

Activists focus on World Bank's 'two faces' on climate change

Over the weekend protests around the world targeted the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as they concluded their annual meeting in Washington DC. The international financial institutions are being targeted for their role in financing dirty energy at the beginning of *Reclaim Power* 'a global month of action on energy.'

The World Bank tries to present itself as a leading institution in the fight against climate change but the activists charge that it is a huge backer of dirty, climate-change-inducing fossil fuel projects.

"Despite the World Bank's rhetoric on combating climate change, last year the Bank funded US \$2.7 billion in fossil fuel projects, including projects to explore for more dirty oil and gas. At the same time, less than 10 percent of energy financing even targeted those who lack access to energy." Elizabeth Bast, managing director of Oil Change International said.

Oil Change International are a part of a global alliance of movements, networks and NGOs that have come together under the banner 'Reclaim Power', to focus attention on the energy transformation that is needed to stop run-away climate change.

The first international day of action of Reclaim Power was to focus on the World Bank's role in financing dirty energy, with protests taking place at the Bank's offices in Washington and Manila and against World Bank funded dirty energy projects in India and Indonesia.

The groups are highlighting examples of the Bank's lending that supports fossil fuel expansion, compounding climate change, as well as causing local displacement and harm.

"The World Bank continues to support oil and coal projects in Indonesia and other countries through the loopholes of its energy strategy, and is increasing support for mega-dams and gas projects. This approach fuels climate change, destroys ecosystems, and bypasses poor communities - at a time when better solutions are available." Peter Bosshard, Policy Director at International Rivers, another group participating in the month, said.

Actions as a part of Reclaim Power also targeted the Tata Mundra project in India, highlighting local resistance to the project, and pushing for a strong compliance review of the project by the Bank.

The actions come after protests in South Africa against Eskom's petition for air quality exemptions, which would violate the World Bank's loan to conditions.

Tristen Taylor the Jhb's Project Coordinator of Earthlife Africa, another participant in Reclaim Power, said, "neither The World Bank nor Eskom seem to be particularly concerned about the health impacts of Medupi being

exempted from air quality standards. This violates the contract the Bank and Eskom made with the people of Lephalale: they promised to prevent dangerous and possibly lethal pollution, but now prefer excessive profits instead.”

“The World Bank should support clean local power for the poor, or get out of the energy sector for good.” Bosshard said.

"Reclaim Power is a global month of actions focusing on the harm that dirty energy does to our climate and our communities, and proposing real, people focused solutions." Lidy Nacpil of Jubilee South, Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development said.

“Reclaim Power has clear demands for the banning of new dirty energy projects and stopping the handout of public money to dirty energy corporations, the World Bank must adhere to these demands from people all over the globe.” Lidy Nacpil of Jubilee South, Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development said.

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Notes for editors:

- **Reclaim Power** is an alliance stretching from grassroots organisations, national and international networks, and large NGOs on every continent committed to actions across October and early November to "Reclaim Power" with a "Global Month of Action on Energy."
- The ***Oil Change International report into the World Bank's lending practices*** is available here: <http://priceofoil.org/2013/10/08/world-bank-fossil-fuel-lending-increases-last-year/>
- ***Eskom is the South African*** electricity utility that controversially received a series of loans from the World Bank since 2010 totalling \$3.75 billion. Some of the material conditions under which the loan was granted were that Medupi would install Flu-gas Desulfurization (FGD) and that Eskom would meet South Africa's air quality emissions standards and legislation. Both conditions were touted as being some of the advantages of Medupi: it would be a “cleaner”, supercritical coal-fired power station different from Eskom's dirty plants in the Witbank region and a central condition to The World Bank's loan to Eskom. However, over the past three months and with approval from The World Bank, Eskom has been seeking to exempt itself for most of its fleet of coal-fired power stations from South African air quality regulations and is delaying FGD at Medupi for several years. .
- The 4,000 MW ***Tata Mundra*** (Coastal Gujarat Power Limited) Project is the first Ultra Mega Power Project (UMPP) to get approval from the Government of India. Mundra Taluka where this plant is located (as well as neighbouring coastal talukas), has been identified as an excellent source of both solar and wind power. It is also home to a

large number of fishing families, whose livelihood depends on fishing in the Gulf of Kutch. The development of the plant has been riddled with failures to meet consultation and local environmental protection requirements and local groups have demonstrated that the electricity generated is unlikely to reach those without energy access in the region. The total greenhouse gases emission from the Tata Mundra plant, based on Ernst and Young's estimated baseline CO emissions for the project, would be 30.796 million tonnes per year (baseline value), which would make it India's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases.

- The proposal for 600-MW lignite coal-fired power station in **Kosovo**, to replace an existing coal plant (Kosovo A) has been met with fierce local resistance. The Kosovar government is currently conducting an environmental and social impact assessment which will be presented to the World Bank's board of executive directors in 2014. As part of the environmental assessment, the Kosovar government will also assess alternatives to the project, including energy efficiency and renewable energy. The Kosovo case will be the first major coal project the bank's board has had to decide on since it approved finance to ESKOM in 2010. It is seen as a significant test of the Bank's rhetoric on climate change.

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