

# New threats

**In order to preserve their livelihoods, women processors in Senegal have come together to oppose the Tosyali steel project**

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Since 2009, women fish processors of Khelcom in the traditional municipality of Bargny, about 35km from Dakar, have been facing the aftermath of development projects that jeopardise their environment, health, security and livelihoods. First there was the 125 MW coal-fired power station financed by the African Development Bank in 2009. Then, in July 2020, came the announcement of a mining and steel complex operated by the Turkish company, Tosyali, within a newly established local Special Economic Zone.

The Association of the Women Fish Processors of Bargny Guedj Khelcom has expressed clear opposition to the Tosyali Holding Sénégal project. It has filed a complaint with the Turkish National Contact Point for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD) against the company which tries to “grab the land currently used by the women” to build its steel complex. With support from Lumière Synergie pour le Développement (LSD), these women have decided to speak out loud and clear. It is a unanimous “NO” to Tosyali.

The President of the Association, Fatou Samba, points bluntly to what she considers as repeated disregard for the local population. “After the cement factory (SOCOCIM) and the coal-fired power station, here they come with a steel plant. They want to kill us; the people of Bargny are tired! More than 1000 women are impacted by the coal plant. Thanks to the income raised from their processing activities, they have been able to meet family needs. If they can’t work on the Khelcom site anymore,

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Bargny community protesting against the Sendou coal power plant, Senegal. The Association of the Women Fish Processors of Bargny Guedj Khelcom has expressed clear opposition to the Tosyali Holding Sénégal project

a social crisis will develop. So we say to Tosyali: buzz off!”

The chairperson of LSD, Aly Marie Sagne, who has been helping these women for some years, has clearly voiced his indignation. “As a partner of the women fish processors who have been struggling to remain on their traditional site for more than ten years now, and to oppose the construction of the Bargny Sendou power plant, we express our deep concern about this second attempt at grabbing the fish processing site in Bargny.”

The operations of the steel complex would expose the local population to environmental and sanitary risks. As part of their campaigning, the women have submitted a memo to about 20 public and private institutions: the President of the Republic, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the President of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, the sector ministries, including the Fisheries and Environment Ministries, and a number of diplomatic representatives, in particular from Turkey and the Netherlands.

As a result of increasing lobbying by the women, some negotiations have been initiated. Women representatives took part in two meetings with the Tosyali Company, the Ministries of Fisheries and Finance, with also the presence of APIX (National Agency for investment promotion and major works).

Thanks to the mobilisation of women, work on the plant has been delayed. Tosyali is now committed to conducting an impact assessment, and also respecting the rights of the neighbouring women processors and maintaining appropriate environmental standards.

For the first time in ten years, these women of Khelcom have been respectfully and responsibly treated by the decision-makers, including from the state and private entities. They have been invited to share their views regarding the future of the fish processing site. During an interview, the Minister of Environment had this to say: “They are full citizens, with the right to a healthy environment”.

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