

Drying up: Tracking the environmental and human rights harms caused by hydropower in the Caucasus and Central Asia

Investor Outreach

August, 2022

In July 2022, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre released [Drying up: Tracking the environmental and human rights harms caused by hydropower in the Caucasus and Central Asia](#) report, which tracked publicly reported allegations of environmental and human rights abuses linked to hydropower plants (HPPs) in Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The data in the report demonstrated that local communities are facing major risks amid increasing demand for hydropower.

After the release of the report, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre reached out to the investors involved in hydropower projects included in the report for their comment on environmental and human rights allegations and steps to remediate alleged harms.

Below, you can find the letters we sent to each of these investors.

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KfW

Asian Development Bank

European Investment Bank

International Finance Corporation

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

Eurasian Development Bank

Korea Development Bank



KfW

Dear Sir/Madame,

13.07.2022

Greetings.

We are writing from the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to invite the KfW Development Bank (KfW) to respond to the findings of our recent report, 'Drying up: Tracking the environmental and human rights harms caused by hydropower in the Caucasus and Central Asia'. We write to express concern regarding the alleged environmental and human rights impacts of hydropower projects linked to your investments in the Caucasus.

This report examined and found allegations of environmental and human rights abuses linked to 32 hydropower projects in Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The evidence of human misery and environmental damage reflected in our tracker demands urgent attention from the international banks and investors backing these projects. You can find the summary and key findings [here](#), the allegations tracker [here](#), and the full report with recommendations [here](#).

According to our findings, KfW is involved in the following hydropower plant (HPP) projects in Armenia - Vorotan hydrocascade, Yegheg small HPP, Argitchi small HPP, Jermuk-1 small HPP, Amberd-3 small HPP, Gegharot small HPP.

Our research showed that these projects contain some serious environmental concerns including adverse impacts on the ecosystems, inadequate impact assessment, as well as negative impacts on the nearby communities with their access to water, right to land, impact on livelihoods, public health, access to information and other rights being at stake.

Our research also showed that none of the companies involved in these projects has a publicly available human rights policy. Thus, considering this evidence we would like to invite you to respond to the following questions:

1. Did KfW assess real and/or potential adverse human rights impacts connected to the above investments?
2. How does KfW monitor progress on its efforts to address human rights risks and impacts of these investments?
3. Does KfW consult with civil society, affected rights-holders, and other stakeholders in its efforts to help mitigate and address human rights risks and impacts of your investments?
4. Does KfW have escalation and/or corrective action processes in place when human rights risks and impacts are discovered?
5. How did KfW engage investee companies on human rights, including on their human rights policies, due diligence, and/or grievance mechanisms? With the evidence provided by the report, how is KfW going to follow up with the investee companies and what steps does KfW take to remediate human rights and environmental harms caused by the projects?

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6. How is KfW engaging with governments/policy makers in the region to ensure that rights-holders are respected and, where appropriate, remediated?

We believe that it is important to give companies and investors the opportunity to respond when concerns are raised about their operations or investments, so that our readers have access to their perspective.

Investors like KfW have the tools for ensuring business projects in Eastern Europe and Central Asia do not infringe on human rights or contribute to severe environmental destruction. Many governments in this region, including those of Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, have failed to address human rights issues, or are unable or unwilling to do so. In some cases, government officials have ownership or significant interest in business projects, making it difficult or impossible to seek justice from the state. When states fail to protect, and businesses fail to respect, communities look to investors for assistance and intervention.

In light of this, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre has issued [recommendations](#) on responsible investment in the region. Notably, these recommendations focus on public participation, due diligence, and grievance mechanisms. Early and timely access to information for affected rights-holders is also a key issue. Access to information is critical for preventing and addressing human rights impacts, as well as securing access to remedy for those who have been adversely impacted by hydropower projects. However, such access to information is poor in the region as a whole, meaning investors should pay particular attention to this topic when making investments.

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Invitation to Respond and our Weekly Update

While socioeconomic development is greatly needed in the region and can play a critical role in the achievement of human rights, growth without human rights due diligence and remedy undermines the stated purpose of development: to improve the lives and well-being of the individuals and communities within a society.

For us to publish your full response alongside this letter, please send us your response by **5:00pm CET, Monday 25 July 2022**. Please notify us if you need additional time. We hope to publish your response along with this letter. We are also inviting the other investors mentioned in the report to respond.

