

Our Rivers, Our Water Future

INTRODUCING OUR
2018–2022 STRATEGIC PLAN





Rivers are essential to all life on the planet.

Free-flowing rivers work like arteries, providing the world's ecosystems with critical freshwater resources that sustain a higher biodiversity per square mile than almost any other ecosystem.

Their fisheries are crucial to the food security and livelihoods of millions of people. Yet freshwater ecosystems are being fragmented, diverted and polluted, and they're losing biodiversity at rates higher than any other ecosystem.



Dams are fragmenting rivers and ecosystems, driving this unprecedented loss of freshwater habitat and biodiversity. More than 3,700 hydropower projects are planned or under construction on the world's rivers.

Large dam projects can displace tens of thousands of people from their lands, are prone to corruption, and emit a powerful greenhouse gas: methane. Low corporate accountability has allowed hundreds of river defenders—often indigenous and marginalized people—to be threatened, harassed or, in some cases, killed.

Nature depends on healthy rivers—and so do we. The United Nations has declared that water scarcity is one of the most urgent problems facing human societies this century. Water stress affects more than two billion people around the globe, a figure that is projected to rise. The World Economic Forum has described global water crises as “the biggest threat facing the planet over the next decade.”



In the last 40 years, the wildlife that inhabit our rivers and lakes have, on average, lost more than 81% of their populations.



These freshwater species are declining more than twice as fast as land-based and marine species.



Less than 10% of the world's largest river basins are protected.

International Rivers protects rivers and defends the rights of communities that depend on them.

Since 1985, we have been at the heart of the global movement to ensure river-dependent communities' voices are heard and their rights are respected. We help build well-resourced networks of civil society groups, undertake investigative research, campaign to resist destructive projects, and engage with all stakeholders to find solutions that meet energy needs while protecting nature and the rights of local communities. Our pioneering work includes the formation of the World Commission on Dams, a gold standard for water and energy planning, as well as convincing the world's largest dam-builder, China's Sinohydro, to adopt precedent-setting social and environmental policy. In recognition of these achievements, International Rivers was awarded the 2013 MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions for "applying science, rigorous policy analysis, and strategic advocacy."

SALWEEN RIVER | A woman pans for gold along the Upper Salween River. Photo courtesy of Pal Deetes/International Rivers.



Our Goals

To protect rivers and the rights of river communities, we need to influence how rivers are governed, how they are protected in law, and how they are valued through planning and management. By gaining lasting protections for the world's rivers, we can realize our vision for healthy rivers that sustain life.



Strengthen movements for healthy rivers



Ensure corporate accountability in policy and practice

Promote clean and fair finance for energy and water solutions



Secure human rights for water protectors and their communities



Support equitable and effective governance that sustains rivers



Gain permanent legal protections for the world's iconic rivers

How we achieve impact

Community voices matter.

Communities with generations of experience fishing in and farming alongside their rivers are the first to suffer from river fragmentation. Solutions to the freshwater crisis must deeply involve these communities, drawing on their experience and addressing their needs and concerns.

Networks and movements build power.

We help build well-resourced, active networks of civil society groups that understand global trends in infrastructure and finance sectors to better advocate for the health of the world's major rivers and ecosystems.

Evidence and data drive change.

We undertake on-the-ground investigations and research on the value of river ecosystems and the impacts of dams and river fragmentation. We value community-generated research alongside institutional research by academics, policymakers and NGOs.

Engage stakeholders, maintain independence.

We have a track record of successfully working with local communities, financiers, governments, and the private sector to shift river management policies and practices.



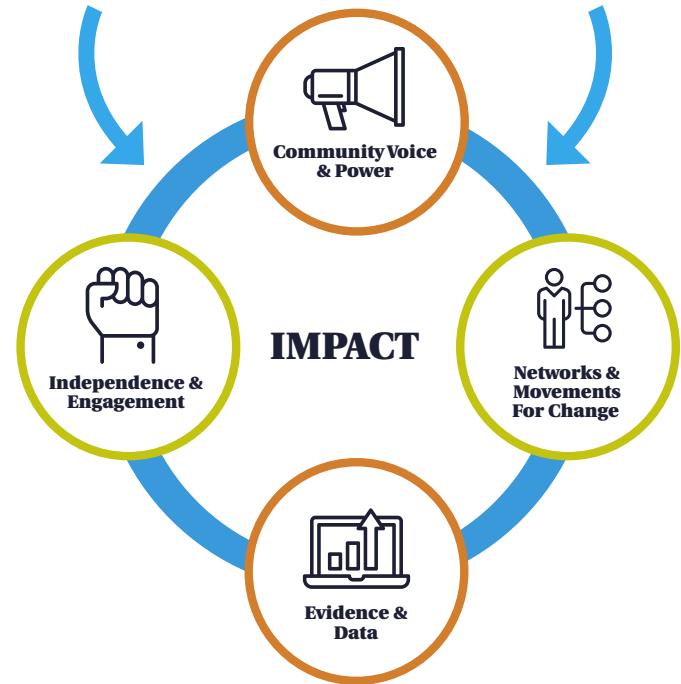
Context for our work

Freshwater is essential to life. Rivers are the arteries and veins of our freshwater systems. Freshwater and rivers face significant pressures across the globe.



