

[← GO BACK](#)

Lake Turkana Project in Indigenous Territories, Kenya

Last update:
2022-05-02

Africa's largest windfarm to be deployed along indigenous communities' territories in Kenya. Local organization is against illegal land purchases and violation of indigenous rights.



▼ Description of the conflict case

One of the most controversial cases of wind energy siting in Africa has to be with the Lake Turkana Wind Power Project (LTWP). The LTWP is to be located along 162 km² of ancestral lands of the Turkana, Randile and Borana communities (Loyangalani district, Marsabit County). As almost all indigenous communities' lands in Kenya, this territory is classified as "trust land", where certain communal rights are considered, but local authorities retain the powers for their own use. Since 2005-2006 local governments started to grant rights over the territory to Lake Turkana, a company registered in Kenya but owned by a joint-development group including British, Dutch, Norwegian and Denmark companies and public funds for developing countries. The project is expected to be the largest wind power facility in sub-Saharan Africa, with a total installed capacity of 310 MW intended to supply the national grid. The wind farm is also registered as a CDM project expecting to remove 736,615 metric tones CO₂ equivalent per annum. In addition, a 266-mile transmission

line being installed for the project will enable more geothermal projects to come on-grid in the future.

As other renewable energy investments in Kenya, the Lake Turkana project does not recognize local pastoralist communities as “indigenous peoples”, avoiding the most stringent safeguard policies required by investors (IEWA, 2013). Although the Letter of Allotment that privatized community lands was issued in 2009, communities did not know about it until 2014 through the effort of activists and the cooperation of some members of the County Assembly. In this context, Marsabit communities organized to form a resistance network called “Sarima Indigenous Peoples’ Land Forum”. A lawsuit was filed in October 2014 at the Meru High Court to nullify the titles and return to the original status as “community land”. Communities also raised objections to what the company was presenting as “community consultations”, and denounced co-optation of local elites and creating division among tribes. Meanwhile, in 2015 Google announced plans yesterday to take a 12.5% stake in Lake Turkana, once the project becomes operational in 2017. The firm will purchase its stake in the windfarm from Danish turbine manufacturer Vestas Wind Systems, becoming the project’s third largest investor. However, the company did not disclose the value of the deal. There are also concerns about wildlife: nearby Lake Turkana is a major stopover for migrant waterfowl including pelicans, flamingos, herons, and storks. As reported in National Geographic, Van Wageningen (LTWP chairman) said that the wind farm is 15 kilometers away from principal migration routes. In addition, LTWP will employ a full-time environmental specialist to monitor and report on any impacts to birds in the area. The latest news from the Sarima indigenous forum (03/2016) indicates the Meru High Court issued an injunction banning any works by LTWP on most of the land. However, they state that the consortium has systematically tried to violate this injunction, while Kenyan security agencies did nothing to prevent it. Local communities therefore blocked the roads in order to enforce the court injunction and defend their community land. The blockades have been so far focused on stopping road construction/upgrade works that are being undertaken specifically for the project. These works involve partly upgrading an existing road, and partly diverting its route. The Sarima indigenous forum states that the modification of the alignment of the existing road will affect more community land (without consultation or compensation) and will have detrimental effects on the traditional culture and livelihoods. For instance, the new alignment of the road will seriously damage the 'singing wells' of Ilaut, one of the only points where water is available during the dry season, and where water fetching is associated with traditional songs and the sustainance of culture. In the same communication, the Forum states that LTWP representatives increased the

pressure on the Kenyan government to deploy security agencies to clear the road blockades. This pressure increased after Siemens France, which has been hired to build the wind farm substation, threatened to abandon the project. After a series of meetings intended to co-opt or threaten community representatives and activists, some of them were convened on February 9th by the Cabinet Secretary of Internal Security and the Cabinet Secretary for Energy. At this meeting, the Cabinet Secretary of Internal Security said that the government will use force to clear blockades and facilitate the construction of the road and the wind farm. In this context. The Sarima movement then appeals to national and international civil society organizations to put pressure on consortium members, particularly on foreign governments that have invested or lent taxpayers' money in LTWP's project, and on the Kenyan government, in order to prevent a tragedy. This can take many different forms, from letters and petitions to social or mainstream media activism, from awareness-raising in your community to urgent protest actions in case the threats come true. (*) Since April 2016, the Sarima Indigenous Forum webpage is unavailable

▼ Basic data

Conflict name

Lake Turkana Project in Indigenous Territories, Kenya

Conflict country

[Kenya](#)