- Format: PDF, word document, or web link
- Must clearly indicate the date
- If KfW has already taken action with regards to any or all of the allegations, please feel free to include that in your response.

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If KfW does not provide a response, we will indicate in our free Weekly Update that we invited KfW to respond, but that it did not. The Weekly Update is sent via email to over 20,000 opinion leaders worldwide, including people in the media, business, investment firms, the United Nations and other international organizations, governments, and NGOs. Your response or non-response will also be permanently registered in all relevant sections of our website.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you require any further information – we can be reached by email or telephone (see contact details below).

Kind regards,

Ella Skybenko (Eastern Europe/Central Asia Senior Researcher & Representative) & Sofya Manukyan (Eastern Europe/Central Asia Research Assistant)

skybenko@business-humanrights.org; manukyan@business-humanrights.org

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ADB

Dear Elisea Gozun,

13.07.2022

Greetings.

We are writing from the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to invite the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to respond to the findings of our recent report, 'Drying up: Tracking the environmental and human rights harms caused by hydropower in the Caucasus and Central Asia'. We write to express concern regarding the alleged environmental and human rights impacts of hydropower projects linked to your investments in the Caucasus.

This report examined and found allegations of environmental and human rights abuses linked to 32 hydropower projects in Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The evidence of human misery and environmental damage reflected in our tracker demands urgent attention from the international banks and investors backing these projects. You can find the summary and key findings [here](#), the allegations tracker [here](#), and the full report with recommendations [here](#).

According to our findings, ADB is involved in Nenskra, Shuakhevi hydropower projects in Georgia and Sevan-Hrazdan Hydro-cascade in Armenia.

Our research showed that these projects contain some serious environmental concerns including adverse impacts on the ecosystems, inadequate impact assessment, as well as negative impacts on the nearby communities with their access to water, right to land and displacement problems, public health, limitations to right to protests, access to information and other rights being at stake.

Our research also showed that none of the companies involved in these projects has a publicly available human rights policy. Thus, considering this evidence we would like to invite you to respond to the following questions:

1. Did ADB assess real and/or potential adverse human rights impacts connected to the above investments?
2. How does ADB monitor progress on its efforts to address human rights risks and impacts of these investments?
3. Does ADB consult with civil society, affected rights-holders, and other stakeholders in its efforts to help mitigate and address human rights risks and impacts of your investments?
4. Does ADB have escalation and/or corrective action processes in place when human rights risks and impacts are discovered?
5. How did ADB engage investee companies on human rights, including on their human rights policies, due diligence, and/or grievance mechanisms? With the evidence provided by the report, how is ADB going to follow up with the investee companies and what steps does ADB take to remediate human rights and environmental harms caused by the projects?
6. How is ADB engaging with governments/policy makers in the region to ensure that rights-holders are respected and, where appropriate, remediated?

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- Format: PDF, word document, or web link
- Must clearly indicate the date
- If ADB has already taken action with regards to any or all of the allegations, please feel free to include that in your response.

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EIB

Dear Hakan Lucius,

13.07.2022

Greetings.

We are writing from the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to invite the European Investment Bank (EIB) to respond to the findings of our recent report, 'Drying up: Tracking the environmental and human rights harms caused by hydropower in the Caucasus and Central Asia'. We write to express concern regarding the alleged environmental and human rights impacts of hydropower projects linked to your investments in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

This report examined and found allegations of environmental and human rights abuses linked to 32 hydropower projects in Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The evidence of human misery and environmental damage reflected in our tracker demands urgent attention from the international banks and investors backing these projects. You can find the summary and key findings [here](#), the allegations tracker [here](#), and the full report with recommendations [here](#).

According to our findings, EIB is involved in Nenskra hydropower project in Georgia and might be [considering](#) getting involved in Rogun HPP in Tajikistan.

Our research showed that these projects contain some serious environmental concerns including adverse impacts on the ecosystems, inadequate impact assessment, as well as negative impacts on the nearby communities with their access to water, right to land and displacement problems, limitations to right to protest, labour issues, access to information and other rights being at stake.

Our research also showed that companies involved in these projects have no publicly available human rights policy. Thus, considering this evidence we would like to invite you to respond to the following questions:

1. Did EIB assess real and/or potential adverse human rights impacts connected to the above investments?
2. How does EIB monitor progress on its efforts to address human rights risks and impacts of these investments?
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IFC

Dear Vittorio Di Bello and Merima Zupcevic,

13.07.2022

Greetings.

