

A person is ziplining over a wide, calm river. The person is suspended in mid-air, holding onto a rope that extends from a tree on the left. The river is surrounded by lush greenery and trees. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

International Rivers
Annual Report
2016

Our Impact in 2016

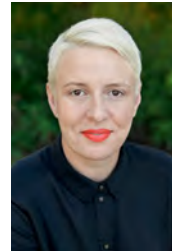
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A Letter From the Executive Director

Dear friends and supporters,

We're pleased to share our 2016 Annual Report with you.



The movement to protect rivers and communities has never been more important. We know that freshwater is vital to all life on earth. Local communities, the traditional and best stewards of this most precious resource, are increasingly fighting to maintain control of their lands and waters. Freshwater ecosystems are suffering, transformed from vibrant, connected ecosystems into stagnant dead zones.

In 2016, our campaigners worked tirelessly to protect rivers and river communities, and we met with striking success. In Chile, Endesa pulled out of six destructive hydropower projects on five rivers, citing community resistance as a major reason for the move. China declined to develop its last major free-flowing river, the Nu, for the next five years. And the World Bank pulled out of the troubled Inga 3 hydropower project.

We have continued to collaborate with regional partners who are fighting the worst hydropower projects, elevating the voices of local communities while bolstering their work with the latest research. We've held some of the world's most powerful governments and dam-builders to account, helping communities map their rivers and supporting lawsuits where necessary. And we have continued to innovate, launching an ambitious new permanent river protection campaign that has brought this concept to a global audience.

The tide is turning. With the meteoric rise of wind and solar, the world can now meet its energy needs without developing calamitous large hydropower projects. We can see the way to a water and energy future that is decentralized, inclusive and just. We hope you'll stay with us as we work to make that vision a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Horner'.

Kate Horner

Mission & Vision

International Rivers protects rivers and defends the rights of communities that depend on them.

We seek a world where healthy rivers and the rights of local river communities are valued and protected. We envision a world where water and energy needs are met without degrading nature or increasing poverty, and where people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

We are a global organization with regional offices in Asia, Africa and Latin America. We work with river-dependent and dam-affected communities to ensure their voices are heard and their rights are respected. We help to build well-resourced, active networks of civil society groups to demonstrate our collective power and create the change we seek. We undertake independent, investigative research, generating robust data and evidence to inform policies and campaigns. We remain independent and fearless in campaigning to expose and resist destructive projects, while also engaging with all relevant stakeholders to develop a vision that protects rivers and the communities that depend on them.



Legal Protection:

