**Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Centre, Nigeria**

**TO: Government of India, Government of Manipur and the Japan International Cooperation Agency.**

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**URGENT APPEAL TO STOP BLOCKING OF THOUBAL RIVER / FILLING UP OF MAPITHEL DAM RESERVOIR AND TO DESIST FROM FORCE EVICTION IN MAPITHEL VALLEY, MANIPUR**

**INCIDENT:** Displacement and survival threats due to filling up of Mapithel Dam Reservoir by blocking Thoubal River by IFCD, Government of Manipur

**PERPETRATOR:** Irrigation and Flood Control Department, Government of Manipur

**IDENTIFICATION OF VICTIMS:** Tangkhul Naga, Kuki and Meitei people of Manipur

**DATE/TIME OF INCIDENT:** January 2015 and continuing

**SOURCE OF INFORMATION:** Mapithel Dam Affected Villages Organization, Citizens Concern for Dams and Development, Centre for Research and Advocacy, Manipur

**EVENT DESCRIPTION:** The Irrigation and Flood Control Department, Government of Manipur commenced blocking the Thoubal River and filing up of the Mapithel Dam Reservoir from January 2015 onwards in a forceful attempt to commission the Mapithel dam of the Thoubal Multipurpose Hydroelectric Project, tentatively scheduled at March 2015. The filling up of Mapithel dam reservoir already submerged an extensive portion of the agriculture land, grazing ground, forest areas of Louphong and Chadong villages respectively. The entire Chadong Village, Lamlai Khunnou and other villages along Mapithel Hill range will be submerged once the water level rises. The filling of the dam reservoir without addressing the plights of affected communities and in an absence of holistic impact assessment of the Mapithel dam has already led to mental harassment and insecurity over the livelihood and survival of affected communities, belonging to the Tangkhul Naga and Kuki people, who will lose their agriculture land and survival sources.

The blocking of Thoubal River for filling up of Mapithel dam already led to drying up of Thoubal river in immediate downstream of Mapithel dam, such as Tumukhong, Itham, Moirangpurel and further down in Thoubal District. The villagers of immediate downstream villages, belonging to the Meitei people, are worried of extreme water shortage, for basic household communities. The villagers can no longer fish and collect sand stone brought down by the Thoubal River both in upstream and downstream portion of the River, which has been their main economic mainstay. Collection of firewood and seasonable food sources from nearby hills is disturbed as the forest areas has been destroyed for filling up the Mapithel dam and also due militarization. The Mapithel dam site is located in high seismic area and villagers in downstream areas of worried of dam break.

The ongoing filling up of the Mapithel dam reservoir is accompanied with full scale deployment of security forces of Government of India while subduing all affected peoples’ call and resistance against the blocking of the Thoubal River. Villagers strongly opposed the forceful filling up of Mapithel dam reservoir as a clear instance of undemocratic and anti indigenous peoples of development and has created a fear psychosis among the affected villagers.

The ongoing effort to finalize Mapithel dam construction is despite the fact that the National Green Tribunal is still considering the violation of Forest Rights under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and the Forest Rights Act, 2006.In clear procedural violations, the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), Government of India accorded final Stage II Forest Clearance for Mapithel Dam only on 31st December 2013 after more than thirty years of project approval in 1980 without conducting any site visits into affected areas.

The ongoing move to complete Mapithel dam construction is amidst controversial and manipulative rehabilitation and resettlement process that has caused confusion, division and violation of affected indigenous communities' rights. The Rehabilitation and Resettlement is being carried out in a piecemeal and divisive approach and already caused much controversy and human rights violations.

Due to the failure of the agreement on RR in 1993 and also due to the acknowledgement of the lapses and failure, the Government of Manipur constituted the Expert Review Committee (ERC) in 18 January 2008. However, the Government withdrew from the ERC process after seven rounds of talks, the last talk held in February 2011. The Government of Manipur forcefully began verification at Lamlai Khunou and Chadong Village from 29th October 2012 with security despite community objections. The verification based on Ukhrul District DC’s order dated 28 September 2012 and 26 March 2013 is a direct violation of the stay order of the Gauhati High Court on 25 April 2012.

The construction of Mapithel Dam is still fraught with the absence of a detailed impact assessment on communities with their rightful participation, especially impacts on forest land and other livelihood sources and further down in the downstream portion of Thoubal River. The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is preparing to finance a Water Supply scheme for Imphal Town from the Mapithel dam. JICA’s support will only facilitate causing more inconveniences, harassment and human rights violations on communities affected by Mapithel dam.

The plight of the affected communities continues to remain uncertain as the project authorities continue to fill the Dam Reservoir with militarization of their land and suppression of their democratic rights. Mapithel dam today, represents a clear symbol of development injustice.

**Background:** Manipur witnesses series of mega dams commissioned in 1980’s and 1990’s which are either failed or seriously underperforming. The Khuga Dam, the Singda Dam, the Khoupum and the Loktak Project have all failed to fulfil its objectives. Indeed, some of the dams like Khoupum dam failed to provide irrigation and power. The Singda dam failed to generate a single unit of its intended 750 KW of power. Similar is the case with Khuga Dam, which failed to generate single unit of power, despite its component to generate 4.5 MW of power. The Government of Manipur instead pursued for construction of more hydroelectric power projects under the controversial Manipur Hydroelectric Power Policy, 2012. Of late, International Financial Institutions like the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation etc are financing energy and allied infrastructure projects, and thus facilitating development injustice.

**Demands:** The Mapithel Dam Affected Villagers Organization, the Citizens Concern for Dams and Development and the Centre for Research and Advocacy, Manipur would like to request your good office to kindly intervene in the following demands to urge upon the Government of Manipur and the Government of India to:

1. Stop blocking the Thoubal River and filling up of the Mapithel Dam reservoir
2. To stop Mapithel dam construction till all rehabilitation process acceptable to affected communities and their free, prior and informed consent is taken with.
3. Resume the Expert Review Committee set up in the year 2008 by Government of Manipur
4. All militarization process that support Mapithel dam construction should halt immediately.
5. Stop all forms of involuntary displacement of indigenous peoples affected by Mapithel Dam in Manipur as per UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples Rights, 2007 and recommendations of the World Commission on Dams, 2000
6. Further, to urge the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) not to finance the Integrated Water Supply Scheme, to draw water from Mapithel dam for Imphal Town.

Thanks

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