Response

International Rivers has built a responsive, global presence, connected to river communities and civil society partners.



International Rivers' Impact

By the Numbers



217

Number of dam projects we have delayed, prevented, or stopped in collaboration with our partners around the world.



24

Number of river basins we've worked in, covering 17% of the earth's total land area.



\$174b

Amount of USD channeled away from destructive dams and needless financial risk.



859

Number of NGO partners around the world.



277

Number of grassroots organizations supported financially to protect rivers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.



1

International Rivers was voted the most influential NGO by the hydropower industry in a 2015 survey by the International Hydropower Association.

“Over the years, International Rivers has been seen as an integral part of our collective struggle by friends in the movement in South Asia and around the world.”

Smitu Kothari, Lokayan and Intercultural Resources, India

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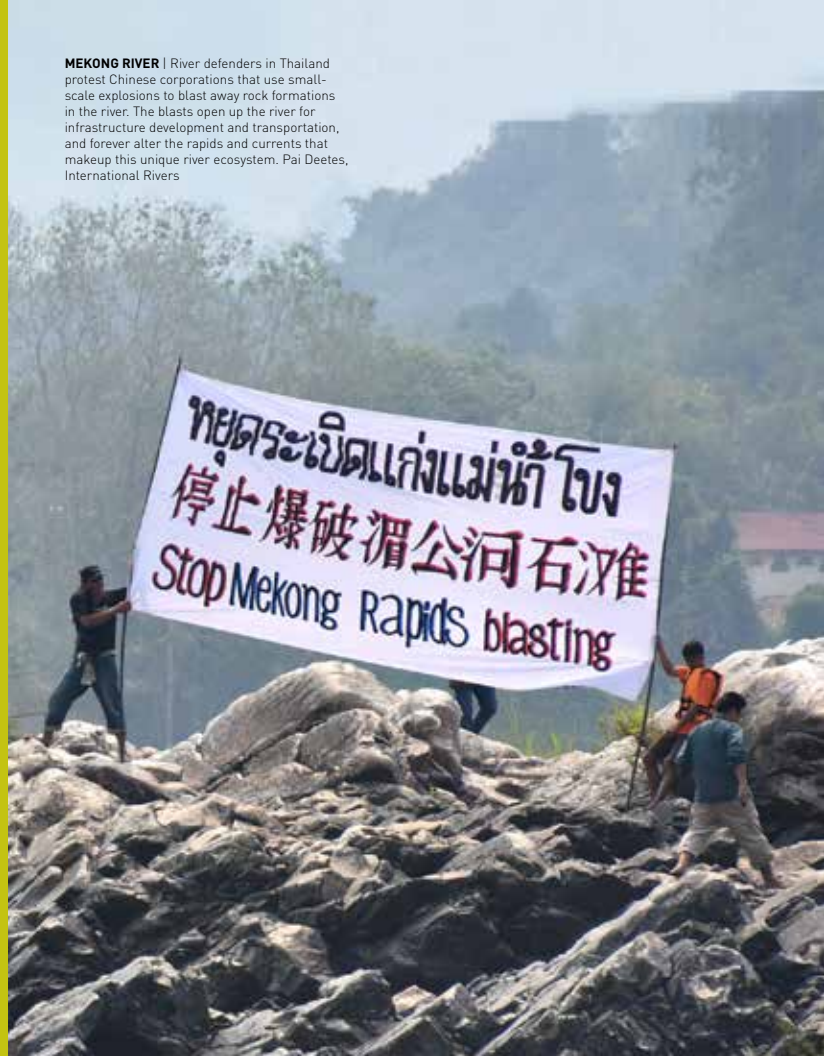
Get involved

Take Action on March 14

The annual International Day of Action for Rivers takes place on March 14. Tens of thousands of people rise up together on this day to clean up rivers, voice support for river protection, kayak and raft, screen documentaries, organize conferences, hold ceremonies, and more.

Pledge to take action for a river you care about on March 14: intlriv.rs/riveraction

MEKONG RIVER | River defenders in Thailand protest Chinese corporations that use small-scale explosions to blast away rock formations in the river. The blasts open up the river for infrastructure development and transportation, and forever alter the rapids and currents that makeup this unique river ecosystem. Pai Deetes, International Rivers





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