

Press Release

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Sesan, Srepok, and Sekong Rivers Protection Network

Stop Plans to Construct the Lower Sesan 2 Hydropower Project

[Ratanakiri, Cambodia] The Sesan, Srepok and Sekong Rivers Network Protection (Sesan, Sekong, Srepok) was established in October, 2001 after a big and astonishing flood hit the Sesan River in 1996, which severely affected ethnic minorities along the river, forcing them to organize their traditional ritual pray. Although such a prayer was organized, the impacts still continued to threaten their livelihoods. Only years after the flood, did people along the Sesan River learn that the cause of the devastating impacts they were experiencing was due to the construction of the Yali Falls Dam, located upstream in Vietnam.

“We call to the governments of Cambodia and Vietnam to pay attention for future studies and to cancel the Lower Sesan 2 Dam, because the project will mostly affect indigenous people and our livelihoods and rights and our fisheries,” said Mrs. Von from Phe Village, Sesan Commune, Oyado District, Ratnakiri. “If the the dam is built, the governments and company must allow for more community participation throughout all steps of the process.”

The Mekong River is a river that is most abundant river in terms of fish biodiversity, ranking second worldwide (after the Amazon River). We have observed that there are approximately 877 fish species in the Mekong River Basin (excluding those river-mouth species). The Sesan River is one of the most important tributories of the Mekong River in terms of fisheries, and water and nutrient flows.

Hydropower dams have caused floods, which inundate forests (leading to the loss of carbon sources that cannot be recovered), and water fluctuations, which have impacted fishing occupations. They have also reduced the opportunity to create tourist areas and damaged the regional economy, especially the economy of those who wholly rely on natural resources.

The 400 MW Lower Sesan 2 Hydropower Dam has been planned in Stung Treng Province and is being constructed by the Electricity of Vietnam (EVN, a Vietnamese Company) and the Royal Group (a Cambodian Company).

The Lower Sesan 2 Hydropower Dam will lead to the resettlement of 5,000 (five thousand people) and impact more than 100,000 (one hundred thousand) people in Stung Treng, Ratanakiri, and Mondulkiri provinces. Thousands of other inhabitants residing next to the Mekong River Basin will be severely affected from its innumerable adverse impacts on fishing occupations in Cambodia, including the Tonle Sap Lake and Mekong’s tributeries, and other areas of Vietnam, Lao PRD, and Thailand.

According to a scientific report of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), if the Lower Sesan 2 Hydropower Dam is to be constructed, the entire Mekong River Basin’s fish biomass will drop by 9.3 percent. This means the income from fishing resources of about USD 800 million per year will be lost, which is almost equal to the cost of the Dam Project of USD 816 million. A study by the Mekong River Commission has estimated a total value of fishing occupation within the Mekong Basin from USD 5.6-

billion to USD 9.4 billion. Hence the Lower Sesan 2 Hydropower Dam would lead to a loss from USD 520 million to USD 874 million per year for the poor.

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For more information:

- View the PNAS study:
<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2012/03/09/1201423109.short>