The Movement to Keep Rivers Free

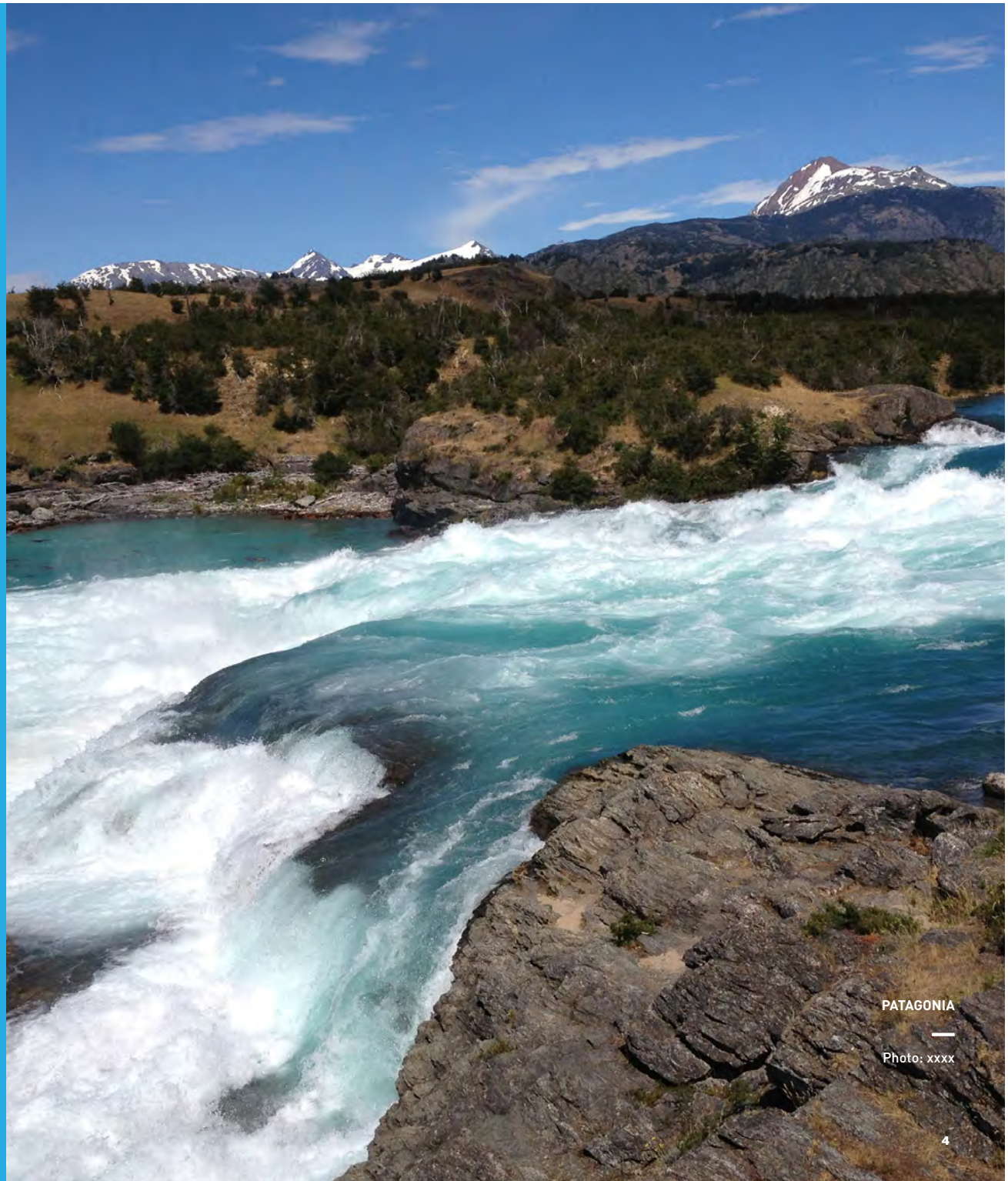
**By Monti Aguirre,
Latin America Program
Coordinator**

When the energy company Endesa announced it would relinquish water rights to five rivers in Chile, we celebrated...and then we got back to work. Because until a river is permanently protected, it's not safe from harmful development.

We're confident that we can win permanent legal protection for rivers of outstanding value, by building a strong movement to support these legislative changes. In 2016, we launched a program to make permanent river conservation a legal reality for some of Latin America's most biodiverse and important rivers, including the Magdalena River, the headwaters of the Amazon, and Patagonia's rivers.

In Chile, we are partnering with Geute Conservación Sur and Ecosistemas. In Colombia, we are partnering with the Movimiento Ríos Vivos. In Ecuador and Perú, we are building relationships with the Shuar, Achuar, Awajún and Wampis peoples to work towards legal protection for their rivers.

It's time to ensure that future generations can enjoy wild, scenic and free-flowing rivers.



PATAGONIA

Photo: xxxx

Program Update: Latin America

Our Latin America Program helps Latin American countries understand and explore their energy options – and highlights the risks posed by climate change.

Peru

Our new report, *Peru's Energy Future*, found Peru's energy planning relies heavily on hydropower while only tepidly exploring wind, solar and geothermal. As glaciers retreat and rainfall patterns change, relying on hydropower poses grave risks to the country's energy future. The report made waves in the country, and in October, Peru said it won't build large dams on the Amazonian portion of the Marañon River.

