

>> **SYNTHESIZE** MOUNTAINS OF KNOWLEDGE <<

**Submitted Abstract**

ID IMC22-FSAbstr- 708

<b>First Author</b> First Name Last Name	Rinchu Doma Dukpa
<b>Submitting Author</b> First Name Last Name	Rinchu Doma Dukpa
<b>Correspondence</b>	rinchudukpa@gmail.com
<b>Co-Authors</b> >> E-Mails will be not listed	
<b>Organisations</b>	Wageningen University and Research, India
<b>Country</b>	India
<b>Region</b>	Asia
<b>Title</b>	Hydropower Development Contestations In Sikkim: Whose “Environmental” Justice?
<b>Keywords</b>	Dams, Conflicts, Resistance, Environmental-Justice, Indigenous Communities, Eastern Himalaya, Sikkim.
<b>Type</b>	List Of Focus Session
<b>Focus Session ID</b>	28

>> SYNTHESIZE MOUNTAINS OF KNOWLEDGE <<

## Abstract

Sikkim in the Indian Eastern Himalaya - a sovereign Kingdom merged with India in 1975 - has witnessed a systematically planned and aggressively executed large and mega dam development on the Teesta River for over four decades. Rigorously undertaken by the Government of India (federal) and Government of Sikkim (provincial) in joint-partnership with private energy companies, dam development has been fiercely resisted in Sikkim by the local indigenous communities, particularly in its North District. While some anti-dam resistance culminated into a wider “social movement” capturing national and global attention, most remained locally confined within the dam-affected-areas across the tiny state. What is important to note here is that in none of these dam-affected-areas of struggle, issues regarding displacement and rehabilitation, common in anti-dam contestations elsewhere, became relevant. Rather contestations and dam-conflict have revolved (and continue to) around the issues related to land rights, indigeneity, identities, and territoriality, in fact even less about the water, its impoundment in the large dam, and other environmental consequences pertinent in the wake of visible climate change manifestations in the high mountainous terrains of Sikkim Himalaya. Equally important to note is the presence of strong networks of pro-dam supporters and pro-dam mobilisations from none other than the project affected landowners belonging to the same indigenous communities awaiting and(or) aspiring for decades old “promises” of economic benefits and opportunities from dam development, that have intensively exacerbated dam conflicts and contestation in the region. A complex web of hydropower development conflict has thus perpetuated across the three regions of North District for decades which remains the focus of this paper. Each of these cases in Dzongu, Chungthang; and Lachen and Lachung exhibiting a unique place-based anti-dam contestations and outcomes, yet alarmingly similar struggles for legitimacy over decision making regarding dam development. This paper analyses the three case studies with diverse social response to large dams to examine how, on the ground the anti-dam resistance movements by various indigenous communities engage with the notions of environmental justice in mobilising collective actions? Whose voice counts and prevails in building the visible contestation on hydropower development and resistance against the Government and power companies; and whose voice and participation remain unheard and invisible in the decision-making processes as well as in the articulation of the struggle itself. What then are its implication in terms of water governance and sustainable development goals envisioned for such high mountain region and its communities?