

MOVE BEYOND COAL, NOW!

VICTORIES ON THE FRONT LINES



SIERRA
CLUB
FOUNDED 1892



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Global Anti-Coal Movement Awakens	1
Sompeta, India	3
Chicago, United States	7
Pristina, Kosovo	9
Krefeld, Germany	11
Victoria, Australia	13
Hulu Sungai Tengah, Indonesia	15
Gerze, Turkey	17
Sabah, Malaysia	19
Conclusion	21

September 2012

Published by:
The Sierra Club
50 F Street NW 8th Floor Washington D.C. 20001
(202) 547-1141 | www.sierraclub.org



GLOBAL ANTI-COAL MOVEMENT AWAKENS

Photo provided by Nicole Ghio, Sierra Club

Lost amid industry propaganda is a hard truth: coal is a dying industry in the countries that formed the heart of the Industrial Revolution. In the United States, plans for 170 new coal-fired power plants have been abandoned, and another 120 existing plants are now scheduled for retirement. The same thing is happening in Europe, where none of the 120 coal-fired power plants proposed since 2007 have reached the construction stage. Even the world's largest coal exporter, Australia, recently witnessed the defeat of perhaps its last domestic coal plant. Why is this happening? Because coal is caught in a perfect storm of changing market dynamics and fierce grassroots opposition from communities around the world seeking safer, healthier, and cheaper clean energy sources to power the future.


As a result, the industry is now in a dead sprint to build as many plants as possible in an effort to lock in a new era of coal-fired power before it's too late. Its efforts are focused, at least rhetorically, on emerging markets and the 1.3 billion people without access to electricity. The argument is simple and

compelling for the uninitiated: coal is the cheapest and most abundant fuel for delivering energy access. The problem is, reality doesn't match up with this spin.

Energy markets are dramatically changing: coal is getting expensive and clean, renewable energy is becoming cheap. The Faustian social contract coal has long enjoyed — cheap power in return for social and environmental degradation — is now broken. This rupture has allowed a growing opposition to stand up, push back, and defeat plant after plant around the world. The industry knows if it doesn't act now, the centuries-long dominance it has enjoyed will come crashing down in front of its eyes.

When it does, it will be because communities around the world fought back. From the sleepy village of Sompeta, India, on the Bay of Bengal, to the spectacular coral reefs of Sabah, Malaysia, in Southeast Asia, to the bustling metropolitan city of Chicago in the United States, communities on the front lines are defying threats and intimidation to turn the tide of history. These are their stories.



A photograph of a blue cylindrical water tank in a village. The tank has red and green graffiti that reads 'SAVE LIVELY HOOD AROUND BEELA GO BACK N.C.C'. In the background, there are simple houses and power lines. A blue speech bubble with white text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**“THIS IS A GOD-GIVEN GIFT
TO US. WE SHALL FIGHT TILL
IT IS RETURNED.”**

Dr. Babu Rao

SOMPETA, INDIA



Content provided by Dr. Babu Rao, Retired Public Servant

BACKGROUND

A mere six kilometers from the sparkling Bay of Bengal sits the quiet village of Sompeta in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Sompeta is home to a unique system of coastal wetlands that support a rich heritage of biodiversity and rare migratory birds. Local communities have lived off this abundant natural endowment for centuries. The livelihoods of fisherman, farmers, and shepherds alike are all linked to the health and vitality of these wetlands.

This idyllic setting was shattered when the Nagarjuna Construction Company (NCC) proposed a 1,980-megawatt coal-fired power plant inside the wetlands. The determined opposition of local villagers made Sompeta ground zero in the battle against India's coal boom—a boom that has steamrolled the country's rural poor as it attempts to build a whopping 499 new coal-fired power plants.

The valiant struggle waged by Sompeta residents is a tale of locals standing up, fighting back, and defeating a project that would have deprived them of land and livelihood. Their victory has reverberated throughout surrounding communities and is now the inspiration for a growing anti-coal movement across India.