State or province

Lovangalani

Location of conflict

Marsabit county

Accuracy of location

HIGH (Local level)

▼ Source of conflict

Type of conflict. 1st level

Fossil Fuels and Climate Justice/Energy

Type of conflict. 2st level

Windmills

Land acquisition conflicts

REDD/CDM

Other types

Specific commodities

[Land](#)

[Carbon offsets](#)

[Electricity](#)

▼ Project details and actors

Technical information of the contested project

Installed capacity 310 MW Number of turbines 365 The project includes the construction of roads and a sub-station

Project area

16,200

Level of Investment for the conflictive project

Type of population

Rural

Affected population

Start of the conflict

01/01/2005

End of the conflict

Company names or state enterprises

[Vestas Wind Systems A/S](#) from [Denmark](#)

[Norwegian Investment Fund for Developing Countries \(Norfund\)](#) from [Norway](#)

[Aldwych International Limited](#) from [United Kingdom](#)

[KP&P Africa B.V](#) from [Netherlands](#)

[Industrial Fund for Developing Countries \(IFU\) Denmark](#) from [Denmark](#)

[Finnish Fund for Industrial Cooperation Ltd](#) from [Finland](#)

[Google](#) from [United States of America](#)

Relevant government actors

Meru High Court Cabinet Secretary of Internal Security Cabinet Secretary for Energy.

International and Finance Institutions

[The World Bank](#) from [United States of America](#)

[African Development Bank](#)

[United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change/CDM](#)

Civil society organizations and their web pages, if available

Sarima Indigenous Peoples' Land Forum <http://siplf.org/en/Support-Our-Demands/> IWGIA, International Workgroup for Indigenous Affairs

▼ Conflict & Mobilization

Conflict intensity

MEDIUM (street protests, visible mobilization)

Reaction stage

PREVENTIVE resistance (precautionary phase)

Groups mobilizing

- Indigenous groups or traditional communities
 - Local ejos
 - Landless peasants
 - Pastoralists
 - Ethnically/racially discriminated groups
-

Other Mobilizing Groups

Forms of mobilization

- Blockades
 - Development of a network/collective action
 - Involvement of national and international NGOs
 - Lawsuits, court cases, judicial activism
 - Objections to the EIA
-

Other Mobilizing Forms

∨ Impacts

Environmental Impacts

Potential

- Groundwater pollution or depletion
 - Food insecurity (crop damage)
 - Loss of landscape/aesthetic degradation
 - Noise pollution
 - Biodiversity loss (wildlife, agro-diversity)
-

Other Environmental impacts

Health Impacts

Other Health impacts

Socio-economical Impacts

Visible

- Violations of human rights
- Increase in Corruption/Co-optation of different actors
- Militarization and increased police presence

Potential

- Displacement
 - Loss of livelihood
 - Loss of traditional knowledge/practices/cultures
 - Land dispossession
-

Other Social Economical impacts

▼ Conflict outcome

Project Status

Under construction

Conflict outcome / response

- Corruption
 - Court decision (victory for environmental justice)
 - Strengthening of participation
-

Other Outcomes

Proposal and development of alternatives

Do you consider this an environmental justice success? Was environmental justice served?

Not sure

Briefly explain

The Meru High Court issued an injunction banning any works by LTWP on most of the land. However, the consortium has systematically tried to violate this injunction, while Kenyan security agencies did nothing to prevent it. In March 2016 news indicate the project is ongoing.

Other comments

▼ Source & materials

References to published books, academic articles, movies or published documentaries

Related media links to videos, campaigns, social network

By Stuart Thornton, April 4, 2012, Wild Winds. Lake Turkana Wind Power aims to create electricity for Kenya

[Click to view](#)

Kenya: Locals Want Court to Halt Power Project, The Star, James Mbaka, Published 27 OCTOBER 2014, Consulted: 03/08/2016.

[Click to view](#)

UPDATED ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SUMMARY. Lake Turkana Wind Power Project Kenya November 2011

[Click to view](#)

Google invests in Africa's largest windfarm. The Guardian

[Click to view](#)

International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and Indigenous Peoples National Steering Committee on Climate Change (IPNSCCC); Renewable Energy Projects and the Right of Marginalised/Indigenous Communities in Kenya, written by Kanyinke Sena, November 2015.

[Click to view](#)

Documents

▼ Meta Information

Collaborator

Sofía Ávila-Calero

Last update of the case form

2022-05-02

Conflict ID

2244

> Related conflicts

