

Biographies delegation participants

Ruth Buendia Mestoquiari, President of Central Ashaninka del Rio Ene.

Ruth Buendia Mestoquiari is an Asháninka woman and indigenous leader from the indigenous community of Cutivireni in the Ene Valley in Peru . After the period of social violence suffered in the Selva Central under the Shining Path movement, Ruth was displaced from her community to the city of Satipo, where she began her work with the indigenous organisations CARE (Central Asháninka of the Rio Ene) and ARPI SC (Regional Association of Indigenous Peoples of the Central Forest). Under these organisations, she had the opportunity to return to her community to do work with indigenous women and community leaders. In 2005 Ruth was elected as a member of CARE's management team, and in 2006 was elected as President of the organisation, and re-elected again in 2009. Ruth has become an important leader for the Asháninka communities of the Ene River, and a key spokesperson for the Asháninka people in their struggles to resist the planned hydroelectric Pakitzapango dam, which will have immense social and environmental impacts on the communities in the Ene Valley.

Sheyla Yakarepi Juruna, Belo Monte

Sheyla Yakarepi Juruna, 36, is an indigenous leader of the Juruna, from the Boa Vista community in the municipality of Vitória do Xingu, Pará, Brazil. She has been active in the struggle to defend the Xingu River since the landmark victory in 1989 that stopped the Kararaô Dam Complex. Since participating in a national indigenous conference marking the 500 year anniversary of Brazil in the year 2000, Sheyla has become an important local leader in the indigenous peoples' rights movement, working to ensure "health, culturally appropriate education, land demarcation, and respect for indigenous rights" for her people. Her strong involvement in the movement was inspired in particular by the need for indigenous peoples to resist the destructive forces that endanger their survival, such as the Brazilian Government's plans to dam the Xingu River. As such, Sheyla has become an unwavering opponent to the Belo Monte Dam Complex, a key spokesperson for the indigenous peoples resisting the project, and a leader within the Movimento Xingu Vivo Para Sempre (MXVPS). Located adjacent to the planned reservoir of Belo Monte, the Boa Vista community will be gravely impacted by the dam.

Almir Narayamoga Surui,

Almir Narayamoga Surui, 36, of the Paiter Surui people, was born in the Lapetanha community of the Sete de Setembro indigenous territory, Cacoal, Rondônia, Brazil. Having observed the destruction of his people's ancestral lands by settlers flooding into the region as part of the World Bank-funded POLONOROESTE programme, Almir was determined to halt this process and defend the territorial and human rights of the Paiter Surui. At the age of 14 he began to study Portuguese and was soon able to articulate the demands of his people to Brazilian and international decision-makers. In 1994 he was elected the General Coordinator of the indigenous federation of Rondônia (CUNPIR). During his tenure several indigenous territories were demarcated in Rondônia, including

a territory that contained isolated indigenous peoples, and was a tireless opponent of illegal land invaders. Almir is among the best-known Brazilian indigenous leaders, having worked closely with international governments and leaders, including England's Prince Charles, to call attention to indigenous rights and environmental protection in the Amazon. He has also worked extensively in defence of isolated indigenous groups through the group CIPIACI (International Committee for the Protection of Isolated Indigenous Peoples) and has spoken out against the dangers posed by major infrastructure projects to these peoples.

Short information about the dams

Pakitzapango hydroelectric dam background:

The Pakitzapango hydroelectric dam - named after the narrow gorge that for the Asháninka is the mythological birthplace of the Amazonian tribes - is the latest and the largest threat to the Asháninka communities. At 165m high, its floodwaters will cover almost 100,000 hectares, and affect more than 10,000 Asháninka people in the Ene River Valley. These people will lose their homes, farms and lands under the new dam's floodwaters in only a few years' time.

The Peruvian Government has entered into a huge agreement with the Government of Brazil to build a series of hydroelectric dams, and the electricity will be exported to help power Brazil's burgeoning urban centres. The centre piece of the project is Pakitzapango dam, but at least five more dams will follow on other rivers in the region. The construction of this dam, and associated projects in the pipeline, represent major investment opportunities for private companies and for the Brazilian and other multilateral banks. Brazilian companies Electrobras, Odebrecht, Engevix, Camargo Correa, Andrade Gutierrez, and the Brazilian National Development Bank (BNDES) are driving the push to build these dams.

