

Basotho people demand compensation for Lesotho Dam construction, 2001-2005.

- [\(mainly or initiated by\) indigenous participants](#) [1]
- [\(mainly or initiated by\) people of color](#) [2]

Timing

Time period notes:

Residents likely began campaigning for compensation around 1996, though no direct actions are on the record until 2001.

November

2001

to:

March

2005

Location and Goals

Country:

Lesotho

Location City/State/Province:

Katse, Mohale, Maseru

Location Description:

communities impacted by dam construction and capital city

[View Location on Map](#)

Goals:

Residents demanded compensation for their land taken for the Lesotho Highlands Water Project.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 037. Singing
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction>One thousand gathered at the Mohale Dam, blockading access roads with stones.

Methods in 2nd segment:

Methods in 3rd segment:

Methods in 4th segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions>In 2003, the Ombudsman released a public report outlining the complaints of communities affected by LHWP dam construction.

Methods in 5th segment:

Methods in 6th segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions>In March 2005, the World Bank released a report, stating that the LHWP's first phase did not comply with treaty requirements regarding resettlement and community development.
- 038. Marches

Notes on Methods:

It is unclear what methods the residents used in segments 2-5.

Segment Length:

6 months

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Human Rights

Group characterization:

- local farmers
- villagers

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Residents impacted by the Katse and Mohale Dams (Survivors of the Lesotho Dams)

Partners:

Transformation Resource Centre, International Rivers

External allies:

not known

Involvement of social elites:

Ombudsman Office

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- International Rivers (enter)
- Transformation Resource Centre

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

- Ombudsman Office

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length:

6 months

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Lesotho Highlands Development Authority

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

not known

Campaigner violence:

not known

Repressive Violence:

Police repressed protesters with batons and whips, causing three elderly women to require medical attention. In the capital city Maseru, police denied demonstrators a permit to gather.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

2 points out of 6 points

Survival:

0.5 points out of 1 point

Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

Total points:

4.5 out of 10 points

Notes on outcomes:

Though the LHDA did address some of the residents' grievances, it is unclear whether they provided all delayed compensation to the residents. It does not seem that the residents were satisfied by the LHDA's actions.

In 1986, the national governments of South Africa and Lesotho jointly launched the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP). The Project would involve the construction of several large dams, tunnels, bridges, and power lines, in an effort to transport water from Lesotho to South Africa and to produce electricity.

In 1990, the LHWP, estimated to cost \$16 billion, became the largest World Bank-funded initiative in sub-Saharan Africa. The two countries established the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) to oversee the completion of the 30-year project. The mandate of the LHDA included an expectation that the LHWP should benefit the economy of Lesotho without decreasing the quality of life for any residents.

In 1990, the LHDA began power-line construction for the Water Project, displacing a number of families. The LHDA promised an annual payment for 15 years for residents losing their land. A 1993 LHDA survey showed that residents were unsatisfied with the amount of compensation to be provided, stating that it did not match the productive value of their land. In 1995, those families remained without compensation or replacement housing.

In 1998 the LHDA began Phase 1 of the project with construction of the Katse Dam, the largest dam in Africa, followed by the Mohale Dam and Muela Dam. 20,000 people came from elsewhere to work for the LHWP. The International Rivers Network reported that these temporary workers spread HIV/AIDS in the area.

The three projects displaced 467 households and affected thousands more, through the flooding of villages, fields, and grazing lands. The LHWP relocated or resettled 2,000 residents who the flooding had directly displaced. As of 1998, the LHDA had provided none of the displaced residents with compensation. The LHDA supposedly allocated additional funds to local governments for development projects, but residents claimed that corrupt officials had not released those funds.

Resettlement required residents to shift their dependence from subsistence agriculture to cash. The need for resettlement only exacerbated the poverty. Resettled residents henceforth had to pay for water through public utilities, since the water they previously held in common had been dammed.

After its completion, the Katse Dam, due to its immense weight, caused a series of earthquakes in the surrounding area. The LHDA relocated residents impacted by these earthquakes to low-quality storage-shed housing. The Transformation Resource Center and the Highlands Church Action Group helped affected residents to communicate their complaints to the LHDA.

On 19 November 2001, over two thousand demonstrators marched and sang in protest of the persistent negative impacts of the dams. The marchers claimed that the LHDA had not fairly compensated them for their lost land. The protesters demanded a ten-percent share of royalties from the projects, a formal inquiry into the dams' negative effects, and an extension of the 15-year compensation period. Protesters delivered a petition with their demands to the LHDA and claimed that the LHDA had ignored complaints made through institutional channels.

About one thousand gathered at the Katse Dam. Another thousand gathered at the Mohale Dam, blockading access roads with stones. Police repressed these protesters with batons and whips, causing three elderly women to require medical attention.

About three hundred demonstrators gathered at the Muela Dam; others attempted to assemble in the capital city Maseru. Police did not grant permission for the Maseru demonstration.

Representatives from the Transformation Resource Center, including Motseoa Senyane, acted as spokespeople about the demonstrations for international media. The non-governmental organizations International Rivers and the Environmental Monitoring Group also expressed their support for the protesters.

Since the dams' construction, the Ombudsman, holding the position responsible for processing grievances about public agencies, received many complaints from the people who the LHDA had resettled. In 2003, the Ombudsman conducted a public inquiry into the many complaints that had been lodged with his office by residents impacted by the LHWP.

Later that year, the Ombudsman released a public report. ?

In March 2005, the World Bank released a report, stating that the LHWP's first phase did not comply with treaty requirements regarding resettlement and community development. On 4 October 2005, 500 impacted residents, calling themselves the Survivors of the Lesotho Dams, marched in Maseru, reiterating demands for adequate compensation, development and training, and sanitation in resettled communities. They called on the government to halt further progress on the LHWP, until addressing outstanding grievances. Chairperson of the group the Survivors of the Lesotho Dams, Monaheng Mahlakeng, acted as a spokesperson for media. The Transformation Resource Center and International Rivers Network made statements in support of this

demonstration.

Over time, the LHDA addressed some of the residents' grievances. The LHDA extended the compensation period to 50 years and released delayed communal compensation to affected communities. In 2005, after claiming financial inability to pay annual compensatory stipends, the LHDA agreed to pay those stipends.

The marches in 2005 that gained concessions by the LHDA marked the end of the use of nonviolent direct action in the people's campaigning for fair treatment.

The project as a whole continued to be built. In August 2011, the LHDA launched the second phase of the LHWP, beginning construction of the Polihali Dam. The LHDA expects to complete this project by 2018 and predicts that about 4,000 households will be impacted.

The period since 2005 has been marked by some continued efforts to gain fuller compensation for displaced people, such as the pressure in 2006 by the Transformation Resource Center which achieved a long-delayed resettlement house for the Lakabane family. The Ombudsman's office also continued to speak out. The office in 2010 released another report explicitly holding the LHDA responsible for the grievances of the residents, including that of delayed compensation.

Research Notes

Influences:

not known

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