



Shortlist 2010

Public Eye Global Award

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**Nominated for the Public Eye Global Award 2010  
by Amigos da Terra - Amazônia Brasileira:**

## **GDF Suez**

Headquarters:	Paris, France
Sector:	Energy
Turnover/Profit:	€83.1 billion (2008) / €13.9 billion
Owned by:	Shareholders: 36% France, 44% institutional investors, 20% individual shareholders
Employees:	200,000 worldwide
CEO:	Gérard Mestrallet

### **In Brief**

*Despite opposition from the local populations and harsh criticism from Brazilian, Bolivian and Peruvian civil societies and the relevant environmental authorities, the company GDF Suez, partially owned by the French government, is heavily involved in the construction of the Jirau hydroelectric dam on the Madeira River. The mammoth Brazilian project will cause devastating problems: several thousand indigenous residents are expected to be displaced, and large areas of the forest will be cleared. The river and the developed area will be poisoned with mercury. An increase of species loss of fish and of malaria cases are almost guaranteed. On top of all this, GDF Suez also violates Brazilian and international labor laws. Thanks to ruthless political lobbying, the energy giant has infringed on the current labor law and provided no minimal guarantees on social and environmental issues. Due to all this, GDF Suez has fueled political tensions between the local peoples and the central government on the one hand, and between affected countries as well.*

### **Irresponsible Corporate Behavior**

The French energy concern GDF Suez is – via its subsidiary Tractebel Energia – the driving force in the construction of the Jirau hydroelectric dam on the Brazilian Amazon tributary Madeira River. Construction of the mega-project is going on night and day, with a planned start of operation in 2013. Because of its majority holding of 50.1 percent, GDF Suez has primary responsibility for the environmental and social problems connected to the project. Civil society protests in Brazil, Bolivia and Peru have so far been ignored, and dialog with the local population has been systematically refused. To push through the project on the political level, the company exerted massive pressure on Brazilian environmental agencies. As a result, the agencies granted legally questionable partial licenses, resulting in numerous technology specialists within the agency to come out against the licenses. GDF Suez also conducts scandalous greenwashing and deliberately hides in its environmental report the massive direct and indirect impacts that the power plant construction will have on

neighboring countries Bolivia and Peru, as well as on the indigenous peoples on both sides of the border. Not even minimal guarantees are given to the local population. Important questions about infrastructure are also systematically ignored by GDF Suez. Consequently, the company infringes on a variety of internationally-recognized and compulsory environmental principles, which is leading to constantly-increasing political tension between the affected countries.

### **Consequences**

The people living on the Madeira River are facing a threat to their existence because of the dam construction. For example, the migratory routes of fish from which the people live will change dramatically. The river and surrounding areas will be contaminated with mercury, and large areas of virgin forest will be cleared. As a result, the people living near the river will no longer have access to the fishery and water routes necessary for their survival. And the company has no plans to address the increased spread of malaria caused by the dam. GDF Suez also violates Brazilian and international labor law: Multiple cases of inhumane working conditions are already documented. Violations against environmental standards, tolerated by Brazil because of political pressure, provoked official protests in neighboring Bolivia. So far the Brazilian government has not responded to the protests. In short, the tensions in the region are increasing due to the ruthlessly-implemented commercial interests of a French energy concern.

### **Current Status and Demands**

The nominating organizations call on GDF Suez to immediately and unconditionally withdraw from the construction of the Jirau hydroelectric dam on the Madeira River.

### **Further Information**

- <http://ef.amazonia.org.br/index.cfm?fuseaction=noticia&id=341147>
- [http://www.banktrack.org/show/dodgydeals/rio\\_madeira\\_dam\\_project](http://www.banktrack.org/show/dodgydeals/rio_madeira_dam_project)
- <http://www.amazonia.org.br/arquivos/254880.pdf>
- <http://www.internationalrivers.org>
- <http://www.bicusa.org/en/Project.10138.aspx>
- <http://www.ef.amazonia.org>