Chile

When the Chilean energy company Endesa scrapped six dams on five rivers, the company cited sustained civil society opposition as one reason they're pulling out.

Brazil

See Brazil's program update on p. 7

Argentina

Argentina's Supreme Court ordered the suspension of the construction of the Kirchner and Cepernic dams in the province of Santa Cruz until the environmental impact assessment process and hearing is implemented.

“ENDESA CHILE WANTS TO ONLY MOVE FORWARD ON PROJECTS THAT ARE TECHNICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY VIABLE AND THAT ARE EMBRACED BY THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES.”

Endesa

Rivers & Human Rights

Caught in the Crosshairs of Development

In recent years, the silencing and assassination of environmental and indigenous defenders has become tragically common. On average, three people are killed every week defending their land and waterways against deforestation, pollution and damming.

Indigenous and local communities face enormous risks when they stand up to the powerful interests behind these projects. We saw this firsthand with the murder of our longtime friend and partner Berta Cáceres in March 2016: The Goldman Prize-winning river defender was shot dead in Honduras for her opposition to Agua Zarca Dam.

We demanded European funders end their support for the dam. After months of sustained pressure from an international coalition of groups including International Rivers, funders exited Agua Zarca Dam.

The frequent human rights violations in the hydropower sector disproportionately impact indigenous peoples. We are working to:

- Influence the planning process to prevent projects in danger-prone regions.
- Document and target corporations that violate rights through project monitoring.
- Provide recommendations for strengthening national, regional and international instruments for human rights protections.
- Support project-affected peoples to seek redress for human rights violations.

Energy access and economic development are necessary, but must not come at the expense of human lives.



HOMAGE TO BERTA CACERES

Berta Zúñiga Cáceres speaks at a rally for justice for her late mother, Berta Cáceres. Photo by Daniel Cima, via Wikimedia Commons

Program Update:

Brazil

The Tapajós River Basin: Education and Movement Building

The Tapajós River and its major tributaries are threatened by an unprecedented series of massive dams and associated industrial waterways (hidrovias) that would flood national parks, indigenous lands and other protected areas, accelerating the destruction of the Amazon Basin.

We launched Ocekadi, a book about hydroelectric dams, conflict and resistance on the Tapajós, with a series of well-attended film screenings and public debates that raised awareness of this epic struggle. Soon after, Brazil suspended the Sao Luis do Tapajós mega-dam on the Tapajós River. While many threats remain, it was a massive win for indigenous groups and civil society.