We are writing from the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to invite the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to respond to the findings of our recent report, 'Drying up: Tracking the environmental and human rights harms caused by hydropower in the Caucasus and Central Asia'. We write to express concern regarding the alleged environmental and human rights impacts of hydropower projects linked to your investments in Caucasus.

This report examined and found allegations of environmental and human rights abuses linked to 32 hydropower projects in Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The evidence of human misery and environmental damage reflected in our tracker demands urgent attention from the international banks and investors backing these projects. You can find the summary and key findings [here](#), the allegations tracker [here](#), and the full report with recommendations [here](#).

According to our findings, IFC is involved in Shuakhevi, Paravani hydropower projects in Georgia and Vorotan Hydro-cascade in Armenia. Our research showed that these projects contain some serious environmental concerns including adverse impacts on the ecosystems, inadequate impact assessment, as well as negative impacts on the nearby communities with their access to water, right to land and displacement problems, public health, labour issues, access to information and other rights being at stake.

Our research also showed that companies involved in these projects have no publicly available human rights policy. Thus, considering this evidence we would like to invite you to respond to the following questions:

1. Did IFC assess real and/or potential adverse human rights impacts connected to the above investments?
2. How does IFC monitor progress on its efforts to address human rights risks and impacts of these investments?
3. Does IFC consult with civil society, affected rights-holders, and other stakeholders in its efforts to help mitigate and address human rights risks and impacts of your investments?
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EBRD

Dear Sam Coen-Walker and David Williamson,

13.07.2022

Greetings.

We are writing from the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to invite the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to respond to the findings of our recent report, 'Drying up: Tracking the environmental and human rights harms caused by hydropower in the Caucasus and Central Asia'. We write to express concern regarding the alleged environmental and human rights impacts of hydropower projects linked to your investments in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

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According to our findings, EBRD is involved (through investing or in case of planned projects, considering investments) in several hydropower projects (HPPs) in Georgia - Namakhvani, Nenskra, Shuakhevi, Paravani, and Dariali; in Armenia - Yeghegnadzor small HPP and Sevan-Hrazdan Hydrocascade, as well as [considering](#) investing in Rogun HPP in Tajikistan.

Our research showed that these projects contain some serious environmental and human rights concerns including adverse impacts on the ecosystems; inadequate impact assessment; negative impacts on the nearby communities, including problems with their access to water, right to land, and displacement; limitations to the right to protest, access to information; and other rights being at stake.

Our research also showed that none of the companies involved in these projects has a publicly available human rights policy. Thus, considering this evidence we would like to invite you to respond to the following questions:

1. Did EBRD assess real and/or potential adverse human rights impacts connected to the above investments?
2. How does EBRD monitor progress on its efforts to address human rights risks and impacts of these investments?
3. Does EBRD consult with civil society, affected rights-holders, and other stakeholders in its efforts to help mitigate and address human rights risks and impacts of your investments?
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We believe that it is important to give companies and investors the opportunity to respond when concerns are raised about their operations or investments, so that our readers have access to their perspective.

Investors like EBRD have the tools for ensuring business projects in Eastern Europe and Central Asia do not infringe on human rights or contribute to severe environmental destruction. Many governments in this region, including those of Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, have failed to address human rights issues, or are unable or unwilling to do so. In some cases, government officials have ownership or significant interest in business projects, making it difficult or impossible to seek justice from the state. When states fail to protect, and businesses fail to respect, communities look to investors for assistance and intervention.

In light of this, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre has issued [recommendations](#) on responsible investment in the region. Notably, these recommendations focus on public participation, due diligence, and grievance mechanisms. Early and timely access to information for affected rights-holders is also a key issue. Access to information is critical for preventing and addressing human rights impacts, as well as securing access to remedy for those who have been adversely impacted by hydropower projects. However, such access to information is poor in the region as a whole, meaning investors should pay particular attention to this topic when making investments.

About the Resource Centre

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While socioeconomic development is greatly needed in the region and can play a critical role in the achievement of human rights, growth without human rights due diligence and remedy undermines the stated purpose of development: to improve the lives and well-being of the individuals and communities within a society.

For us to publish your full response alongside this letter, please send us your response by **5:00pm CET, Monday 25 July 2022**. Please notify us if you need additional time. We hope to publish your response along with this letter. We are also inviting the other investors mentioned in the report to respond.

- Format: PDF, word document, or web link
- Must clearly indicate the date
- If EBRD has already taken action with regards to any or all of the allegations, please feel free to include that in your response.

