Mekong governments: Listen to the people! - Statement to sign-on

Dear friends,

Local communities in the Mekong region in Southeast Asia, who depend on the Mekong river and numerous other rivers and lakes for their livelihoods, need our urgent support.

The dams already built on the main Mekong river and other rivers in the region have resulted in severe changes in these rivers, endangering life, livelihoods and the economy in the entire region.

The Lao Government is now planning to build the Don Sahong Dam, located at a critical area for fish migration between the upper and lower Mekong. The dam will severely reduce fish species and numbers and also affect agriculture and fisheries in the Mekong delta. Despite the destruction the dam will cause, the Lao Government has not listened to the concerns of the communities in the region that already are and will be affected by the dams in the region.

In September, representatives of local communities from Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand gathered in Thailand and released a statement in English which is enclosed below. Affected communities never received full information about any of the dams constructed, never were properly consulted, and were never given the opportunity to participate in decision making about the planned dam construction. “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 a decision about the future of our rivers and our lives,” they state.

They are **inviting organizations from around the world to support the statement** that will be handed to the Mekong government representatives and relevant Mekong dam actors in a public forum that will be organized at the beginning of November.

If your organization wishes to support the action please send the name and country of your organization until October 20th to the following email: Mekong@wrm.org.uy

Please feel free to distribute widely!

The WRM Team

Mekong governments: Listen to the people!

Statement by local people on dams in the Mekong Region

This declaration is also available in Thai and Cambodian language.

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:

Cambodia

- Mr. Long Sochet, Coalition of Cambodia Fishers (CFF), Pursat Province
- Ms. Phoem Sokun, Community Based Organisation (CBO), Kampong Chhnang Province
- Ms. Chheng Kimheng, Community Based Organisation (CBO),Kampong Thom Province
- Mr. Eang Eangnaim, Cambodia Community Fishery, Kampong Cham Province
- Mr. Dam Samnang, Community Based Organisation (CBO), Stung Treng Province
- Ms. Saron Sokhom, Community Based Organisation (CBO), Stung Treng Province

Thailand

- Mr. Nichon Pholchan, Village person, Bungkarn Province
- Mr. Veera Wongsuwan, Village person, Amnart Charoen Province
- Mr. Amnart Trichak, Village person, Nakhonpanom Province
- Mr. Channarong Wongla, Hug Chaingkhan Group, Loei Province

Vietnam

- Mr. Vo Thanh Trang, Village person, An Giang Province
- Mr. Truong Van Khoi, Village person, An Giang Province
- Ms. Nguyen Thi To Nguyen, Village person, An Giang Province
- Mrs. Huynh Kim Duyen, Village person, Ca mau Province
- Mr. Nguyen Hoang Cau, Village person, Ca Mau province

Supporting Organisations

- Community Resources Centre (CRC), Thailand
- Fishery Action Coalition Team (FACT), Cambodia
- Focus on the Global South, Thailand and Cambodia
- Green ID, Vietnam
- International Rivers (IR)
- My Village (Mvi), Cambodia
- Rachna Satrei Organization, Cambodia
- Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance (TERRA)
- Vietnam River Network
- WARECOD, Vietnam

Supporting Individuals

- Mr. Pham Xuan Phu academic An Giang University, Vietnam

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