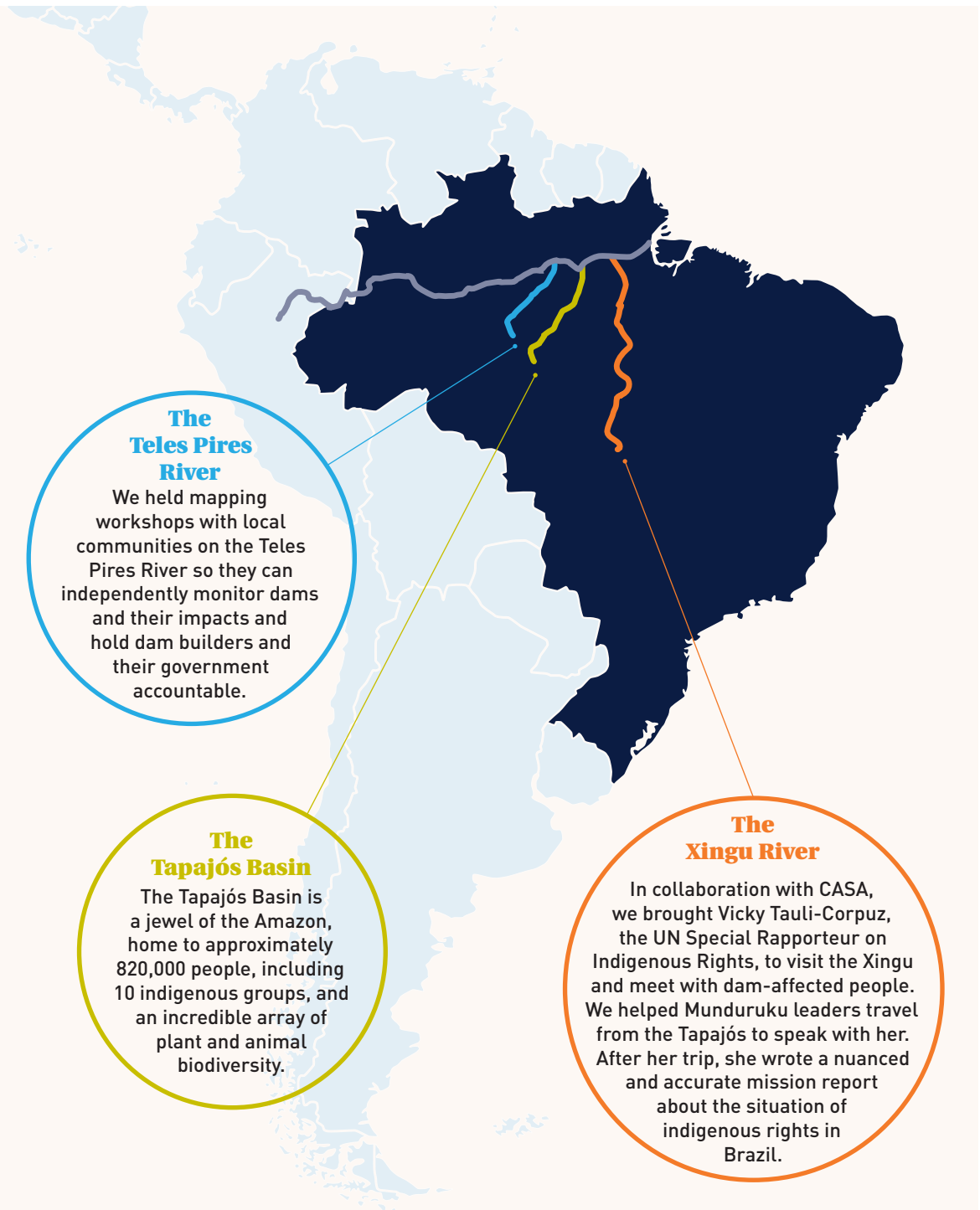
The Xingu River Basin: Connecting Movements and Fostering Debate

The Belo Monte Dam, now complete, is the third-largest hydroelectric project in the world and diverts nearly the entire flow of the Xingu River through two artificial canals, leaving indigenous communities along a 100-kilometer stretch of the Xingu's Big Bend without water, fish, or a means of river transport.

To tell the communities' stories, we produced and launched "Belo Monte: After the Flood." The film, narrated by Brazilian actor Marcos Palmeira, documents the movement of indigenous and local people against Belo Monte, and encourages allies to take action for the future of the Amazon.

"OUR PEOPLE FACE INCREASED VIOLENCE, UNEMPLOYMENT AND MISERY BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT AND A GROUP OF INVESTORS WANT TO EXPLOIT OUR LAND AND RIVERS FOR PROFIT."

Antônia Melo, Xingu Vivo Para Sempre



The Teles Pires River

We held mapping workshops with local communities on the Teles Pires River so they can independently monitor dams and their impacts and hold dam builders and their government accountable.

The Tapajós Basin

The Tapajós Basin is a jewel of the Amazon, home to approximately 820,000 people, including 10 indigenous groups, and an incredible array of plant and animal biodiversity.

