai Dam to support the struggle of their relatives of the Moon Basin Forum for compensation since their lands will be flooded by the dam project. The works would affect more than 600 peasants' lands. But the Department of Energy Development and Promotion is putting their lives at risk menacing to start operating the flood gates soon, by the end of the rainy season.

Prasittiporn Kan-Onsri, adviser to the Forum of the Poor, said villagers would not be moved by threat. "Whatever happens we will not move out from the reservoir. We will survive somehow," he said. The conflict between the authorities and local communities is due to an opposite point of view related to land and natural resources management: while the government considers that the forest and land along the river banks is public property, villagers claim that they have been using the wetland forest along the Moon river for generations because the land is rich with sediment from seasonal flooding. A recent study performed at the Khon Kaen University supports their viewpoint. Additionally, reality shows that land management performed by local dwellers generally assures sustainability. On the contrary, lands under public domain end up very often -by means of concessions- in the hands of logging, plantations or mining companies which destroy the forest.

Source: "Protesters at risk from drowning" by Anchalee Kongrut, Bangkok Post, 10/9/1999, sent by Aviva Imhof
(aviva@irn.org) 13/9/99.