

សម្ព័ន្ធនគ្រួសារកម្ពុជា
The Rivers Coalition
in Cambodia

Media Advisory
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**New Report Finds Planned Lower Sesan 2 Hydropower Dam
Fails to Uphold Best Practice Standards**

Phnom Penh- Plans to construct a large hydropower dam near the confluence of the Sesan and Srepok rivers in Sesan District, Stung Treng Province may be ill-advised given the project's poor feasibility process, which has not adequately considered the project's negative environmental and social impacts and the needs of affected communities living up and downstream of the proposed dam-site, reveals a recently published report "*Best Practices in Compensation and Resettlement for Large Dams: The Case of the Planned Lower Sesan 2 Hydropower Project in Northeastern Cambodia.*"

The report, commissioned by the Rivers Coalition in Cambodia (RCC), and written by environmental impact assessment (EIA) and fisheries expert Dr. Ian G. Baird, documents community concerns regarding the Lower Sesan 2 dam and examines the process of preparing the dam's Environmental Management Plan through the lens of "best practice" standards at the village, national, regional and international level. The report was commissioned due to concern expressed by civil society and local communities that the dam, if built and without accurate assessment of local people's needs, could lead to a loss of livelihood and further impoverishment for affected communities. Given that the 75 meter high dam is expected to inundate more than 30,000 ha of land and forest and result in the resettlement of an estimated 5,000 people, the report gave special focus to resettlement and compensation standards, in order to provide recommendations to be considered in Cambodia's dam-building planning process.

Based upon publicly available documentation regarding the project and discussions held with eleven local communities who would be affected by the dam, the report finds that the Vietnamese company appointed to carry out the dam's feasibility study, Power Engineering Consulting Company 1 (PECC1), has failed to meet even minimum standards for public participation. The study neglected to consult with communities located upstream and downstream of the dam site and those located inside the planned reservoir were not provided substantial information regarding the dam's potential impacts. The process was not participatory and did not promote open and meaningful dialogue. Public participation is considered the most fundamental aspect of any EIA process, with evidence from around the world suggesting that the more the public is involved in assessment processes, the more accurate and useful such processes tend to be. Public participation can also help ensure community support, understanding, and overall cooperation.

The *Best Practices* report is being launched simultaneously to the completion of a review done by the RCC on PECC1's *Environment Impact Assessment for Feasibility Study of Lower Sesan 2 Hydropower Project, Stung Treng Province Cambodia* report, dated October 2008, received from the Ministry of Environment in late July. The EIA review addresses the report's deficiencies in terms of the impacts the dam would have on local people's culture and

livelihoods, the lack of public consultation, along with recommendations to develop more sustainable forms of renewable energy technologies rather than constructing the dam.

The *Best Practices in Compensation and Resettlement for Large Dams* and the RCC Review of the EIA report can be found at www.ngoforum.org.kh.

For more information regarding community concerns over the Lower Sesan 2 dam, please view the community-made video entitled *Community Video Statements: Our Concerns About the Lower Sesan 2 Dam* at:

- Part One: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xVCjHXUyq4>
- Part Two: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbdYw3C8XcQ>
- Part Three: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXMdaXkQINY>

The Rivers Coalition in Cambodia is a coalition of civil society organizations working to protect and restore river ecosystems and river-based livelihoods in Cambodia and is composed of the following Cambodian organizations: 3S Rivers Protection Network, Cambodian Volunteers for Society, Conservation and Development on Cambodia, Cultural and Environmental Preservation Association, Fisheries Action Coalition Team, and The NGO Forum on Cambodia. For more information, contact:

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