The Xingu River

In collaboration with CASA, we brought Vicky Tauli-Corpuz, the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights, to visit the Xingu and meet with dam-affected people. We helped Munduruku leaders travel from the Tapajós to speak with her. After her trip, she wrote a nuanced and accurate mission report about the situation of indigenous rights in Brazil.

BRAZIL

Vicky Tauli-Corpuz, the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights, visits the Xingu River basin.

Photo courtesy of Todd Southgate.

**SOME 25,000
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE
FROM 18 DISTINCT
ETHNIC GROUPS LIVE
ALONG THE XINGU
RIVER.**



An aerial photograph showing a dark, winding river cutting through a lush, green forest. The river meanders through the trees, creating a series of loops and curves. The sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a dappled light effect on the water and the surrounding foliage.

Rivers in an Era of Climate Change

We have entered an era of water chaos. Extreme floods and droughts are wreaking havoc worldwide and particularly across Africa: On the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe, the Kariba Dam's reservoir levels dropped so low that the dam produced very little energy. Residents of nearby cities had to make do with a few hours of electricity a day.

There is another way. Free-flowing rivers are some of our best allies as we develop our resilience in the face of climate change. Free-flowing rivers mitigate floods and droughts, protect biodiversity, and draw an estimated 200 million tons of carbon out of the air each year.

We need these critical natural systems more now than ever. To weather the coming storm – and to protect the people, places and species we hold dear – we must protect and restore our rivers.

Program Update:

Africa

The Omo River & Lake Turkana

Our film on Lake Turkana aired on Kenyan TV and was named Best East African Documentary.

The Omo River & Lake Turkana: Igniting Dialogue & Debate

Ethiopia's Gibe III Dam, coupled with industrial-scale plantations along the Omo River, threatens to starve Kenya's Lake Turkana of water. At least 300,000 people rely directly on Lake Turkana, the world's largest desert lake, for their water and livelihoods.

We launched our third documentary about the lake, "From Water to Dust," showing how Gibe III and related irrigation schemes are impacting local fishers and pastoralists. The documentary aired on NTV in Kenya and won an award for Best East African Documentary in the Mashariki African Film Festival.

The Niger River: Empowering Grassroots Movements

West Africa's Niger River sustains the lives and livelihoods of millions. The proposed Kandadji Dam near Niamey in Niger could flood more than 60,000 people from their homes without sufficient land for resettlement, and inundate prime agricultural land.

We supported partners from Niger to raise concerns directly to the World Bank in Washington about this avoidable humanitarian disaster in the making. Our advocacy led the World Bank to suspend the project and later redesign the dam to limit its footprint.

The Congo River: Bold Policy and Advocacy

The Congo River is rich in bird life, fish species and aquatic mammals – and home to the world's second-largest rainforest. But river communities are threatened by the proposed Inga 3 Dam, would export the bulk of its electricity to South Africa while leaving ordinary Congolese in the dark.

We exposed Inga 3's deep corruption and planning issues. Thanks to our work, the World Bank canceled its involvement in Inga 3. This marked a turning point in the World Bank's support for mega-dams: In 2016, the World Bank's lending for hydropower sank to the lowest level in years, in favor of new renewables.

"THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO WILL BE DISPLACED BY THE KANDADJI DAM WANT TO SEE OUR COUNTRY DEVELOP, BUT NOT AT THEIR EXPENSE."

Sani Ayouba, Executive Director of Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement-Niger, on the International Rivers and JVE visit to Kandadji Dam-affected communities.

The Niger River

Because of our advocacy, the World Bank suspended Kandadji Dam, and later redesigned the project to limit its footprint.

The Congo River

Thanks to our work, the World Bank canceled its involvement in Inga 3 Dam.



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Sani Ayouba, Executive Director of Jeunes
Volontaires pour l'Environnement-Niger, on the
International Rivers and JVE visit to Kandaji
Dam-affected communities.

