



Thousands of Lives to Be Devastated by Lower Sesan 2 Dam: International Groups Demand New EIA

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Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Today, a group of 18 civil society organizations from Cambodia and the Mekong region issued a statement demanding that the project developers and the Cambodian Government conduct a new Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and release information on the redesign of the Lower Sesan 2 (LS2) Hydropower Dam in Stung Treng, Cambodia. The action supports recent community statements in which affected villagers refused to relocate and demanded opportunities for communities to participate in decision-making on the project.ⁱ

Reports state that the LS2 project has been redesigned, including a height reduction and introduction of new mitigation measures, such as radial gates, to improve sediment passage; yet no details have been publicly released or officially confirmed.

The statement calls on the project developers and Cambodian government to publicly release information on the proposed redesign, halt construction of the project and undertake a new EIA and a new decision-making process that complies with national and international standards and includes the meaningful participation of affected communities.

Despite the unresolved issues, pre-construction work is forging ahead on the project at a rapid pace. According to the developers' [project schedule](#),ⁱⁱ substantive construction of the dam will commence in January 2015 and closure of the river is expected to be complete by the same month.

Today's statement stresses serious concerns that the existing EIA for the project does not properly assess the extensive and severe environmental and social impacts of the dam, including the transboundary impacts in neighbouring countries of Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. The EIA does not address community concerns, as it failed to ensure the meaningful participation of affected villagers. Furthermore, the existing EIA is based on the previous plans for the project, and does not include any assessment of the new design changes.

"The current EIA fails to meet standards, as it only examines impacts in a limited area around the project site, and does not assess far more extensive impacts that will be felt by upstream and downstream communities in the Sesan, Srepok and Sekong River Basins, the Mekong River and the Tonle Sap Lake," says Ame Trandem, Southeast Asia Program Director with International Rivers. "More recent studies have predicted very severe impacts, including a 9.3% decrease in fish biomass across the entire Mekong Basin, and reductions in sediment flows, that will devastate access to food, nutrition and sources of livelihood for hundreds of thousands of people in the region."

"To date, communities have not been provided with adequate information about the project's impacts and resettlement plans, and have not been afforded an opportunity to voice their concerns and have these considered in decisions on the project," says Tek Vannara, Executive Director of the NGO Forum on Cambodia. "In particular, communities outside of the reservoir area, living upstream and downstream of the project, will experience serious impacts on local fisheries and livelihoods, but have not been consulted or offered any compensation."

In their recent open statements to the government's 'Committee for Solving the Impacts of the Lower Sesan 2 Dam', villagers from Kbal Romeas and Srekor villages in the reservoir area reject the resettlement plan and refuse to relocate. They urge the conduct of new assessments on the dam's impacts and the opportunity for communities to participate in the assessment and decision-making processes.

"Decision-making on the LS2 project has lacked accountability and transparency and appears to be at odds with standards under national and international laws", said Maureen Harris, Legal Consultant to EarthRights International. "Standards in Cambodian and Chinese laws and best practice require comprehensive and objective study of all likely impacts before a decision is made to proceed, and that substantial changes to a project should also undergo the same processes for impact assessment and public participation."

Read the statement [here](#).

Background Information

The Lower Sesan 2 Dam is located just below the confluence of the major Sesan and Srepok tributaries and about 25km from the Mekong River. Pre-construction activities on the project

are already underway. Substantive construction of the dam will commence in January 2015 and closure of the river is expected to be complete by the same month. According to plans for the project, substantive construction will take 35 months. The Lower Sesan 2 Dam is being developed by a consortium of Chinese, Cambodian and Vietnamese companies, including China's Hydrolancang International Energy Co. Ltd and Cambodia's Royal Group. When complete, the dam will be approximately 75m high and 8km long, creating a 33,560 hectare reservoir, with a generating capacity of 400 MW. More than 5,000 people, most of whom are indigenous, will be forcibly resettled if the project proceeds.

ⁱ 3S Rivers Protection Network, Press Release and Community Statements: Phnong Ethnic Villagers in Kbal Romeas and Lao villager in Srekor 1&2 Village Publically Announce: "We Refuse to be Resettled by the Lower Sesan 2 Dam", 29 September 2014.

ⁱⁱ See Yunnan Lancang International Energy Limited, 'Se San 2 hydropower dam and powerhouse concrete riverbed construction tender prequalification notice', 2014-4-8, available at:

www.chinapower.com.cn/bussiness/viewbidinfo.asp?bidid=10146314&bidtype=%D4%A4%C9%F3%CD%A8%B8%E6.