CONSULT COMMUNITIES FIRST!

In Dedza and Lilongwe districts, Malawi, a development project is threatening the homes and livelihoods of over 5,100 people. The Diamphwe Multipurpose Dam is part of a $290 million project funded by the World Bank, European Investment Bank, African Development Bank, and the government of Malawi.

2,682 hectares of land will be permanently inaccessible, negatively impacting the rights of those affected.

International Accountability Project and the Citizens for Justice (CFJ) Malawi organized a survey of affected people in 2 districts.

This is what they had to say:

- 98% were never consulted during the planning phase of the project.
- 91% didn’t feel safe to speak their minds.
- 90% found out about the project after plans were finalized.
- 76% didn’t have the information they needed to provide informed opinions and ideas about project plans.
- 44% don’t think that their ideas and opinions were incorporated in project plans.
- 99% didn’t know anything about the World Bank and its policies.
- 91% didn’t think that their ideas and opinions were incorporated in project plans.

Reaching out to the people first:

“Communities must be consulted first to make sure that their fears and concerns are addressed.”

Provide project information for meaningful consultation:

“We were told we had no option of denying the project even though people had other views.”

Provide alternatives in case of displacement:

“We are being forced to resettle, how can this project be beneficial to us? If they say resettlement is necessary, they should find land and build houses for us.”

What’s next:

Using the findings of the survey, the communities are informing decision makers about their own development priorities.

The above survey was conducted as part of the Early Warning System, a joint initiative by the International Accountability Project and the Center for International Environmental Law that ensures local communities, and the organizations that support them, have verified information about projects likely to cause human and environmental rights abuses. Thank you to the Coalition for Human Rights in Development for supporting the survey process.