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## Hydropower Dams along the Colorado River: Pros and Cons

Dams have been built for thousands of years – dams to manage flood waters, to harness water as hydropower, to supply water to drink or for industry, or to irrigate fields. [...]

As we start the new century, one-third of the countries in the world rely on hydropower for more than half their electricity supply, and large dams generate 19 % of electricity overall. Half the world’s large dams were built exclusively or primarily for irrigation, and some 30-40 % of the 271 million hectares irrigated worldwide rely on dams. [...] But the last 50 years have also highlighted the performance and the social and environmental impacts of large dams. They have fragmented and transformed the world’s rivers, while global estimates suggest that 40-80 million people have been displaced by reservoirs. [...]

The decision to build a large dam has been increasingly contested, to the point where the future of large dam-building in many countries is in question. [...] Proponents point to the social and economic development demands that dams are intended to meet, such as irrigation, electricity, flood control and water supply. Opponents point to the adverse impacts of dams, such as debt burden, cost overruns, displacement and impoverishment of people, destruction of important ecosystems and fishery resources, and the inequitable sharing of costs and benefits.



Glen-Canyon-Dam

Source: World Commission on Dams, „Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-Making “ (November 2000)

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