

PUBLIC LETTER

National Network of Women Guardians of Territories Threatened and Impacted by Megaprojects



Between November 1st and 3rd, 2024, we, 50 women leaders from seven states in Brazil, gathered in Cabo de Santo Agostinho, Pernambuco, for the National Seminar on Women and Megaprojects to critically reflect on the impact of large-scale enterprises on our territories, our lives, and the protection of the environment. The seminar's program included mapping self-defense practices and building support networks, workshops on mapping megaprojects, as well as plenary sessions and working groups. These moments allowed us to share methods of resistance, self-defense, and strategies to safeguard rights in the face of the threats posed by enterprises that directly impact our territories and ways of life. Held just before the G20 summit in Brazil and in preparation for COP 30 in Belém in 2025, the meeting also addressed how these major events and related global agreements impact our lives and territories, reflecting on possibilities for influencing these agendas.

We, women from communities affected by a range of megaprojects in Brazil, publicly denounce the profound and devastating impacts these projects have caused. We women have been impacted by megaprojects and large infrastructure works, directly suffering the consequences of environmental racism, as our territories, ways of life, and cultures are disregarded in the name of economic and political interests. These projects often proceed without prior consultation and ignore our relationship with the land, violating our right to participation and self-determination. It is we who face pollution, loss of access to clean water, rising living costs, and the destruction of livelihoods. This development model perpetuates inequalities and imposes a disproportionate burden on us, women, who take on the responsibility of supporting our families amid environmental destruction. For this reason, we denounce environmental racism, which must be confronted and overcome.

Our call for action becomes even more urgent in light of the worsening climate crisis, evidenced by the devastating drought in the Amazon, which threatens the lives of the people and the largest tropical forest on the planet, the criminal fires in the Pantanal and across the country, which consume our forests and essential ecosystems, and the severe flooding in Rio Grande do Sul, which has displaced thousands of people. These climate catastrophes do not happen in isolation: they add to the damage caused by megaprojects and large infrastructure works, which intensify the destruction of our biomes, deforest, and further degrade the environment. The interaction between these less natural and more human-made disasters and large-scale projects has worsened socio-environmental impacts, increasing the vulnerability of our territories and the insecurity of our populations.

Multilateral financial institutions (World Bank, IDB, CAF...), national banks (BNDES, Banco do Brasil...) and international banks play a key role in financing the megaprojects that impact our lives, ignoring the socio-environmental consequences of these projects. These institutions provide capital and guarantees that enable devastating works, such as large dams, mining, industrial plants, and infrastructure projects that invade traditional territories and sensitive ecosystems. In the name of economic growth, these banks disregard the rights of local populations. By prioritizing profit and ignoring socio-environmental obligations, these institutions are accomplices in perpetuating environmental racism and inequality, placing profit above life and the fundamental rights of affected communities.