

Thai local voices flag potential ESG and financial risks tied to energy investments ahead of UBS AGM

BANGKOK, Thailand (April 9, 2026) - Representatives from local communities and civil society organizations (CSOs) convened a [media briefing](#) ahead of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of UBS to amplify local voices and highlight the potential environmental, social, and financial risks associated with large-scale energy investments in Thailand.

In Thailand's energy sector, a range of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) concerns have increasingly been raised, pointing to broader systemic risks that may require closer consideration by financial institutions and investors.

UBS is among the major financiers of Thai energy companies including those involved in several controversial energy projects across Asia, including the Burapa gas-fired power plant in Thailand, hydropower dams along the Mekong River (Pak Beng, Pak Lay, and Luang Prabang in Laos), and a waste-to-energy plant in Prachinburi Province – projects that have raised significant environmental and governance related concerns as well as potential risks to local communities and human rights.

Bringing together perspectives and lived experiences from Thailand, the event aims to underscore how transnational investment flows – including those involving major financial institutions such as Swiss Bank, UBS, and their exposure to Thailand's energy sector – may be linked to on-the-ground impacts on local livelihoods, ecosystems, and civic space, while raising questions about accountability across the investment chain.

The discussion zeroed in on how such investments may pose ESG risks, and whether they align with financial institutions' stated sustainability and climate commitments.

UBS, as a financial institution committed to the international standard such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), and as a major shareholder in Gulf Development Public Company Limited, holding approximately 10.12% of shares[1][2], adds to its responsibility to conduct thorough due diligence and carefully assess these concerns, particularly in light of the potential ESG and financial risks associated with these investments.

“Financial institutions like UBS, as a major shareholder, have significant influence to shape corporate practices and ensure that ESG risks are properly addressed. This includes taking responsibility to meaningfully address the concerns raised by affected communities. We hope today's dialogue helps raise awareness of on-the-ground impacts and opens a more inclusive and constructive conversation between communities, financial institutions, and companies on how these risks can be better understood and managed” Muandao Kongwanarat, SFOC said.

Potential ESG Risks in Thailand's Energy Sector

The briefing draws on publicly available information and stakeholder perspectives to highlight potential risks and concerns that may not have been fully addressed by financial decision-makers, particularly those raised by communities and civil society organisations (CSOs)

Reputational Risks for Investors

Exposure to projects associated with governance concerns, environmental impacts, and community opposition may present reputational risks for investors. These risks may raise questions about alignment with international standards such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct, and the Equator Principles.

Governance and Civic Space Risks

In recent years, concerns have been raised over the use of legal actions that may affect civic space and public participation in Thailand's energy sector.

Since 2020, Gulf Development Public Company Limited has filed at least 10 civil and criminal defamation cases totaling over ฿900 million (~US\$28 million)[3], often targeting individuals raising concerns on energy governance and pricing. Watchdogs have described these as Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), potentially creating a chilling effect on public discourse.

Environmental and Social Impacts: Burapa Power Project

The 540 MW gas-fired Burapa Power Project has raised community concerns over land use restrictions, lack of meaningful community participation and transparent decision-making processes, risks to livelihoods and food security, and increased water stress from planned large-scale extraction.

Transboundary Risks in the Mekong Region

Hydropower investments along the Mekong River, including the Pak Beng, Pak Lay, and Luang Prabang projects, have drawn sustained criticism from local communities, civil society, and experts.

[Potential risks](#)[4] include disruptions to fisheries, sediment flows, and ecosystems that support millions of people across the region, alongside concerns about displacement and insufficient impact assessments.

Financial and Transition Risks

[Analyses](#) [5] suggest that up to 67% of Thailand's fossil fuel power capacity could become stranded by 2040 under a full renewable transition scenario, potentially resulting in losses of up to ฿530 billion.

Amid existing electricity overcapacity and accelerating renewable energy adoption, new fossil fuel projects may face declining utilization, policy shifts, or early retirement, raising the risk of becoming economically unviable. These dynamics point to growing exposure to long-term transition risks, with potential implications for asset values, as well as increasing regulatory and reputational pressures on investors.

“The use of SLAPP lawsuits in Thailand risks shrinking civic space and silencing public concerns on environmental and human rights impacts. Energy security should not come at the expense of human rights or continued dependence on fossil fuels. Financial institutions play a critical role in shaping energy investments and have a responsibility to ensure these investments respect communities, protect ecosystems, and enable meaningful public participation. Moving forward, long-term energy security must be grounded in a just and equitable transition to renewable energy aligned with the rights of affected communities” - Manun Wongmasoh, Climate and Energy campaigner, Greenpeace Thailand.

“I have been fighting against this power plant since I was just 10 years old and nearly two decades later, the issue is still not resolved. We are not against development, but we do not want to trade at least 25 years of our future for it. Development should not leave people behind. We want an energy transition that is fair, safe, and sustainable, and that respects our communities.” Chiraphat Chamket, Chachoengsao Impacted Community said

The briefing is intended to support constructive dialogue around responsible investment and the role of financial institutions in addressing climate, human rights, and governance challenges while encouraging stronger due diligence, greater transparency, and meaningful engagement with affected communities.

Remarks:

[1] Gulf Development Public Company Limited, Major Shareholders
<https://investor.gulf.co.th/en/shareholder-center/major-shareholders>

[2] UBS’s Human Rights Statement 2026 <https://share.google/okBZTPzleSD11MHLb>

[3] The total amount is compiled from multiple publicly available.

- <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
- https://voicetv.co.th/read/FEP4ya1dl#google_vignette
- <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/thailand-electricity-co-gulf-energ-sues-political-party-members-overrising-electricity-costs-conference/>
- <https://thestandard.co/gulf-sued-move-forward-party-100-mb/>
- <https://pfmsea.org/energy-firm-sues-transparency-activist-100-million-baht>
- <https://voicetv.co.th/read/FEP4ya1dl>
- <https://prachatai.com/journal/2023/06/104482>
- <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/politics/3093045/peoples-party-trio-in-court-for-first-hearing>

- <https://www.business-humanrights.org/it/latest-news/thailand-electricity-co-gulf-energy-sue-s-political-party-members-overruling-electricity-costs-conference/>

[4]<https://www.internationalrivers.org/news/sites-of-struggle-sacrifice-mapping-destructive-dam-projects-along-the-mekong-river/>

[5]<https://climatefinancethai.com/fossil-reckoning-valuation-of-coal-and-gas-stranded-assets-in-thailand/>

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