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	Barclays, E.ON, Wal-Mart take most flack in 2008 London, 18 December: Out of all financial institutions, Barclays attracted the most criticism in 2008 on environmental and social grounds, according to a survey of media and NGO reports. Zurich-based reputational risk consultant Ecofact ranked the UK-based bank in first place, after it came under fire for investing in the weapons and coal industry, and over criticism for paying out large bonuses during the current financial crisis. Barclays was among the companies being sued in the US for allegedly having supported the South African apartheid regime, and the bank's involvement in a number of projects in India was also scrutinised for having possible detrimental effects on local communities, Ecofact said. The bank did not reply to a request for comment by press time. Ecofact compiles negative news on companies' environmental and social performance from thousands of sources. According to sales and marketing director Charlotte Mansson, the data is used by two main groups of customers: asset managers, who use it to screen their portfolios, and investment banks, who use it for checking environmental compliance in areas such as project finance. E.ON was ranked most controversial utility, after being targetted by environmentalists over its coal-fired power plants, particularly its Kingsnorth power station in the UK. Wal-Mart Stores topped the list of North American companies, over accusations of labour violations and poor conditions at factories in Bangladesh and China. It also has several large lawsuits pending against it for social discrimination. But, overall, the most environmentally and socially controversial company in 2008 was Shijiazhuang Sanlu Group Holding Co – the Chinese company that became embroiled in a major scandal involving contamination of milk powder with melamine. Updated 18 December 2008