

In what is being internationally heralded as a victory for the world's indigenous peoples, Brazilian construction company, Odebrecht, has announced its withdrawal from the planned development of the Tambo-40 Hydroelectric Dam on the Tambo River in the Peruvian Amazon, due to the strong opposition by potentially affected indigenous communities.

In a letter newly obtained by the Rainforest Foundation, Odebrecht stated to the Peruvian Ministry of Energy and Mines on October 24th that after completing preliminary studies, the company decided to withdraw from the project to "respect the opinion of local populations", referring directly to the more than 14,000 indigenous peoples of the Ashaninka communities who have opposed the construction of dams on the Ene and Tambo Rivers, fearing the loss of the 73,000 hectares of forest and farmland that would have been destroyed if construction had gone ahead.

However the struggle for the Ashaninka communities continues, as another dam on the Tambo River, the 'Tambo-60', is still being planned by Brazilian electric utility company Electrobrás, one of the key designers in the original agreement, under which Peru would supply electrical power to Brazil. Peruvian President Ollanta Humala has recently recommitted his government to forging ahead with these plans, originally tabled by his predecessor, President Alan García.

Ruth Buendia Mestoquiari (President of Centro Ashaninka del Rio Ene, CARE, the representative indigenous Ashaninka organization of the Ene River) said:

"It is very important that Odebrecht have respected the desire of our communities to live in peace in the territory where we have always lived. Decisions like this one show that companies are willing to pass up projects with large impacts to local population and avoid unnecessary socio-environmental problems. We ask the Peruvian Government to stop granting concessions in our territory. We hope that the Ministry of Energy and Mines removes this project from its portfolio once and for all."

Simon Counsell, Executive Director of the Rainforest Foundation said:

"This important victory for Peru's indigenous people shows that environmental protection can

often best be achieved by securing and strengthening the rights of local communities. This is a message that negotiators at the Durban climate conference starting next week, who are looking to ways of protecting tropical forests, would do well to hear. Whilst the Government of Peru has taken the important step of ratifying an international convention on indigenous peoples' rights, there are many cases in the country where indigenous communities still face threats to their lands, resources and livelihoods". [3]

The Rainforest Foundation UK has worked with and supported the Ashaninka people of Peru's Ene Valley for the last 10 years, firstly in helping rebuild their communities following years of devastating attacks by terrorist organisations, then in helping secure legal rights to their lands and supporting the designation of adjacent areas as legally protected communal reserves and a National Park