



**Alliance for  
Climate Justice &  
Clean Energy**

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**Preliminary Draft Report on the Socio-Ecological Impacts of Thar Coal Activities on Communities of Gorrano, Dukar Chao, and Meghay Jo Tar Block II.**

The following summary represents the initial findings of an upcoming report on the impact of coal activities for communities around Coal Blocks 1 & 2 by the Alliance for Climate Change and Clean Energy (ACJCE). ACJCE is a coalition of civil society organizations comprising environmentalists, academics, and policy professionals specializing in social and environmental issues associated with energy projects. The coalition has produced and published several studies documenting the impacts and effects of Thar coal activities on local ecologies and hydrologies. This initial draft summary is based on an extensive visit of Thar in early March 2023 and includes a report from the proceedings of the community-led gatherings (Rajouni's/Tribunal's) which provided invaluable insights and **testimonials into the detrimental impacts of coal-based activities on the local communities and their ecological world and ways of living**. Whilst this represents an initial draft it indicates critical concerns which will be developed more comprehensively in the final draft. It is also important to note that further independent studies on water quality and local hydrology have also been initiated and are currently being drafted and/or under peer review, the initial indications and orientations of the findings of these reports are also indicated in this draft.

The first of these reports, which is currently subject to expert interpretation and international peer review, identifies **a clear and significant degradation in water quality** in Thar Coal Block II, in particular identifying the presence of toxic metals in tests of drinking water. The second report has initiated water testing on the Gorano reservoir the results of which are pending. It will examine the **transformation of the local hydrology** and has also significantly recognized both the lack of an adequate EIA for the dewatering reservoir sites (Gorano and Dukar Cho) as well as a failure to articulate a decommissioning plan for both. This latter failure, it has been

surmised, will result in the accumulation of TDS on the surface of a dried-up reservoir (a salt-pan), presenting significant aerosol and other environmental contaminants as wind erosion takes its course.



### **Field Visit to Gorrano 5th March:**

This section of the report summarizes the findings of a field visit to Gorrano, conducted by the Alliance for Climate Justice and Clean Energy (ACJCE) on 5th March 2023. The visit aimed to collect local testimonies and assess the socio-ecological impacts of Thar coal activities on the communities of Gorrano and Dukar Chao.

During the visit, the ACJCE team attended a 250-strong community-led gathering (Rajouni/Tribunal) composed of a cross-section demographic - men, women and children from surrounding villages. People expressed their deep dissatisfaction with coal-related activities, particularly infrastructural works and maintained that no consultation processes had been undertaken. The focus of these gatherings was on the impacts of Gorano and Dukar Chao Reservoirs on the local hydrology, particularly drinking water, and the precarity of their everyday

lives, and dangers to the livestock as a result of consuming poisonous reservoir waters. The following are key concerns emerging from the testimony:



1. Gorano Reservoir water displays alarming characteristics of poisoning evidenced by the carcasses of dead birds, fish, and animals around the periphery of the reservoir.



2. The once evergreen trees at the center of the Reservoir are now nearly all dried up, and cracked, and appear to be either dead or dying, reinforcing the water's poor quality and its impact on life.



3. The number of animals falling sick or dying because of Reservoir water consumption has also accelerated. The overall population of animals and livestock has decreased significantly. Water consumed by these animals from traditional sources is no longer safe causing stomach disorders, a reduction in fertility, and an increased incidence of preterm births.



4. The underground water sources are increasingly undrinkable, and local communities tie this transformation to the reservoir waters. The declining quality of water and the increasing salinity has also coincided in a rise in the local water level. This can be attributed to the seepage of contaminated water from the Gorano reservoir into the groundwater aquifers, causing an adverse impact on the overall water quality in the area.
5. This evidence of seepage is similarly demonstrated by the pooling of water outside the reservoir boundaries.
6. This complaint of poor drinking water quality in the wells of the surrounding areas is more concentrated in a direction that the locals report is 'downstream' of the natural aquifer flows.
7. Locals report that although it was claimed that the reservoir would not be required after 3-5 years, it is still in use.
8. Locals expressed fears that there are no plans for initiating and handling the decommissioning of the reservoir or cleanup of toxins that will continue to accumulate. The entire area would turn into a 'salt pan' unleashing the whole range of associated respiratory diseases and other illnesses. They ask how a project of such magnitude can be allowed without prior EIA and the decommissioning details.
9. Persistence of problems around land acquisition practices remains a concern. Compensation has been denied and delayed, with denial often tied to apparently

'flawed' land-titling despite community recognition of land rights associated with yaksala tilling and settling.

10. Land concerns remain an ever-present consideration with historical indigenous practices and their associated livelihoods subject to precarity. Fears around land degradation and ongoing acquisition remain ever-present.
11. There has been an explosion in the mosquito population with locals reporting higher incidents of swarming and related mosquito-borne diseases.

The communities were emphatic in their conclusion that the reservoir is devastating for their lives and livelihoods. They emphasized the need to ensure that the quality of water is revived and that their indigenous ways of living are preserved. For the community, the solution lies in the immediate decommissioning of the reservoir. ACJCE stands in full agreement with these assessments and demands.

#### **Field Visit to Dukar Chao Reservoir 7th March:**

A similar Rajouni (Tribunal) was held on the 7th March at the margins of Dukar Chao Reservoir. Since early March mine dewatering water has been pumped into this reservoir and it is rapidly inundating the natural depression which forms the 'reservoir'. Similar to the Rajouni at Gorano it was attended by a broad demographic from adjacent villages. Approximately 150 people attended the gathering with considerable concern about the recent releases of water. This concern animated the proceedings with the experience of Gorano at the forefront of discussion. It was emphasized again that no consultation had taken place, that no EIA had been drafted and/or shared, and that claims by the Company that this was a 'reserve' facility were clearly false given that Gorano was not at capacity and yet this new site was being inundated. The alarm and urgency around the proceedings were palpable.





1. The pooling water has started to interrupt the mobility of both inhabitants and livestock from adjacent settlements, notably grazing routes. The reservoir has also blocked access to the historical graveyard at Dukar Chao, forcing villagers to undertake a long journey around the reservoir just to reach it.
2. The attendees also expressed deep fear for the health and well-being of their cattle, as there have already been incidents of unexplained cattle deaths likely from the consumption of the reservoir water. They are concerned about how to prevent cattle from consuming the water, given that it falls in their natural grazing grounds and cattle paths.
3. The area is one of the most fertile and verdant and agriculture friendly of the Thar desert. There is at present a number of wheat plantations right next to the reservoir and the reservoir area itself is reported to be a natural local food basket. Since the release of water, many standing crops have been destroyed with a bleak outlook for any remaining crops as well as the future of agricultural activity in the area. The impact on the local economy has been ignored.
4. Deep fears about local hydrology, water quality, and water quantity were reiterated, the experience of Gorano representing evidence of what was to come.




The session ended with an emphatic rejection of the reservoir. The attendees called on authorities to immediately halt the release of water in Dukar Chao and Gorrano. Its continuation will cause irreversible damage to their ecology and their relationship to that ecology - material as well as socio-cultural.

The following are member organizations of the Alliance for Climate Justice and Clean Energy (ACJCE) who participated in the production of this report and endorse its findings:

S#	Organisation Names	Logos
1	Indus Consortium for Humanitarian, Environmental And Development Initiatives	
2	Alternative Law Collective	



3	The Knowledge Forum	
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4	Policy Research Institute for Equitable Development (PRIED)	
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5	Lok Sujag	
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