If EBRD does not provide a response, we will indicate in our free Weekly Update that we invited EBRD to respond, but that it did not. The Weekly Update is sent via email to over 20,000 opinion leaders worldwide, including people in the media, business, investment firms, the United Nations and other international organizations, governments, and NGOs. Your response or non-response will also be permanently registered in all relevant sections of our website.

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Kind regards,

Ella Skybenko (Eastern Europe/Central Asia Senior Researcher & Representative) & Sofya Manukyan (Eastern Europe/Central Asia Research Assistant)

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AIIB

Dear Hamid Sharif and Huan Chen,
Greetings.

13.07.2022

We are writing from the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to invite the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to respond to the findings of our recent report, 'Drying up: Tracking the environmental and human rights harms caused by hydropower in the Caucasus and Central Asia'. We write to express concern regarding the alleged environmental and human rights impacts of hydropower projects linked to your investments in the Caucasus.

This report examined and found allegations of environmental and human rights abuses linked to 32 hydropower projects in Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The evidence of human misery and environmental damage reflected in our tracker demands urgent attention from the international banks and investors backing these projects. You can find the summary and key findings [here](#), the allegations tracker [here](#), and the full report with recommendations [here](#).

According to our findings, AIIB is involved in Nenskra hydropower project in Georgia.

Our research showed that this project contains some serious environmental concerns including adverse impacts on the ecosystems, inadequate impact assessment, as well as negative impacts on the nearby communities with their access to water, right to land and displacement problems, public health, limitations to right to protests, access to information and other rights being at stake.

Our research also showed that companies involved in this project have no publicly available human rights policy. Thus, considering this evidence we would like to invite you to respond to the following questions:

1. Did AIIB assess real and/or potential adverse human rights impacts connected to the above investment?
2. How does AIIB monitor progress on its efforts to address human rights risks and impacts of this investment?
3. Does AIIB consult with civil society, affected rights-holders, and other stakeholders in its efforts to help mitigate and address human rights risks and impacts of your investment?
4. Does AIIB have escalation and/or corrective action processes in place when human rights risks and impacts are discovered?
5. How did AIIB engage investee companies on human rights, including on their human rights policies, due diligence, and/or grievance mechanisms? With the evidence provided by the report, how is AIIB going to follow up with the investee companies and what steps does AIIB take to remediate human rights and environmental harms caused by the project?
6. How is AIIB engaging with governments/policy makers in the region to ensure that rights-holders are respected and, where appropriate, remediated?



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Investors like AIIB have the tools for ensuring business projects in Eastern Europe and Central Asia do not infringe on human rights or contribute to severe environmental destruction. Many governments in this region, including those of Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, have failed to address human rights issues, or are unable or unwilling to do so. In some cases, government officials have ownership or significant interest in business projects, making it difficult or impossible to seek justice from the state. When states fail to protect, and businesses fail to respect, communities look to investors for assistance and intervention.

In light of this, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre has issued [recommendations](#) on responsible investment in the region. Notably, these recommendations focus on public participation, due diligence, and grievance mechanisms. Early and timely access to information for affected rights-holders is also a key issue. Access to information is critical for preventing and addressing human rights impacts, as well as securing access to remedy for those who have been adversely impacted by hydropower projects. However, such access to information is poor in the region as a whole, meaning investors should pay particular attention to this topic when making investments.

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- Must clearly indicate the date
- If AIIB has already taken action with regards to any or all of the allegations, please feel free to include that in your response.

If AIIB does not provide a response, we will indicate in our free Weekly Update that we invited AIIB to respond, but that it did not. The Weekly Update is sent via email to over 20,000 opinion leaders worldwide, including people in the media, business, investment firms, the United Nations and other



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Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you require any further information – we can be reached by email or telephone (see contact details below).

Kind regards,

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EDB

Dear Sir/Madame,

13.07.2022

Greetings.

We are writing from the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to invite the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) to respond to the findings of our recent report, 'Drying up: Tracking the environmental and human rights harms caused by hydropower in the Caucasus and Central Asia'. We write to express concern regarding the alleged environmental and human rights impacts of the hydropower project linked to your investment in Central Asia.

This report examined and found allegations of environmental and human rights abuses linked to 32 hydropower projects in Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The evidence of human misery and environmental damage reflected in our tracker demands urgent attention from the international banks and investors backing these projects. You can find the summary and key findings [here](#), the allegations tracker [here](#), and the full report with recommendations [here](#).