In essence, the memorandum between the two Governments will allow Brazil to study, finance, build and operate up to six very large hydroelectric power plants on Peruvian soil to supply its energy requirements by purchasing a large part of the energy produced in Peru. The hydroelectric plants chosen by Brazil are Inambari (2,000 MW), Sumabeni (1,074 MW), Urubamba (940 MW), Vizcatán (750 MW), Chuquipampa (800 MW), and Pakitzapango (2,000 MW), and as well as the corresponding transmission lines which will be integrated into the Brazilian system. The total cost of these six undertakings will amount to the order of US\$16 billion. Pakitzapango is the second project selected on the Ene River at the confluence of Satipo and Junín Departments, and will cost approximately US\$6 billion. This concession was granted without informing or consulting the Asháninka communities, demonstrating the Peruvian Government's lack of respect for the Asháninka way of life, and more fundamentally, for their human rights as enshrined in national and international law.

Madeira River Complex background:

The Madeira River Complex — an enormous mega-project including the construction of four hydroelectric dams, extensive river dredging and opening of channels — is currently underway in Brazil's western Amazon. The Madeira River Complex is part of two larger initiatives: the Integrated Regional Infrastructure for South America (IIRSA) - an effort

by the national governments to construct a new infrastructure network for the region - and the Accelerated Growth Program (PAC) - the flagship 'development' programme of Brazil's President Lula.

Despite being heavily promoted as a necessary hydroelectric project for Brazil to meet its increasing energy demand, the underlying justification for the Madeira River Complex is that it will serve to promote raw material export, particularly soybeans, timber and minerals. Through the installation of navigation locks and dredging to open the river channel, the Madeira River Complex will connect the western part of Brazil with highways being built in the Peruvian and Bolivian Amazon to the Pacific, facilitating the export of raw materials to Asia and North America.

Already under construction, the Santo Antônio and Jirau dams are causing negative impacts on the region's ecosystems and local populations, including indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation. Effects include the permanent displacement of families and communities, the potential extinction of migratory fish species on which local communities depend, the increased spread of malaria, increased erosion of riverbanks, the loss of access to agriculture and forest extractive products, and stronger pressure on already lacking social services due to the migration of families in search of jobs. The contingent of people looking for work who have flooded into the region is far greater than the number of jobs created by the dam construction, overstressing the state capital Porto Velho and contributing to problems commonly associated with the overpopulation of urban centres, such as violent crime.

BNDES has approved R\$7.2 billion in financing to build the Jirau dam, while the Santo Antônio dam will receive R\$6.1 billion. Without BNDES financing, the Madeira Complex would not be built, as the risks and enormous costs of the project would not attract sufficient investment from private institutions.

Belo Monte Dam background:

The Brazilian Government is planning to build what would be the world's third largest hydroelectric project on one of the Amazon's major tributaries, the Xingu. The project would divert nearly the entire flow of the Xingu River along a 62-mile stretch known as the Big Bend (Volta Grande) leaving indigenous peoples and other traditional inhabitants without fish, clean water and river transportation that are essential for their survival.

The sheer enormity of the project means that an area of more than 1,500 square kilometers would be devastated, resulting in the forced displacement of 20,000 –40,000 people, and grave impacts to the land and livelihood of 800 indigenous people and thousands of riverine and urban families. Some 100,000 migrants are expected to arrive in the region in search of jobs, overwhelming already strained public services in health, sanitation and public security and increasing pressures on forests.

Given the seasonal fluctuations of the Xingu River, the 11,000-megawatt Belo Monte dam would only produce an average of 1/3 of its installed capacity. The project will not be economically viable without the construction of additional dams upstream to store water during dry seasons. The upstream dams would mean dire consequences for the well-preserved rainforest and indigenous territories of the upper Xingu.

The Belo Monte dam complex is expected to cost upwards of USD \$17 billion, including \$2.5 billion for the transmission lines. The project has been developed by the state-owned energy company Eletronorte, and would be funded largely by BNDES, which has publicly committed to financing up to 80% of the project cost. Financing for Belo Monte would represent the largest loan in BNDES's history, for which the bank has offered unprecedented loan conditions, including 30-year interest periods at 4%, significantly below the cost of capital.