



PRESS ADVISORY - For Immediate Release
15 October 2007

Report: Northeast Cambodians Abandon Riverside Homes for Safer, Higher Ground

Ratanakiri: More than 3,500 dam-affected people in northeastern Cambodia have abandoned their riverside villages and moved upland, according to research conducted by 17 community-based researchers with technical support by the 3S Rivers Protection Network (3SPN) in Ratanakiri province.

3SPN researchers found that 722 households from 17 villages along the Se San River have resettled upland – without government or donor assistance – to escape damaging floods and erratic river conditions caused by upstream dam operations in Vietnam.

“We published this study to educate government authorities and international donor agencies about the difficult life imposed on indigenous communities since Vietnam built the Yali Falls dam in 1993,” says Meach Mean, Acting Coordinator of 3SPN.

The 720 mega-watt Yali Falls dam is the first and largest of four hydro dams built on the upper Se San by Electricity of Vietnam.

“Abandoned Villages Along the Se San River in Ratanakiri Province, Northeastern Cambodia” was prepared by local researchers from three of the eight indigenous groups living along the Se San in Cambodia. The report highlights villagers’ perspectives on how the Se San has changed in the last decade and what compelled them to abandon their riverside homes:

- Since dam construction upstream, the river is no longer a reliable source of fish and water for irrigating rice and dry season crops, Mr. Roman Mal, a Jarai Village Chief of Dal Pok village, explains: “*Villagers have lost their hopes and dependencies on this river, because nearly all of the river resources are gone.*”
- Mr. Pous Pin, a Brao villager from Ta Veng district stated: “*We moved our village away from the riverbank because we no longer could cultivate rice in our Chamkars (farm land) along the Se San River which flooded every year and because so many people and animals have died (from the floods).*”
- “*Everyday, both during the day and at night, I live with fear of severe water fluctuations and of the dam breaking. I cannot sleep well at night. I often get up and go to see the river late at night because I fear a water surge may come,*” said Mrs. Romas Veun, a Jarai villager from Pi village who has recently built a house away from the river for shelter in an emergency.

Earlier this year, Electricity of Vietnam released an assessment of the downstream impacts of Se San hydro development but the report – prepared by Nordic engineering consultants

SWECO Grøner – provides no information about the villagers' move upland nor does it recommend compensation for damages caused by EVN dams.

3SPN is a local organization working with communities affected by hydropower development in Vietnam and Lao PDR on the Se San, Srepok and Sekong rivers in northeastern Cambodia.

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Hard copies of the report can be requested from 3SPN at sesan@camshin.net. The electronic report is available in English and Khmer at NGO Forum on Cambodia's website at: <http://www.ngoforum.org.kh/Environment/Docs/mekong/Abandoned%20Village%20Report%20August%202007.pdf>

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