THE PEOPLE'S BODY: UNITY IN OPPOSITION

The grassroots struggle solidified in response to Nagarjuna Construction Company claims that no ecologically sensitive areas existed near the project area and that it was all "uncultivable waste land." These rash assertions outraged locals. But it was the company's attempt to convince local residents that NCC could burn 34,245 tons of coal, spew out 14,380 tons of ash, and emit 226 tons of sulfur every day without severe environmental impacts

that ignited resistance. As NCC representatives attempted to deliver their message with a straight face, they were met with blistering cross-examination from local doctors on the health impacts of the proposed coal plant.

Worse, the company claimed that the plant would somehow create enough jobs to make up for displacing thousands of families and depriving the fishing community of access to the sea. To locals this was simply incomprehensible. How could destroying the land that had provided for generations be replaced with a polluting coal plant that would at best provide temporary construction jobs and a handful of long-term positions? What would become of local fisherman, farmers, and shepherds without land or a functioning ecosystem? More important, how could they morally allow this thriving ecosystem to be destroyed?

When company representatives couldn't answer these questions, opponents of the coal plant organized. In a society often violently riven with internal conflict, their unity was astounding. They came together across party lines, castes, creeds, and religions to form the Paryavarana Parirakshana Sangham (PPS). The "people's body" connected local villagers, professionals, doctors, volunteer organizations, labor groups, women's groups, farmers, and fishermen under the leadership of Dr. Y. Krishna Murthy.

Dr. Murthy explains their determined opposition this way: "What our forefathers gave to us, we shall pass on to our next generations without damaging the Sompeta wetland. It is our precious water source for both irrigation and drinking."

“WHAT OUR FOREFATHERS GAVE TO US, WE SHALL PASS ON TO OUR NEXT GENERATIONS WITHOUT DAMAGING THE SOMPETA WETLAND. IT IS OUR PRECIOUS WATER SOURCE FOR BOTH IRRIGATION AND DRINKING.”

Dr. Y. Krishna Murthy



The PPS went on to organize a trip to a coal-fired power plant in neighboring Visakhapatnam, where activists saw firsthand the devastating impacts coal development has on local communities. They listened as villagers told their stories of displacement, loss of livelihoods, pollution, and illness, and they brought these stories back to Sompeta as a stark warning.

PEACEFUL RESISTANCE MET WITH VIOLENT REPRESSION

While the PPS organized, lawyers challenged the project in court, clearly demonstrating that Sompeta was far from a “wasteland.” The company was furious, and it wasn’t long before the peaceful and growing movement was met with violence; activists were arrested, beaten, and falsely accused of crimes as the company and its political allies attempted to divide them.

On July 14, 2010, the harassment and intimidation reached a fever pitch, culminating in a pitched battle between the NCC — backed by hundreds of security personnel and armed policemen — and local villagers armed only with sticks and agricultural tools. The ensuing battle left two fishermen dead and 150 people injured. Media reports brought the heartbreaking images of fallen victims and traumatized villagers to television sets across India.

A MOVEMENT IS BORN

But the company’s violent attack on Sompeta failed to break the spirit of the resistance. Televised images of the violence in Sompeta helped galvanize the National Environment Appellate Authority, which the very next day threw out the environmental clearance for the plant. Less than a year later, the Andhra Pradesh High Court ordered the suspension of land allotments to the company, effectively halting the project in its tracks. The people literally put their lives on the line — and they won.

In Sompeta’s victory, a movement was born. News of the violent clash quickly spread to neighboring Kakrapalli, where locals defied land acquisition efforts for another coal plant, effectively halting construction. Now Sompeta has become an icon — a symbol of people’s resistance and people’s power.

As the Sompeta legend grows, it’s important to remember it was the first, but by no means the last example of effective grassroots resistance to the Indian coal rush. India’s gargantuan coal pipeline is being met by communities across the country who are banding together to call for an end to destructive projects that threaten their land and livelihoods. It’s high time the country heeded their call because, as local activist Dr. Babu Rao, Secretary of PPS, says: “This is a God-given gift to us. We shall fight till it is returned.”



