

Dam and Water Access Press Release

China's hydropower dam expansion destroys Tibetan homes and temples, stands to displace 1.2 million people, and drives climate change

A new International Campaign for Tibet report finds China's rapid hydropower dam scheme is causing irreparable damage to Tibetan civilization, the environment, downstream nations, and the climate. Its agenda disregards the human impact, scientific consensus, and the worsening climate change associated with hydropower.

"The scale and scope of the PRC's hydropower dam spree is both unbelievable and unconscionable," said Tencho Gyatso, President of the International Campaign for Tibet. Adding, "Beijing's disdain for the Tibetan people's rights, its neighbours' fate, and the urgent moral and scientific demand to combat climate change could not be clearer. China must stop in its tracks and use its money, manpower, and innovation to advance solutions—not its political manoeuvring."

Tibet's glacial peaks are the headwaters of the region's eight major rivers. The report's rigorous research and advanced GIS mapping detail the Chinese Communist Party's rampant construction of hundreds of hydropower dams. This first-of-its-kind interactive map allows users to see the impact each dam will have on local populations, religious sites, and surrounding land cover. The report also presents alternatives for developing truly sustainable, renewable energy.

Key Findings:

- If completed, 1.2 million residents living near dam projects could be displaced from their homes, communities, and livelihoods. Religious and sacred sites serving communities will also be destroyed.
- Almost 80 percent of dams studied are large or mega dams (>100MW), which carry the most significant risks to Tibetan civilization, environmental sustainability, and the climate. However, over half the dams (59%) are still in the proposal or preparation stage, presenting opportunities to change course.
- A truly sustainable pathway for energy development must account for the climate, social, environmental, and geopolitical costs of hydropower. No plan is sustainable without the consent, participation, and co-management of local communities.
- Tibetans, who remain among the most politically marginalized in China, should not bear the highest cost to power China's industrial centres. Any long-term solution must involve a political resolution where Tibetan people enjoy the right to freely decide how their natural resources are used. This begins with the PRC entering into meaningful dialogue with representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Key Recommendations:

1. Cease all planning, proposing, and construction—including projects underway—of large-scale hydropower dams within Tibet.

2. Protect the right of Tibetans to participate in all development projects as per the 1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the right to free, prior, and informed consent. Stop the forcible dislocation of Tibetan communities.
3. Invest in properly sited and inclusively developed solar and wind power, as these do not carry the demonstrable environmental, climate, and social costs of hydropower. Such projects should prioritize co-management, co-benefits, and the maintenance of traditional ways of life, and in particular, should correspond to the needs of the local Tibetan population.
4. If China is sincere in acting as a global leader, it must engage in multilateral transboundary water policy forums to establish a mutually beneficial management architecture and data-sharing norms. Hydrological data and dam project plans should not be used as bargaining tools leveraged against downstream states.

Read the Full Report

To explore the findings and recommendations in detail, read the full report here:

<https://savetibet.org/chinese-hydropower/>