Program Update:

China

ICONIC RIVER CAMPAIGN The Nu River

The Nu/ Salween River

In 2016, China dropped its plans to dam the Nu River! Instead, national parks will be created to preserve the region.

The Nu/Salween: Protecting a Jewel

The Nu is one of China's last major free-flowing rivers, a hotbed of biodiversity, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and home to more than 20 ethnic minorities.

Starting in the early 2000s, China planned a hydropower cascade along the Nu River in China, which becomes the Salween River in Thailand and Myanmar. Many groups, including International Rivers, campaigned for years to save the river from this fate. In early 2016, International Rivers submitted comments to the World Heritage Committee and the Chinese government pushing for better protection of the Nu.

We also organized field trips to the river with geologists and environmentalists to collect information on overlooked plant diversity, governance of protected areas, seismicity risks, and the approval processes for large hydro projects in this region. In 2016, China dropped plans to dam the river!

THE NU RIVER IS A BIODIVERSITY EPICENTER. THE AREA CONTAINS OVER 6,000 PLANT SPECIES, AND SCIENTISTS BELIEVE IT SUPPORTS OVER 25% OF THE WORLD'S ANIMAL SPECIES.

Supporting Latin American NGOs

Latin America is an important market for Chinese companies and financiers. International Rivers went to Bogota to help Latin American NGOs better understand, strategize and engage with the Chinese stakeholders that have a large impact on Latin America's rivers.

We are also working to build capacity and networks within China's growing civil society sector.

Program Update:

Southeast and South Asia

The Mekong River

We are highlighting the human rights impacts of Mekong hydropower projects at the national and international levels.

The Teesta River

Thanks to our work, Teesta River communities are now exploring natural ways to protect their riverbanks from erosion.

The Teesta River

The River

The Teesta River, which originates in the Himalayas and flows into the Brahmaputra, is the lifeline of Sikkim state. The Teesta Valley is rich in biodiversity, and the river provides livelihoods for the residents along its entire length of 393 kilometers (245 miles).

The Threat

Communities living along the Teesta River were demanding huge hydro engineering to save their lands from erosion and flooding, including construction of a 25-kilometer wall.

What We Did: Advancing Community-Based Solutions

We held meetings to assess the risks to communities. During the meetings, the communities realized that such hydro engineering is not the ideal solution, and they decided to drop the demand. They're now exploring soft engineering solutions like planting plants and trees that bind the soil and prevent erosion.

The Mekong River

The River

The Mekong River is the heart and soul of mainland Southeast Asia. Over 60 million people depend on the river and its tributaries for food, water, transport and many other aspects of their daily lives. The river supports one of the world's most diverse fisheries, second only to Brazil's Amazon River.

The Threat

A new dam-building boom presents a serious threat to the river's ecology and puts the wellbeing of millions at risk.

What We Did: Driving Legal Reform to Protect Human Rights

We highlighted the human rights impacts of Mekong hydropower projects in the region and internationally, including at the United Nations Human Rights Council. We engaged the Thai and Malaysian national human rights institutions on the impacts of Mekong dams, leading to new policy recommendations for Thai and Malaysian companies to respect human rights in their extraterritorial investments.

We also supported Thai villagers to file an appeal to Thailand's Supreme Administrative Court challenging Thailand's power purchase from the Xayaburi Dam on the Mekong River in Laos. Our extensive campaigning on regional water governance prompted the Mekong River Commission (MRC) to conduct a review of its procedures and increase emphasis on stakeholder engagement, public participation and information transparency for hydropower development in the Mekong Basin.

"THE TEESTA AGREEMENT IS MEANINGLESS IF THERE IS NO WATER. IF 34 DAMS ARE BUILT AS PLANNED, BANGLADESH WILL TURN INTO A DESERT.... THE TEESTA IS NEARLY DEAD. WE NEED A MOVEMENT FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER [TO SAVE IT]."