Photo provided Deepak Kumar Jha, Tehelka



**“THIS VICTORY PROVES
THAT WHEN COMMUNITIES
AND ORGANIZATIONS WORK
TOGETHER, THEY CAN STOP
BIG POLLUTERS IN THEIR
TRACKS.”**

Tony Fuller

CHICAGO, UNITED STATES



Content provided by Claire Orphan, Sierra Club

BACKGROUND

Despite being one of America's most modern cities, Chicago has been home to some of the oldest and dirtiest coal-fired power plants in the nation. Chicago's Fisk and Crawford coal plants pumped pollution into the air from 1903 until 2012, with disastrous health effects. The coal was brought from mines in Wyoming, the power was sold out-of-state, the profits went to a California-based company, and local neighborhoods were left to deal with the pollution. Until August 2012, Chicago was the only major metropolitan area in the U.S. with not one, but two polluting coal plants within the city limits. But thanks to a concerted grassroots campaign by local residents, Fisk and Crawford have now ceased burning coal.

"THE CLOUD MAKER"

The Fisk and Crawford coal plants forced community members in the Pilsen and Little Village neighborhoods to work and play amid a harmful, toxic soup of pollution. Dvorak Park, with its swimming pool, baseball diamond, and playground, sits right underneath the smokestacks — and kids breathed in the pollution from the plant whenever they played outside. Local children referred to the smokestack as "the cloud maker." But the cloud maker was making them sick, causing asthma attacks, pulmonary problems, and heart disease.

For mother and activist Kim Wasserman, the effect of the plants' emissions on air quality was a family problem. "It's very hard to explain to a 6-year-old who wants to do nothing but play outside that he



can't because the air quality isn't good enough," she says.

FIGHTING BACK

Kim joined forces with other community members to fight back against the environmental hazards the two coal plants produce, and the irresponsible behavior of Midwest Generation, which operates both plants.

"Our kids have the right to breathe clean air, and the owners of Fisk and Crawford need to be held responsible for the damage they're doing," she says.

Kim and her two asthmatic sons live in the shadow of the plants. Kim is the leader of the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, which along with the Sierra Club, the Chicago Clean Power Coalition, and other residents of the Pilsen and Little Village neighborhoods, called on Mayor Rahm Emmanuel and the city council to protect the health of Chicago's children. For more than two years, thousands of Chicagoans delivered postcards and petitions and marched in the streets to demand clean, breathable air for everyone.

VICTORY IN SIGHT

On February 29, 2012, after years of struggle, their work paid off. Mayor Emmanuel and Midwest Generation announced the planned retirement of the Fisk and Crawford coal plants. And on August 29 and 30, respectively, the Fisk plant in Pilsen and the Crawford plant in Little Village burned their last batches of coal. With this decisive victory, the people of Little Village and Pilsen will now have access to better air quality and a more breathable future.

Tony Fuller, a volunteer for the Sierra Club remarks "this victory proves that when communities and organizations work together, they can stop big polluters in their tracks."

The Fisk and Crawford plants were the 99th and 100th coal-fired power plants to be retired in the U.S. since the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign began in 2002. Passionate activists from Little Village and Pilsen make it clear that a cleaner environment is possible for everyone.



PRISTINA, KOSOVO



Content provided by Nezir Sinani, Institute for Development Policy (INDEP)

BACKGROUND

The core of Europe is rapidly moving away from coal, with 71 percent of all new capacity in 2011 coming in the form of clean, renewable energy. But lurking on the fringes of the EU is a wave of new lignite plants (the most heavily polluting form of coal) planned for Eastern Europe and Turkey. One of these plants is planned for the tiny Republic of Kosovo, and is backed by two of the most powerful institutions on the planet — the World Bank and U.S. State Department. But a small and determined resistance has formed to a project that would mire Europe's youngest nation in coal pollution for decades to come. The heart of the resistance is in the cities of Pristina and Obilić, where two Soviet-era coal plants already choke the air with deadly pollution. The people have decided they simply cannot afford more decades of coal pollution,

and they are prepared to fight — no matter how powerful their opponents or uphill their struggle.

