

Statement by local people on dams in the Mekong Region

Mekong governments: Listen to the people!

Statement by local people on dams in the Mekong Region

We are people from local communities in the Mekong region, who depend on the eco-systems created by the Mekong river and numerous other rivers and lakes in the region, especially, the Tonle Sap, Sesan and Mekong Delta, for our food, health, livelihood, culture, society and incomes. The waters and resources of the Mekong region sustain our lives and economic security.

The dams built on the Mekong mainstream and other rivers in the region have resulted in severe changes in the Mekong's ecosystems, endangering life, livelihoods and the economy of the entire region. Indigenous peoples, women and children are most affected by these changes. The dams have also worsened the impacts of climate change that we are already facing. These dams include Pak Mun, Yali Falls, Nam Theun 2, Theun-Hinboun, Xayaburi and the series of dams on the Lancang river in China.

We have witnessed and experienced the destruction caused by the dams. For us, who live by the river and experience every change in the water systems, there is no question that such dams result in serious negative impacts for present and future generations, and should not be built.

We have very serious concern about the Don Sahong Dam in Laos, which is located at a critical area for fish migration between the upper and lower Mekong, and will severely reduce fish species and numbers in the whole Mekong river basin. The dam presents special dangers to the Mekong giant catfish and the Irrawaddy Dolphin. The Don Sahong Dam will also negatively affect agriculture and fisheries in the Mekong delta. Despite the destruction that this dam will cause, the Lao Government has not listened to the concerns that have been repeatedly publicly expressed by local people from other Mekong countries.

We have never received full information about any of these dams, never been properly consulted about them, and never been provided the opportunity to participate in decision making about them. We are being forced to bear the increasingly unbearable impacts of these hydropower projects. It is time for our governments to hear our voices and respect our rights to make decision about the future of our rivers and our lives.

We request:

- Direct dialogue between Mekong region governments and peoples' representatives through public forums: governments must come to the public forum which will be soon be organized and attended by Mekong local peoples' representatives, listen to us and learn from us about the impacts of the dams.
- Studies to understand the full value of the rivers, and social and environmental impacts of dam projects: these studies must be conducted by independent actors, with full participation of all

affected communities, and with enough time to gather the evidence needed to make appropriate decisions about the projects. If the studies show that the negative impacts outweigh the benefits, the dams must be stopped.

- Urgent studies and actions on the Don Sahong dam because of its critical location and status of the project. The full costs and impacts of this project must be made public and recognized by all Mekong region governments.
- Once again, we remind our governments that we, the people of the Mekong region, have protected these rivers for generations and must be involved in decision making about them.

Signed by:

6,473 signatures of local people from Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam

77 Supporting local, national, and international NGOs