Mohammad Ziaur Rahman

TEESTA RIVER

Villager along Teesta River
Photo courtesy of
Samir Mehta



Rivers Nourish Us

By Pai Deetes

As a child living in a hilltribe village near the Thai-Burma (Myanmar) border, my earliest memories were of playing in streams. I was often carried to meetings with hilltribe groups by my mother, Tuenjai Deetes, who was developing a model of community-led sustainable agriculture and poverty alleviation for which she would later win the Goldman Environmental Prize.

Growing up as a young adult, I traveled the rivers in my region for myself, witnessing firsthand their horrible destruction through projects to exploit water resources for profit, and I knew that I had to do everything in my power to save these rivers. Millions of lives here depend on them.

The Mekong River feeds upwards of 65 million people in Southeast Asia. Globally, freshwater fisheries feed at least 550 million people. Healthy rivers are key to the food security of some of the poorest and most marginalized groups in the world. Sustain our rivers, and they will nourish and sustain us.

MEKONG RIVER

Fishing boats on Mekong River.



Energy and Finance

The Tide is Turning

By Josh Klemm, Policy Director

We witnessed an unprecedented string of victories for rivers where we work in 2016. In Peru, Chile, Brazil, DRC and China, river communities were spared from large infrastructure developments they didn't want.

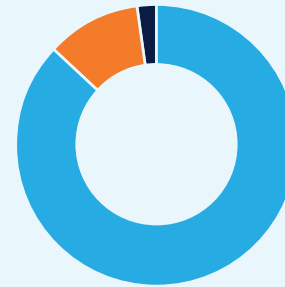
And the good news doesn't stop there. Major financiers are also reconsidering their support for hydropower. The World Bank, which led the quest for large dams only three years ago, sharply pivoted towards solar power in 2015. The Brazilian development bank BNDES recently announced a shift from gas and hydropower towards wind and solar power.

The conditions are ripe for a fundamental shift because the way we produce energy is changing. While wind and solar power are booming, newly installed hydropower capacity dropped from 38 to 22 gigawatt between 2013 and 2015. Globally, financiers invested 12 dollars in wind and solar projects for every dollar they put into large hydropower last year.

The wind is at our backs. We have the chance to truly transform the way governments, financiers and dam builders think about freshwater, human rights and energy development.

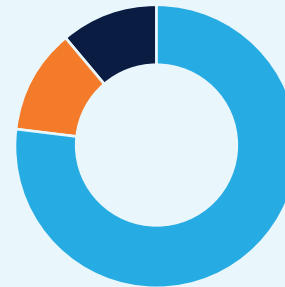
We can protect the world's critical freshwater ecosystems for future generations, with the help of a vibrant global community of people standing up for their rivers from the Amazon to the Mekong, from the Congo to Patagonia. Let's seize the moment!

Financial Statement



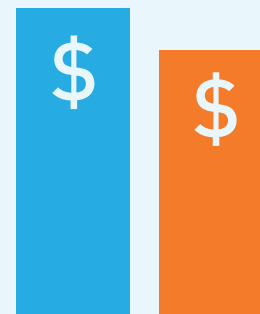
2016 Income:

- Grants \$1,650,152
- Contributions \$215,353
- Other \$28,009



2016 Expenses

- Programs: \$1,647,137
- Administration: \$266,486
- Fundraising: \$257,085



2016 Net Assets

- Beginning: \$1,574,161
- Ending: \$1,296,967

Donors

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Ayesha DSouza
Sabrina Gyorvary
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Internationalrivers.org
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Read our new 2018-2022 Strategic Plan here:
internationalrivers.org/strategicplan

Get Involved

Take Action on March 14

The annual International Day of Action for Rivers takes place on March 14. Tens of thousands of people rise up together on this day to clean up rivers, voice support for river protection, kayak and raft, screen documentaries, organize conferences, hold ceremonies, and more.

Pledge to take action for a river you care about on March 14: intrv.rs/riveraction