CLEARING THE AIR

The power situation in Kosovo is no trivial matter, as Nezir Sinani of the Institute for Development Policy (INDEP) knows all too well. It was only a few years ago that he worked for the state-owned power company, where as a media representative he faced public rage during the frequent blackouts. But over time, Nezir learned that the problem went much deeper than simply a lack of power. He realized that every day the country's coal-fired power plants put the health and lives of Kosovars in jeopardy, and plans for yet more coal meant the nation would face a toxic legacy for decades to come.



“The project proponents do not care about what another coal plant means for the health of Kosovars,” says Nezir. “They don’t live and breathe the pollution like we do. They see this as just another project that they will force a small, poor country to bear. But we’re fighting back. We’re taking our case to the courts and to the streets, and when we’re done the public will know the truth.”

INCREASING DEBT AS THE EU CRISIS RAGES

The Kosovo movement has teamed up with a team at the University of California, Berkeley, headed up by Dr. Dan Kammen, the former chief renewable energy specialist at the World Bank. Dr. Kammen has thrown his considerable weight behind the Kosovo struggle, personally lobbying the World Bank and the U.S. Government to abandon the plan in favor of developing the tremendous clean energy resources his team has shown are available in Kosovo. In fact, the Berkeley team’s study reveals that improvements to the grid and increased renewable energy will not only meet Kosovo’s energy needs, they will do it more cheaply and create more jobs than a new coal plant.

The Berkeley team’s analysis complements that of former Chief U.S. EPA Enforcement Officer Bruce Buckheit, who found that building a new coal plant would throw the country into further debt at a time when an economic crisis is raging across Europe. Ordinary Kosovars simply cannot afford the debt or the rate increases on their electricity bills that would be necessary to pay for the project. As Besa Shahini from the Kosovo Consortium

of Civil Society for Sustainable Development (KOSID) explains, “The chilling effect we feel in our bones when we look at this project is something they do not comprehend. Kosovo has an unemployment rate of 45 percent. How can they think skyrocketing electricity rates will improve our lives?”

But Besa’s anger does not stop there. “As if the huge financial cost were not enough, they want us to pay with our lives, our land, our air, and our water,” she says. “What they don’t understand is that we won’t give up, and we will fight to win what’s best for us. We’ll fight for our future.”

OUR LAND, OUR CHOICE

As it turns out, determined activists like Besa are turning the tide in a lopsided war. While the Kosovar government, the World Bank, and the U.S. State Department have all lent their support to the controversial project, the one group that hasn’t been consulted are the people who will be directly affected: local citizens.

“Living in the village of Dardhishte has become an everyday nightmare,” says resident Burim Gërguri. “Pollution and degradation are of epic proportions. No one wants to live in a place where burning coal is done in your garden. This must change and we will certainly not be quiet.”

Now Besa and others are channeling their anger to beat back the project. On a damp, rainy afternoon this spring, Obilić residents took to the streets arm-in-arm. Their message was simple: this is their land, and their future is their decision. With the help of allied activist groups in Washington, D.C., their message has spread to the decision-makers in the World Bank and U.S. government. Now the project plans are changing almost daily, and activists believe it is a sign that change is coming and the project can be defeated.

When they began, “very important people” told them to sit down, shut up, and accept their fate. Defeating a new coal plant backed by the world’s most powerful government, the World Bank, and their own government was simply an impossible task. But as Besa says, “We won’t give up, we will fight back, and eventually we will win.”



KREFELD, GERMANY



Content provided by Mona Bricke, German Climate Alliance and Kerstin Ciesla, Friends of the Earth Germany

BACKGROUND

When residents of Krefeld, Germany, learned there was a proposal to build a new coal-fired power plant in their backyard, they knew they had an uphill battle. Situated in one of the most industrialized regions of Germany, North Rhine-Westphalia, the area is home to the majority of Germany's coal plants and is responsible for a third of the country's total CO₂ emissions. Already facing dangerous and deadly air pollution from numerous steel, chemical, and coal facilities, the people of Krefeld spent five long years fighting to stop this new threat to their health. And at the end of their struggle, not only had they won, they had kickstarted a national movement to end coal

burning in Germany and protect the country's burgeoning clean energy revolution.

A GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT IS BORN

"We started by building strong local citizen groups in two neighboring cities," explains Kerstin Ciesla of Friends of the Earth Germany. "We focused on cleaning up the air that was laden with particulates, arsenic, cadmium, mercury, and other nasty pollutants." Ciesla worked with doctors and pharmacist groups to educate the public about the dangers of deadly particulates and other air pollution, while activists in the community began rallying and holding presentations at farmers' markets and local festivals.



“WE FOCUSED ON CLEANING UP THE AIR THAT WAS LADEN WITH PARTICULATES, ARSENIC, CADMIUM, MERCURY, AND OTHER NASTY POLLUTANTS.”

Kerstin Ciesla

But local citizens weren't just concerned about the health effects of a new coal-fired power plant—they were also worried about the economics. They knew that coal wasn't cheap, despite the claims of the project's backers. Over the long run, renewable energy is cheaper, and the mounting threat of climate change made constructing a new coal plant callous and irresponsible. Worse, by already having taken great strides to modernize its energy sector, Germany had become home to the clean energy revolution. Coal was simply not flexible enough to be viable in an updated grid dominated by clean, renewable energy.



GAINING STEAM

The groups opposing the Krefeld plant joined forces with other communities and organizations fighting against new coal-fired power plants to form a network of anti-coal activists across Germany. One by one, bit by bit, they began to turn the tide.

Their determined opposition ensured that the Krefeld plant did not get a rubber stamp. The consortium of public utilities behind the proposed Trianel coal plant was not prepared for the wave of opposition that ensued. Faced with public scrutiny from both local community members and national organizations, Trianel accepted that the economics of a new coal plant were simply not viable. The consortium opted to build a modern combined gas-steam power plant instead, which Kerstin calls a “real bridge technology on the way to getting 100 percent of our energy from renewable sources.”

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

The real legacy of the Krefeld fight is the activism it helped spark across Germany, which held back a wave of new coal projects in favor of cleaner energy and started a national debate on a Renewable Energy Standard. As Kerstin explains, “We spent most of our holidays and a lot of our time and effort on the resistance against this coal power plant, but the success shows that local groups can become powerful when they join up with groups and organizations at the regional and national level, and that we can win!”

VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA



Content provided by Julien Vincent, Greenpeace Australia

BACKGROUND

During the 2010 Australian elections, Prime Minister Julie Gillard made a clear commitment to ban new coal-fired power plants in Australia. Despite this proclamation, HRL, a Melbourne coal technology company, used a “clean coal” message to secure \$150 million in grants from the national and Victoria state governments. When Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Chief Executive John Merritt attempted to allow the project to move forward, activists hit back, and they hit hard.

If built, the HRL project would be Victoria’s first new coal-fired power plant in 20 years. Locals, fearing the pollution and climate impacts it would

entail, defeated HRL — the last proposed coal plant in Australia. Their victory marks a historic change for Australia, where coal-fired power dropped 10 percent in July 2012 — a change mirrored across the Western world.

A UNITED FRONT

When HRL applied for approval of the coal plant, environmental activists in Victoria were ready. Julien Vincent of Greenpeace quickly banded together with numerous other organizations, including Environment Victoria and Quit Coal, to fight back. Together they generated a record 4,000 submissions to the EPA opposing the project, and staged public demonstrations and protests.



**“NEVER EVER LOSE SIGHT OF
THE FACT [THAT YOU] ARE
ABSOLUTELY IN THE RIGHT.”**

Julien Vincent

As Julien explains, “The community turned out in the hundreds to rallies opposing the project, thousands of submissions were made to EPA Victoria opposing the approval of the project, and nearly 13,000 petitions were gathered to call on the Australian government to cancel its taxpayer-funded grant to the project. “

Meanwhile, the coalition began collecting research to counter HRL’s claims and demonstrate just how economically unfeasible the coal plant was. They found that by utilizing “clean coal” technology, HRL would actually force Victoria to provide the project with \$400 million in taxpayer subsidies. A survey followed showing that the majority of Victorians favored using tax money for renewable energy, not HRL’s grant. And — as if any additional proof was needed to demonstrate that the proposal was not economically viable — they also discovered that the cost of the project had skyrocketed from its original estimate of \$750 million to \$1.18 billion!