According to our findings, EDB is involved in Kambarata-2 hydropower project in Kyrgyzstan. Our research showed that this project contains some serious concerns regarding inadequate impact assessment, as well as corruption allegations.

Our research also showed that the company involved in this project has no publicly available human rights policy. Thus, considering this evidence we would like to invite you to respond to the following questions:

1. Did EDB assess real and/or potential adverse human rights impacts connected to the above investment?
2. How does EDB monitor progress on its efforts to address human rights risks and impacts of this investment?
3. Does EDB consult with civil society, affected rights-holders, and other stakeholders in its efforts to help mitigate and address human rights risks and impacts of your investment?
4. Does EDB have escalation and/or corrective action processes in place when human rights risks and impacts are discovered?
5. How did EDB engage investee company on human rights, including on its human rights policies, due diligence, and/or grievance mechanisms? With the evidence provided by the report, how is EDB going to follow up with the investee company and what steps does EDB take to remediate human rights and environmental harms caused by the project?
6. How is EDB engaging with governments/policy makers in the region to ensure that rights-holders are respected and, where appropriate, remediated?

We believe that it is important to give companies and investors the opportunity to respond when concerns are raised about their operations or investments, so that our readers have access to their perspective.

Investors like EDB have the tools for ensuring business projects in Eastern Europe and Central Asia do not infringe on human rights or contribute to severe environmental destruction. Many governments in this

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region, including those of Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, have failed to address human rights issues, or are unable or unwilling to do so. In some cases, government officials have ownership or significant interest in business projects, making it difficult or impossible to seek justice from the state. When states fail to protect, and businesses fail to respect, communities look to investors for assistance and intervention.

In light of this, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre has issued [recommendations](#) on responsible investment in the region. Notably, these recommendations focus on public participation, due diligence, and grievance mechanisms. Early and timely access to information for affected rights-holders is also a key issue. Access to information is critical for preventing and addressing human rights impacts, as well as securing access to remedy for those who have been adversely impacted by hydropower projects. However, such access to information is poor in the region as a whole, meaning investors should pay particular attention to this topic when making investments.

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- Must clearly indicate the date
- If EDB has already taken action with regards to any or all of the allegations, please feel free to include that in your response.

If EDB does not provide a response, we will indicate in our free Weekly Update that we invited EDB to respond, but that it did not. The Weekly Update is sent via email to over 20,000 opinion leaders worldwide, including people in the media, business, investment firms, the United Nations and other international organizations, governments, and NGOs. Your response or non-response will also be permanently registered in all relevant sections of our website.

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KDB

Dear Sir/Madame,

13.07.2022

Greetings.

We are writing from the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to invite the Korea Development Bank (KDB) to respond to the findings of our recent report, 'Drying up: Tracking the environmental and human rights harms caused by hydropower in the Caucasus and Central Asia'. We write to express concern regarding the alleged environmental and human rights impacts of hydropower projects linked to your investments in the Caucasus.

This report examined and found allegations of environmental and human rights abuses linked to 32 hydropower projects in Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The evidence of human misery and environmental damage reflected in our tracker demands urgent attention from the international banks and investors backing these projects. You can find the summary and key findings [here](#), the allegations tracker [here](#), and the full report with recommendations [here](#).

According to our findings, KDB is involved in the Nenskra hydropower project in Georgia. Our research showed that this project contains some serious environmental concerns including adverse impacts on the ecosystems, inadequate impact assessment, as well as negative impacts on the nearby communities with their access to water, right to land and displacement problems, public health, limitations to right to protests, access to information and other rights being at stake.

Our research also showed that the companies involved in this project have no publicly available human rights policy. Thus, considering this evidence we would like to invite you to respond to the following questions:

1. Did KDB assess real and/or potential adverse human rights impacts connected to the above investment?
2. How does KDB monitor progress on its efforts to address human rights risks and impacts of this investment?
3. Does KDB consult with civil society, affected rights-holders, and other stakeholders in its efforts to help mitigate and address human rights risks and impacts of your investment?
4. Does KDB have escalation and/or corrective action processes in place when human rights risks and impacts are discovered?
5. How did KDB engage investee companies on human rights, including on their human rights policies, due diligence, and/or grievance mechanisms? With the evidence provided by the report, how is KDB going to follow up with the investee companies and what steps does KDB take to remediate human rights and environmental harms caused by the project?
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