

# BRAZIL

## Hydroelectric Dam of Belo Monte under Construction

The impact on the environment and the lives and culture of the indigenous people caused by the Belo Monte Dam project at Xingu River in the state of Pará (Amazonian rainforest) was already described in *Heritage at Risk 2008–10* (see p. 37 f.). The dam is currently under construction and is to open in 2014 or 2015. It will then be the second-largest hydroelectric dam complex in Brazil and one of the world's largest in installed capacity, behind the Three Gorges Dam in China and the Brazilian-Paraguayan Itaipu Dam. With the energy produced by this dam and many others under construction Brazil aims to speed up its economic growth, the country already being the world's fifth-largest economy.

The project has strongly been criticised by indigenous people and numerous environmental organisations in Brazil as well as by organisations and individuals around the world. Belo Monte's 668 square kilometres of reservoir will flood 400 square kilometres of forest, about 0.01 % of the Amazon forest. Though argued to be a relatively small area for a dam's energy output, it seems this output cannot be fully obtained without the construction of other dams planned within the dam complex. Therefore, the prognosed area of reservoir for the Belo Monte dam and the necessary additional Altamira dam, also on Rio Xingu, together will exceed 6 500 square kilometers of rainforest. Thousands of indigenous people will either be directly displaced or will have to leave as the river diversion negatively affects their fisheries, groundwater and ability to transport on the river. Apparently, these effects have not been or not sufficiently addressed by environmental impact assessments.

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△ Visualisation of the Belo Monte dam  
([plattformbelomonte.blogspot.de](http://plattformbelomonte.blogspot.de))



△ Construction work at Santo Antônio  
([plattformbelomonte.blogspot.de](http://plattformbelomonte.blogspot.de))

▷ Construction work in connection with the Belo Monte dam project  
(photo: [www.altamirahoje.net](http://www.altamirahoje.net))