As a result, activists turned out in force to protest public funding for the HRL coal plant, chaining themselves to the Premier’s office, unfurling banners, and demonstrating in front of the Parliament House. The big banks also took notice, rejecting funding for the project and leaving the government grants as the only financial pillar propping up the antiquated proposal.

THE HOUSE OF CARDS CRUMBLES

As the government took notice of the overwhelming opposition, Prime Minister Gillard gave HRL an ultimatum to meet all outstanding conditions for their grant to show the project was a sound investment. Communities in Victoria used this time to ratchet up the pressure on the government, ensuring that their concerns were heard. As the deadline approached, HRL’s proposal began to collapse under the weight of its false promises.

Finally on July 27, 2012, news arrived that years of hard work by community members and environmentalists paid off: HRL’s 100 million dollar government grant was cancelled. And with it, the last proposed coal-fired power station in the works in Australia was finished. The decision marks a new era of clean technology for the country.

Though Australia has won its long battle against the HRL coal plant, the battle is still being fought around the world. When encouraging activists who are fighting coal projects in other countries, Julien Vincent tells them, “Never ever lose sight of the fact [that you] are absolutely in the right. Coal is old, dirty, and expensive, and it causes a huge array of hazards, from human health impacts to global warming. There is every reason to switch from coal to renewable energy and in each of those reasons lies a host of opportunities for campaigning against coal.”

HULU SUNGAI TENGAH, INDONESIA



Content provided by Dwitho Frasetiandy and Pius Ginting, Friends of the Earth Indonesia (WALHI)

BACKGROUND

In the world's second-largest coal exporting country, the coal industry is king. It dictates the health of the land and, by extension, the people who live on that land. The center of this power is Kalimantan Island, where rich forests and agricultural lands are being devastated by rampant mining. In South Kalimantan lies the District of Hulu Sungai Tengah (HST), which is home to a thriving community dependent for their livelihood on rice paddies and water from the Batang Ali River. In the middle of Indonesian coal country, in defiance of old king coal, this community stood up to the Indonesian Government and the mining companies — and they won.

A FLOOD OF PROBLEMS

It all began when the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources gave a coal-mining permit to P.T. Mantimin Coal Mining Company (MCM) to mine areas surrounding the Batang Ali River. This was the first permit ever given for HST, and the mining would have cut off the flow of water from the Batang Ali River and its tributaries, jeopardizing the community's precious life source — the water supply for their rice paddy fields.

As if this were not enough to rile up locals, the mining threatened protected forests. The resulting deforestation would have dramatically



**“IN THE FUTURE WE SHOULD
PURSUE LESS INTENSIVE
DEVELOPMENT AND
AVOID ENVIRONMENTAL
DESTRUCTION.”**

Pius Ginting

increased flooding and landslides in the district. As activist Pius Ginting puts it, “Coal exports drive deforestation, flooding, and the degradation of our rivers. Polluting and destroying resources relied on by the community is unacceptable.”

DEFENDING THE LAND

In 2008 the news spread that Hulu Sungai was under threat. Community members were enraged and began to organize to defend their land and livelihoods. The first step was making it clear to the Indonesian Environmental Management Agency, which was responsible for conducting an environmental impact assessment for the project, that a new coal mine was not welcome in HST.

Pius Ginting and Friends of the Earth Indonesia (WALHI) were front-and-center in making the community’s voices heard. Angry protests flooded the government agencies involved, making it abundantly clear where locals stood on the proposed project. The deluge of protests marked the beginning of the end for coal in HST.

INTRUDERS STAY OUT

Not long after they spoke out, the community’s activism paid off. The local government bowed to the intense pressure and announced that the operation of the MCM would be halted. With this victory under their belt, the movement strengthened and has now successfully kept mining companies out of HST entirely. “Phasing out coal and shifting the economy to renewable sectors such as fishing, agriculture, forestry, and tourism, is a wise way to avoid social tension,” says Pius Ginting, subtly underscoring the fierce local resistance to any mining. “In the future we should pursue less intensive development and avoid environmental destruction.”



