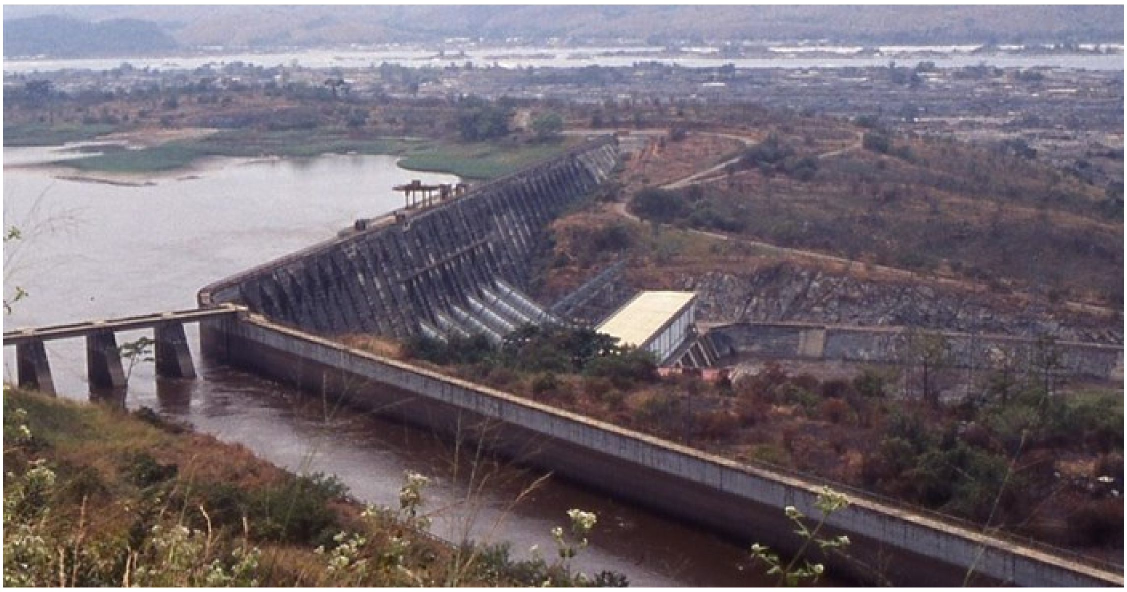
Inga 3 hydropower would cost South Africans billions

A recently released study reveals the true costs to the country of importing power from the planned Inga 3 hydropower scheme in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).



Source: Wikipedia

The study shows that the cost of importing power from Inga would be three times the current cost of generating electricity in South Africa, and would cost over R10bn more per year compared to readily available alternatives. This additional burden would likely fall on the shoulders of ordinary South Africans through increased tariffs and taxpayer subsidies for Eskom.

“Our study clearly shows that Inga is simply not financially viable for South Africa. The economics of the project just don’t add up, so it’s no wonder financiers have stayed away," says says Ben Bowie, one of the study’s authors.

The study raises considerable doubt over whether South Africa’s plans to import power from Inga are likely to proceed, and notes that the South African government has not conducted proper due diligence, including feasibility and socio-economic impact studies.

Wake-up call

Meanwhile, the scheme’s prospects worsened in recent weeks following news that the DRC government has granted exclusive rights to develop the Inga site to Australian company Fortescue Metals Group, which plans to harness Inga’s hydro potential to produce green hydrogen for export to Europe. This would potentially cut South Africa out altogether, despite a longstanding treaty guaranteeing a portion of Inga’s power to South Africa.

“This should be a clear wake-up call for South African authorities to abandon their ill-advised plans to import power from Inga. South Africa must withdraw from the treaty and embrace abundant local solar and wind resources to the benefit of all South Africans," says Siziwe Mota, Africa director at International Rivers, one of the organisations behind the study.

No socioeconomic benefits

In addition, the study found that Inga would create virtually no new jobs within South Africa compared to the estimated 8,096 full-time jobs for South Africans that comparable investments in solar and wind would create.

Women in particular would bear the cost of importing power from Inga, both through direct impacts of the transmission line and increased electricity tariffs. “With women already disproportionately affected by the high unemployment rate as well as the gender pay gap, further tariff increases and displacement to make way for the transmission lines will have devastating effects on the lives of poor women in particular. These already vulnerable women would once again be forced to carry the burden of these so-called development schemes,” says Trusha Reddy, programme head at WoMin African Alliance, which also sponsored the study.

> “ *South Africa simply cannot afford a ticking timebomb of this magnitude.* ”

Our country urgently needs energy, which solar and wind can provide more quickly, more cheaply, and at significantly lower risk," says Mota

International Rivers and WoMin have therefore written to the parliamentary portfolio committees on energy and finance to request an opportunity to present this report to the members of Parliament and calling for the immediate withdrawal of South Africa’s support for Inga 3.