GERZE, TURKEY

Content provided by Pinar Aksogan, Greenpeace Mediterranean



BACKGROUND

Like Kosovo, Turkey faces a wave of planned dirty new lignite plants (the dirtiest form of coal) proposed for the outlying areas of the EU. But unlike Kosovo, Turkey faces the astonishing prospect of 50 new coal-fired power plants, ranking it third in the world for proposed coal plants. Four of these projects are slated for Sinop Province alone, including the Anadolu Group's proposed project in the small jewel-like Black Sea town of Gerze. Just as in Kosovo, citizens and activists are fighting back. But instead of targeting the government, they are fighting the company

backing the project and its popular brand of beer, EFES Polson, as they protest the Anadolu Group's disregard for the health and safety of the people of Gerze.

With a \$50 million annual advertising budget, EFES beer is one of the most beloved brands in Turkey. But now, thanks to a Greenpeace Mediterranean campaign led by Pinar Aksogan, the beer is also associated with the dirty and polluting Gerze coal plant that locals are putting themselves on the line to fight. To date, Pinar has garnered support from 78,000 people opposed to the Gerze coal project, and every day the power of the people grows.



FIGHTING BACK

“Gerze will definitely die if they open a coal plant here,” says Gülseven Kurada, a 56-year-old resident.

Those are the stark terms in which the people of Gerze portray the project. It strengthens their resolve to continue a fight that has raged for three years. Their struggle is so intense that locals have resorted to 24 hour vigils to prevent the Anadolu Group from commencing construction. The vigils have resulted in an active blockade against the transportation of drilling equipment into the village, leading to violent clashes where local protesters have been attacked with gas grenades and batons.

“We came head-to-head with our own police and gendarmerie, and they were not happy, either,” says Gerze resident Nahide Gökhan. “Villagers brought cheesecloth for us to cover our noses and mouths,

and cases of lemons to wash our eyes. We helped soldiers who were badly affected by the gas.”

But the locals are undaunted. They know that if the Gerze plant is built, there will be tremendous damage to their agricultural land and unacceptable levels of pollution in their air and water. “When ash falls on our land, our animals won’t graze and we will not be able to get any products,” says İsmail Akgöz, a small-scale agriculture laborer in nearby Yaykıl.

VICTORY IN SIGHT?

Buoyed by the demonstrations, local residents are now petitioning the Ministry of Environment to revoke approval of the plant. These calls are supported by petitions from a wide range of Turkish society opposing the plant, including agricultural associations, professional chambers, unions, consumer protection groups, and other government agencies.

“There are so many irregularities in it that we believe this Environmental Impact Assessment report will be turned down,” says Şengül Şahin of YEGEP, a citizens group fighting the Gerze coal plant. “We still believe in the rule of law in Turkey.”

These efforts culminated in a decision by The Forest and Water Council declaring the area as unsuitable for a coal-fired power plant and calling for the proposal to be cancelled. The Anadolu Group must now wait three months to resubmit the required documents before it can commence construction.

Winning this decision may be a tipping point in the battle. The movement is gaining strength, the Environmental Impact Assessment process was vindicated, and Anadolu and its famous beer brand are on their heels. The local people, along with Pinar and Greenpeace, now have a real opportunity to reclaim their right to a clean and healthy environment, free of the destructive impacts of dirty coal. Now they plan to seize it.



SABAH, MALAYSIA



Content provided by Cynthia Ong and Gabe Wynn

BACKGROUND

Coal was expelled from Eden. That's how *Time Magazine* described the outcome of an incredibly powerful “beyond coal” grassroots movement in the Malaysian state of Sabah that arose to beat back persistent threats to this tropical paradise. Local residents thwarted proposals to build dirty new coal plants in 2008 and 2009. But in 2010 a new and stronger proposal emerged for yet another coal plant, this time buoyed by persistent power shortages. It was this threat that Eden's defenders expelled.

The planned coal plant was hardly the first action the government undertook to address power shortages. Earlier “magic bullets” included privatizing the local utility company and building

an east-west electricity grid to distribute excess power, but neither yielded the promised results. Now the government was planning to force a new coal plant on local citizens, claiming it was the cheapest way to address the country's energy needs, despite rising coal prices suggesting otherwise.

Worse, the plant would have severe environmental impacts on the Coral Triangle, a diverse coral reef ecosystem and a fishery resource that on which more than 100 million people depend for their livelihood. Toxic emissions from the plant, including sulfur dioxide and other dangerous pollutants, threatened the local populace as well as the forest ecosystem. Given the threat they faced, and the strength of the movement they had built, the





local people in Sabah never thought twice about fighting back. The coal plant tested the depth and the breadth of their movement, but at the end of the day it was no match for the people's strength.

BUILDING A MOVEMENT

Indigenous community-based organizations and environmental groups in Sabah have at times found themselves at odds with one another, but they found a shared cause in opposing the proposed coal-fired power plant, banding together to form the Green SURF coalition (Sabah Unite to Repower the Future).

As Cynthia Ong, executive director of Land Empowerment Animals People (LEAP) explains, "I think that one of the most vital things we did was build the local coalition — everything else emanated from there. Bringing together a diverse group of

Together, the indigenous and environmental activists took to the airwaves to educate the local and international populace about their struggle. The impacts on the climate, agriculture, and fisheries they described rallied people to their cause. One of the more powerful partnerships they built from this work was with the Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory at the University of California, Berkeley. The Berkeley team joined the cause, providing an analysis showing that Sabah could affordably cover its energy needs without coal by relying on geothermal, biomass from palm oil waste, solar PV (photovoltaic) systems, and small-scale hydropower. With this knowledge in hand, Green SURF recruited international organizations to lobby the prime minister and stand in solidarity with the people of Sabah.

Faced with a wave of opposition from the indigenous community, environmental activists, and local residents, the Malaysian government backed down. It cancelled the proposed coal plant in just 15 months. It was a swift and decisive victory not just for activists, but for everyone who believes in the value of natural resources.



NGOs with diverse agendas and a history of fragmentation and even conflict was one of the toughest things about the campaign. It was also our biggest strength. From there, the international alliances were built and the people's movement followed. It became a local, regional, and international campaign."



MOVING BEYOND COAL

Photo provided by Nicole Ghio, Sierra Club

GOING GLOBAL

Communities like Sabah across Southeast Asia are not sitting and waiting for their governments, NGOs, or the international community to decide their fate. They are developing their own renewable energy resources and providing cheap power for residents, all while conserving watersheds and stimulating local cottage industries. Now they are joining forces with renewable energy actors from across Southeast Asia to form the Southeast Asia Renewable Energy Peoples' Assembly (SEAREPA) to exchange ideas and network with rural forest communities. For many, this will be the first time they hear stories from the region's most remote communities, whose innovative solutions are allowing them to sustainably develop their resources on their own terms. Their movement is one whose time has truly come.

As these stories make clear, activists across the world are uniting and winning the fight for our collective future. From Sompeta to Chicago, Gerze to Sabah, Kosovo to Australia, the coal industry is suffering defeat. Rarely are these stories told, but

they are occurring with increasing frequency. The time has come for governments to respond to this groundswell and move the world beyond coal.

Now is the time to end the comfortable myth that the world — developed and developing alike — needs coal. This myth ignores the dark side of fossil fuel booms — the pollution, degradation of habitat, and wanton destruction they cause, and the fetters they place on global ingenuity and innovation. Now, more than ever, the world needs solutions that promote local energy economies and real development for those who need it — things that coal simply can't deliver.

The world stands at a crossroads. Down one path lies a dangerous future of impoverished people and an imperiled planet. Down the other is a new way forward, made possible by harnessing the limitless and cost-effective power of renewable energy. The brave activists in this report have chosen their path in the face of daunting odds. Now it's time to stand behind them and their growing global movement to reject coal, embrace clean energy, and preserve the sanctity of a world we all share.





The Sierra Club
50 F Street NW 8th Floor
Washington D.C. 20001
(202) 547-1141 | www.sierraclub.org